



• A DIAGNOSTIC FIELD TOOL • THE DRIFT TAX

Who actually owns communication *here?*

A self-assessment for teams whose work touches communication — but who aren't the communications staff.

In most small organizations, communication isn't one person's job. It happens in the seams — the program lead who forgets to flag an event, the development staffer sitting on a fundable story, the director whose field notes never reach anyone. No one is doing it wrong. The responsibility was simply never assigned.

• THIS IS THE DRIFT TAX

The quiet cost an organization pays when roles and authority around communication go unnamed. The questions below make that cost visible. Run them with any team whose work intersects with communication. The value is in noticing which ones you can't answer.

PART ONE The *Habits.*

Practices any team can adopt without a communications hire.

- 1 ☐ **Flag what's coming, early.**
Events, visits, meetings, launches, trips. Surface them at least two weeks ahead, wherever your team already tracks shared work.
- 2 ☐ **Share a weekly highlight — two or three sentences.**
"We wrapped a training session this week." "Had a strong first call with a partner office." Short is fine. Frequency matters more than polish.
- 3 ☐ **Ask: would anyone outside this room care?**
A funder, a participant, a policymaker, a journalist, a peer organization. If yes, it's worth surfacing — not burying in a team thread.
- 4 ☐ **Capture the raw material.**
A photo, a quote, a one-line anecdote. It doesn't have to be produced. The raw fragment is what later becomes a story.
- 5 ☐ **Name a point of contact.**
One person per team who connects to whoever holds communication. If no one holds it, that absence is itself the finding.

PART TWO The Questions, *by function.**Different functions leak communication value in different places. Ask these where the work lives.*

► Policy / Program

RESOURCES • THE FIELD RECORD

- ☐ Are we producing briefs, one-pagers, or talking points others should see?
- ☐ Is any internal or technical work being translated for an outside audience?
- ☐ Do we have new research, data, or findings worth featuring?
- ☐ Are we collaborating with partners whose work should be acknowledged?

► External / Gov Affairs

RELATIONSHIPS • THE PUBLIC RECORD

- ☐ Which offices or stakeholders have we met with or scheduled?
- ☐ Are we drafting letters, sign-ons, or testimony?
- ☐ Is there momentum or a response worth amplifying?
- ☐ Are there storytelling openings tied to our issue area?

► Development / Fundraising

RESOURCES • THE FUNDER VIEW

- ☐ Have we secured or pursued meetings with donors or funders?
- ☐ Are we preparing campaigns, asks, or thank-yous?
- ☐ Do we have narratives or visuals that show impact to funders?
- ☐ Should anyone be publicly recognized?

► Operations / Leadership

PRACTICES • THE WHOLE PICTURE

- ☐ Are there operational wins worth surfacing — growth, new staff, systems, progress?
- ☐ Do cross-team projects need visibility?
- ☐ What external engagements are happening — speaking, coalitions, op-eds, partnerships?
- ☐ Are there reflections from the field that could be repurposed for outreach?

PART THREE The Quick *Filter.**When you're unsure whether something belongs in front of an audience.*

ASK YOURSELF...	IF YES...
Will the public, funders, or partners see this?	→ <i>Surface it early.</i>
Does it reflect impact, growth, or credibility?	→ <i>Turn it into a quote or a post.</i>
Are there numbers, images, or voices involved?	→ <i>Route it for a newsletter or social.</i>
Could it build trust, pride, or engagement?	→ <i>Signal it to whoever holds communication.</i>

If your team couldn't answer some of these, the gap isn't effort — it's structure. This sheet surfaces one piece of the Drift Tax: the cost organizations carry when communication responsibility goes unassigned. **Strategy Lab Collective diagnoses where that cost lives and what holds it in place.**

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