

Resilience in Uncertain Times:

Scenario & Contingency Planning for Local Public Media

MAY 29, 2025

PUBLIC MEDIA.CO

Strengthening Local Media



WEBINAR LOGISTICS

1. All microphones are muted and cameras off
2. We welcome conversation – please use chat function to share questions and thoughts
3. Please complete the post-webinar survey. We value your feedback!

Resilience in
Uncertain Times:
**Scenario &
Contingency
Planning for Local
Public Media**

PMC WEBINARS

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The Power of
Forecasting: Navigating
Financial Future in Public
Media

Contingency Planning for
Public Media
(COVID edition)

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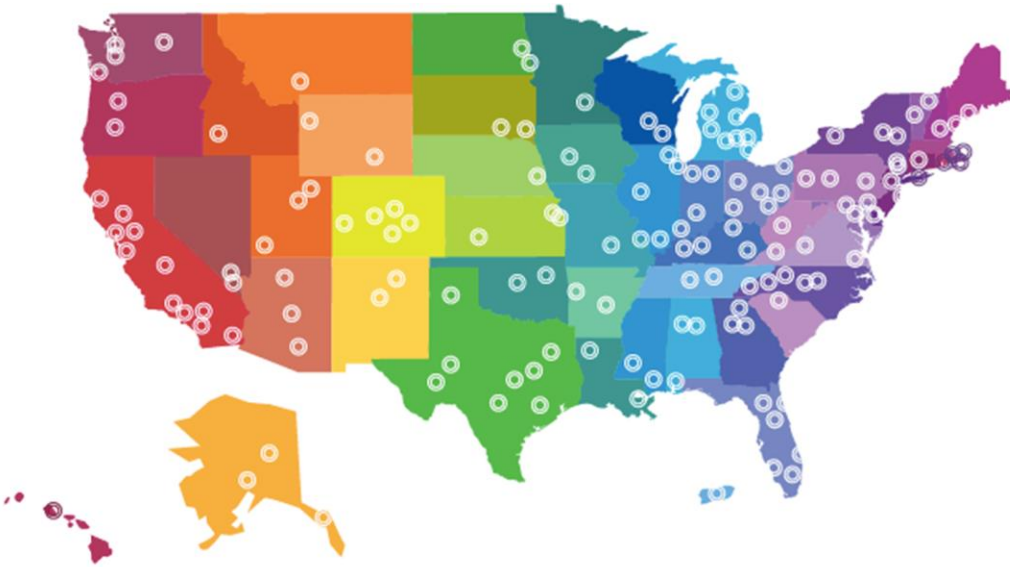


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ABOUT PUBLIC MEDIA COMPANY

Public Media Company is a nonprofit consulting firm dedicated to strengthening nonprofit, mission-driven local media. We leverage our business expertise to provide organizations with the services, support, and insights they need to thrive and make a lasting local impact.



Public Media Company works in partnership with organizations in urban and rural communities to find innovative solutions and grow local impact. We have worked with **over 400 local media organizations in all 50 states**

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About The Bridgespan Group



The Bridgespan Group is a global nonprofit organization that collaborates with mission-driven leaders, organizations, and philanthropists, to make the world more equitable and just.

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Why we're here today...

- Public media is facing **unprecedented levels of disruption**
- Multiple **actions have been undertaken in 2025 aimed at defunding and destabilizing public media organizations**:
 - Termination of federal funding to CPB (through rescissions and/or budget cuts)
 - Restrictions on CPB funding to NPR/PBS (directly and indirectly)
 - Termination of Ready To Learn grants
 - Removal of CPB board members, and more
- The results of these actions remain unclear, but they all add uncertainty and impact your work
 - Blocks, delays, losses of funding
 - Strategic and operational pivots
 - Difficulty reaching people who need it most (e.g., rural areas)
- Lobbying efforts and challenges in court are unfolding, **driving confusion** amid a fluctuating legal landscape
- In moments like these, **scenario planning can help us make sense of uncertainty**



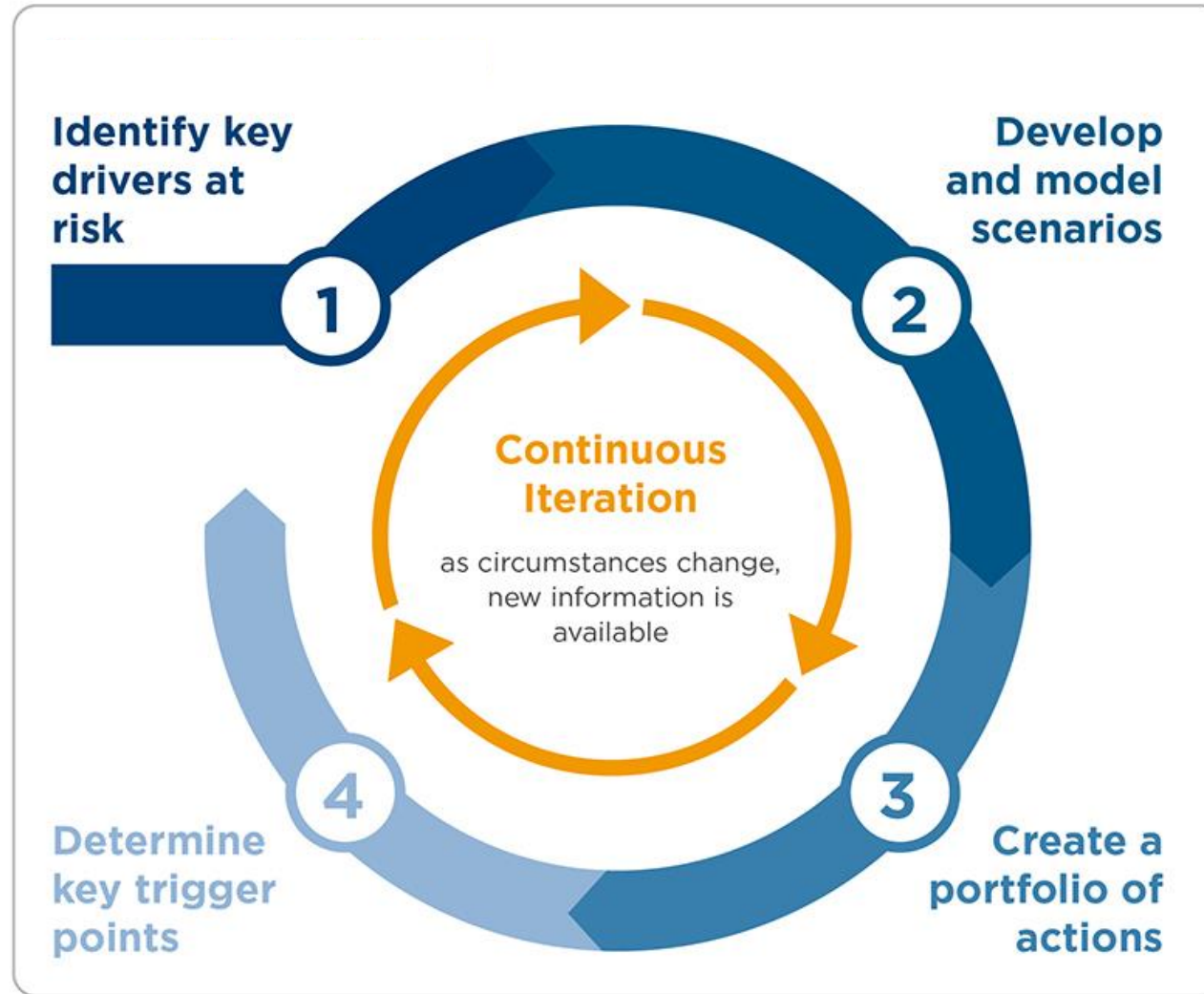


What's on your mind?



What is ONE of the key risks or uncertainties your organization is facing under the new administration?

Scenario planning provides structure to inform decisions amid uncertainty



Guiding principles help ensure decisions are rooted in your values

Categories of principles

Examples of guiding principles

Protect the mission



- We will find ways to safely and effectively **continue our core programs**
- We will **prioritize activities where there is greatest need** in the communities we serve

Put people first



- We will prioritize the **well-being of our people**
- We are invested in the **long-term careers** of our team members

Focus on financial resilience



- We will aggressively **protect revenue streams before cutting** critical expenses
- We will preserve the **long-term financial health** of our organization

STEP 1: Identify key drivers of impact and economics at risk

1

IDENTIFY KEY DRIVERS AT RISK

Develop and model scenarios

Create portfolio of actions

Determine key trigger points

- What are the primary **drivers of your impact and economics**?
- What are the **biggest risks / uncertainties** associated with them?



TIP: Don't get distracted by small stuff

PROGRAMS



OPERATIONS



FUNDING



STEP 1: Identify key drivers of impact and economics at risk [example]

		Likelihood?	Magnitude?
PROGRAMS	• Changing needs of the people you serve	<i>MED</i>	<i>MED</i>
	• Programmatic approach	<i>MED</i>	<i>HIGH</i>
	• Restrictions in doing the work	<i>LOW</i>	<i>MED</i>
	• External partners, e.g., PBS, NPR	HIGH	HIGH
OPERATIONS	• Threats of legal action	<i>LOW</i>	<i>MED</i>
	• Reputational risk	<i>LOW</i>	<i>MED</i>
	• Protecting core operations – systems, facilities, etc.	<i>LOW</i>	<i>HIGH</i>
	• Differentially affected staff	<i>LOW</i>	<i>MED</i>
	• Managing leadership and organizational capacity	HIGH	HIGH
FUNDING	• Government funding streams	HIGH	HIGH
	• Philanthropic funding	HIGH	HIGH
	• Earned revenue	<i>LOW</i>	<i>LOW</i>

STEP 2: Develop and model scenarios

2



- Construct **best-, moderate-, and worst-case scenarios** anchored in these key drivers and uncertainties, that reflect the full spectrum of possible outcomes
- **Translate these scenarios into their related budgetary impact**
- **Consider ~6-12-month time horizons** for each scenario to understand their potential impact



TIP: Don't underestimate



TIP: Precision isn't the goal

STEP 2: Develop and model scenarios [example]

		BEST CASE	MODERATE CASE	WORST CASE
Programs	External partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NPR and PBS lose a small portion of revenue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NPR and PBS lose a large portion of revenue
	Managing leadership and organizational capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nonprofit status threatened
Funding	Government funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No change in CPB funding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partial CPB funding is revoked 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Full CPB funding is revoked
	Philanthropic funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Philanthropic and corporate giving increases / stays the same 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Philanthropic and corporate giving stays the same 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Philanthropic and corporate giving decreases

STEP 3: Create a portfolio of actions

3



Appropriate for any scenario

“No regrets” actions with positive benefits under any scenario

Example: Review and determine if updates are needed to HR policies; secure a crisis communications resource; legal review

Smaller-scale, flexible “handbrakes”

Actions that can be executed quickly and reversed, if needed, as circumstances change

Example: Offer unpaid leave; temporarily reduce executive compensation

Larger and more permanent

Actions that reflect significant investments, cost reductions or operational changes

Example: Close a program site, lay off staff, or revise a strategy, based on political or funding changes

STEP 3: Create a portfolio of actions [example]

3

Action	Operational implications	Economic impact (cost) or savings	Category
1 Terminate lease on unused space		\$10,000	No regrets
2 Delay filling open positions	Redeploy current staff	\$150,000	No regrets
3 Increase food pantry hours	More volunteers	(\$5,000)	Flexible
4 Suspend 401K match		\$200,000	Flexible
5 Install security cameras		(\$6,000)	Flexible
6 Hire security guard		(\$30,000)	Flexible
7 Reduce management salary by 10%		\$25,000	Flexible
8 Furlough 10% of advocacy staff		\$50,000	Flexible
9 Lay off advocacy staff		\$450,000	Major
10 Lay off program staff (government program)	Need to address reduction in admin	\$500,000	Major
Total net savings			\$1,344,000

STEP 4: Create a portfolio of actions

4

Identify key
drivers at risk

Develop and model
scenarios

Create portfolio of actions

**DETERMINE KEY
TRIGGER POINTS**



Trigger point could be an **EVENT**

If CPB funding is revoked, we'll furlough staff



Trigger point could be a **DATE**

*By X date, we'll need to decide whether to move forward with
(or cancel) XX radio program*



TIP: Establish
(or update) your
decision processes and
roles so that you're
ready to act when
needed

What questions are on your mind?

We'll start by going through a few common questions that came up in the registration form but please continue to add your questions to the chat.

...about scenario planning in general

- How is this **different** from scenario planning during the **pandemic**?
- How can we **scenario plan or put together budgets** when there are so many moving targets and unknowns?
- What are **prioritization tools** that can help us make tough decisions?

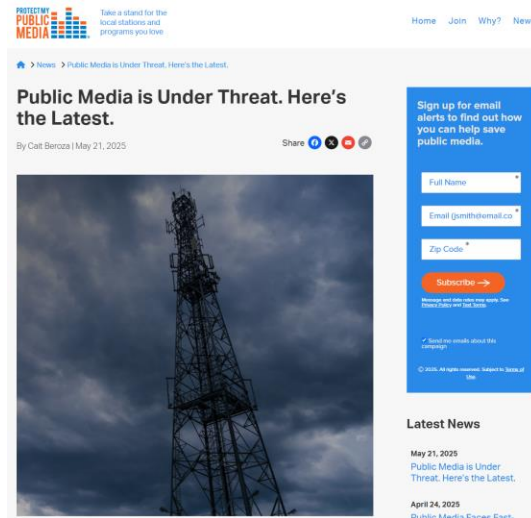
...about the public media sector, in particular

- What / how are stations **communicating** right now?
- What are other stations doing to prepare for **potential CPB funding cuts**?
- How do we continue to “aim high” and **expand services** when budgets are tight and under threat?
- What **partnerships and outside** help are making a difference?
- When and how do we go on the **offense** rather than just retreating?
- How can stations **outsource / share resources** and still stay local?
- What **best practices or data** can be shared?

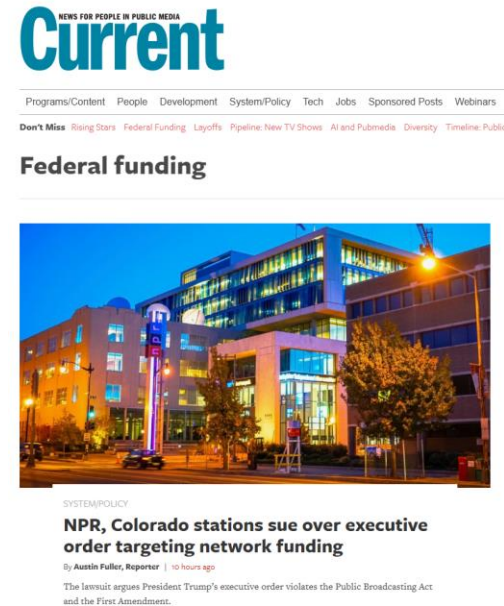
Getting started

- Talk to your Board and **senior team**, as relevant (don't do this alone!)
- Identify the **most important risks** facing your organization in this moment
 - Seek **outside expertise** (e.g., legal counsel) where needed to help **identify and mitigate risk**
- Start **codifying (or refining) the likely scenarios** you may encounter
- Don't wait on **"no regrets" actions**

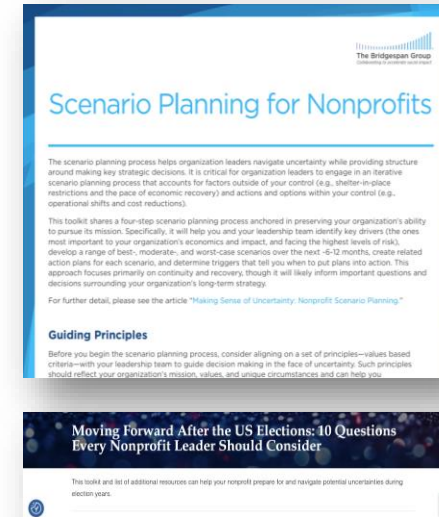
Additional resources



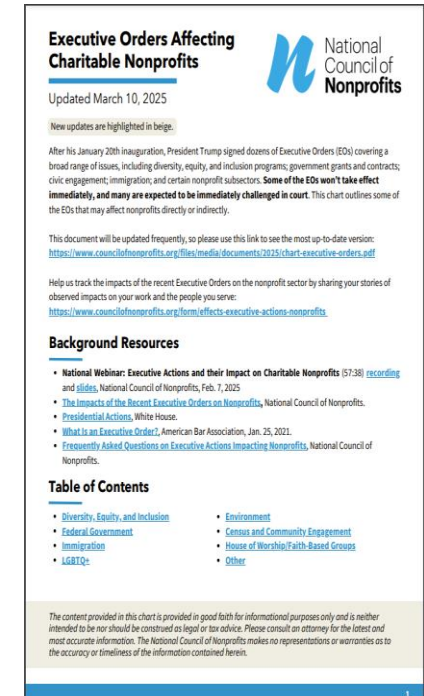
[Protect My Public Media](#) summarizes the latest threats



[Current](#) reports on recent federal funding (and other) developments



[Scenario Planning Toolkit](#) and [other resources](#) available on Bridgespan.org



[National Council of Nonprofits'](#) updated tracking of executive orders

Public Media Company Webinars

Public Media Company has begun hosting a series of informational webinars for public media General Managers and station leaders to help them stay on top of our ever-evolving media landscape.

Webinar will be available on PMC website for all to view

www.publicmedia.co/webinars

THANK YOU!

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Strengthening Local Media

