

Comprehensive training

28 June – 21 July 2022

HOSTED BY GAVI, WHO, UNICEF & US CDC



Crisis Emergency Risk Communication and Science Communication in Uncertain Times

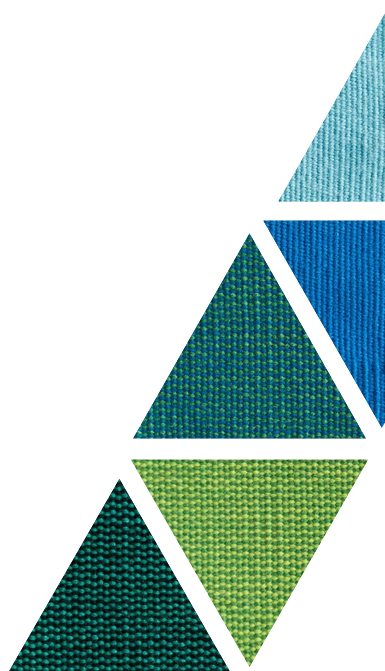
Richard Quartarone
Immunization Services Division
US CDC





Outline

- Introduction to CERC
- Principles of CERC
- Psychology of a crisis
- Principles of CERC
- Science Communication & Literacy
- Group exercise

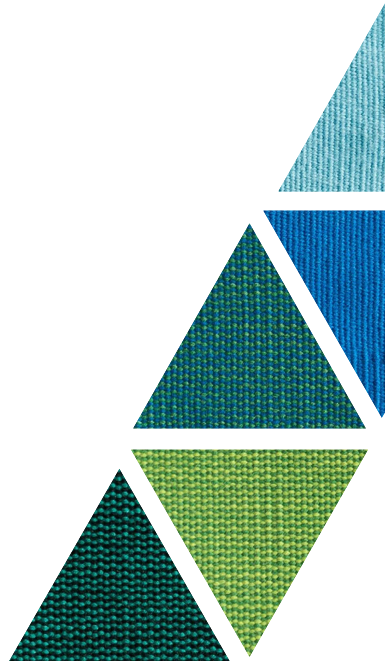




Learning objectives

Participants will:

1. Understand the basics of crisis and risk communication
2. Be able to apply CERC principles in their immunization work
3. Explain the importance of science literacy





Definitions

What is CERC?

- Crisis
- Emergency
- Risk
- Communication



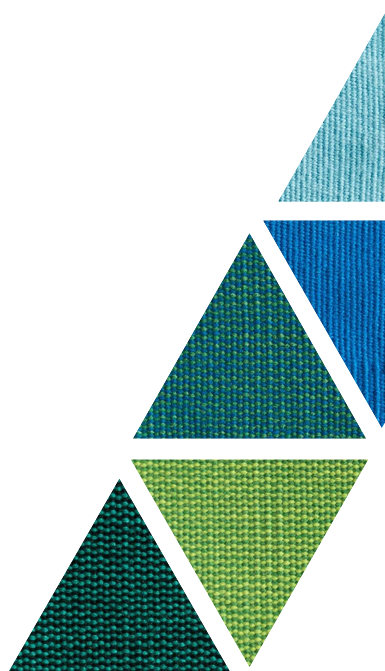


Problem statement



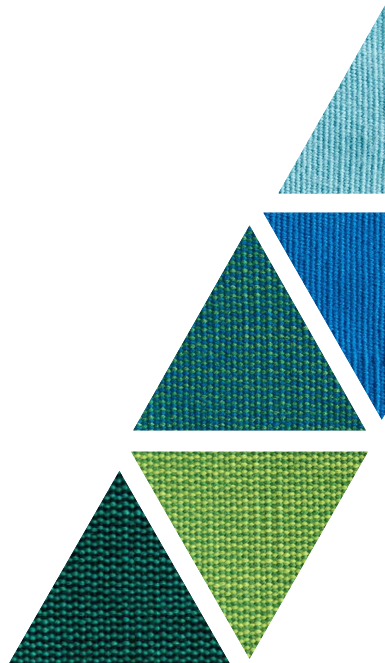
In a serious crisis affected people:

- Search for information differently
- Take in information differently
- Process information differently
- Act on information differently



How does our brain work under stress?

- We simplify & limit intake of information
- We cling to current beliefs
- We remember what we see or previously experience
- Look for additional information or opinions
- Panic myth???



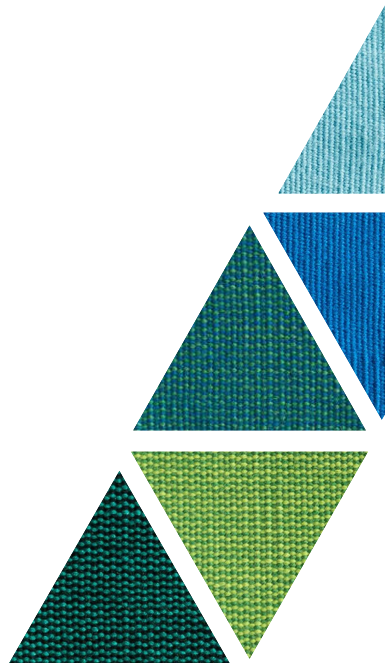
People under stress...

- Experience psychological barriers to our messages and messengers
 - Denial
 - Fear, anxiety, confusion, dread
 - Hopelessness or helplessness



Risk Communication

1. Create and maintain trust
2. Acknowledge and communicate even in uncertainty
3. Coordinate
4. Be transparent & fast with the first and all communications
5. Be proactive in public communication
6. Involve and engage those affected
7. Use integrated approaches
8. Build national capacity, support national ownership



6 Principles of CERC

1 

1. Be First: Crises are time-sensitive. Communicating information quickly is crucial. For members of the public, the first source of information becomes the preferred source.

2 

2. Be Right: Accuracy establishes credibility. Information can include what is known, what is not known, and what is being done to fill in the gaps.

3 

3. Be Credible: Honesty and truthfulness should not be compromised during a crisis.

4 

4. Express Empathy: Crises create harm and the suffering should be acknowledged in words. Addressing what people are feeling and the challenges they face builds trust and rapport.

5 

5. Promote Action: Giving people meaningful things to do calms anxiety, helps restore order, and promotes some sense of control.

6 

6. Show Respect: Respectful communication is particularly important when they are vulnerable. Respectful communication promote cooperation and rapport.





CERC Best practices

- Allow people the right to feel fear
- Don't over-reassure
- Acknowledge uncertainty
- Give people meaningful things to do
- Under-promise and over-deliver
- CERC is an approach to inform all public health activities



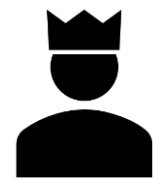
5 communications failures that kill operational success



1. Mixed messages from multiple experts



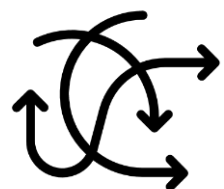
2. Information released late



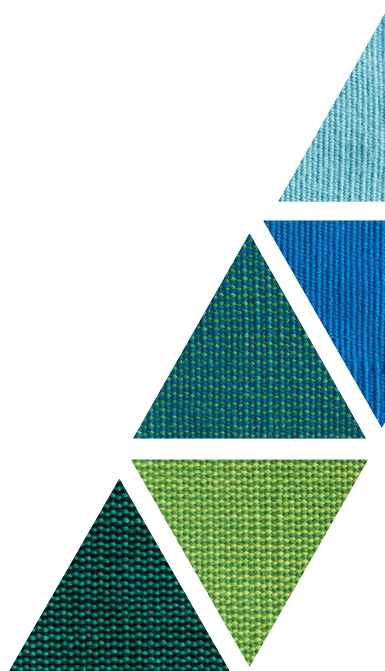
3. Paternalistic attitudes



4. Failing to counter rumors and myths in real-time



5. Public power struggles and confusion





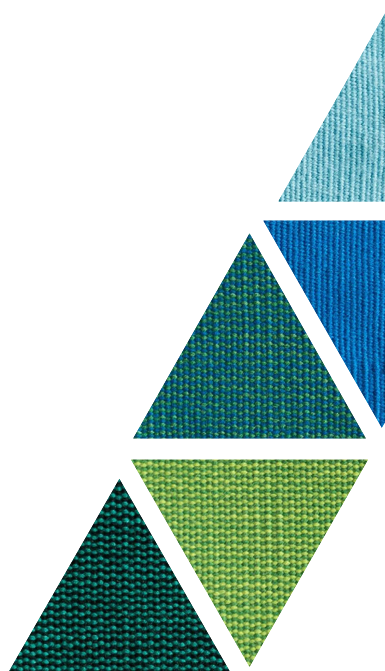
3 Truths from the field

The **right message...**

at the **right time...**

from the **right person** can **save lives.**

Dr. Barbara Reynolds
CDC CERC Author (Ret.)

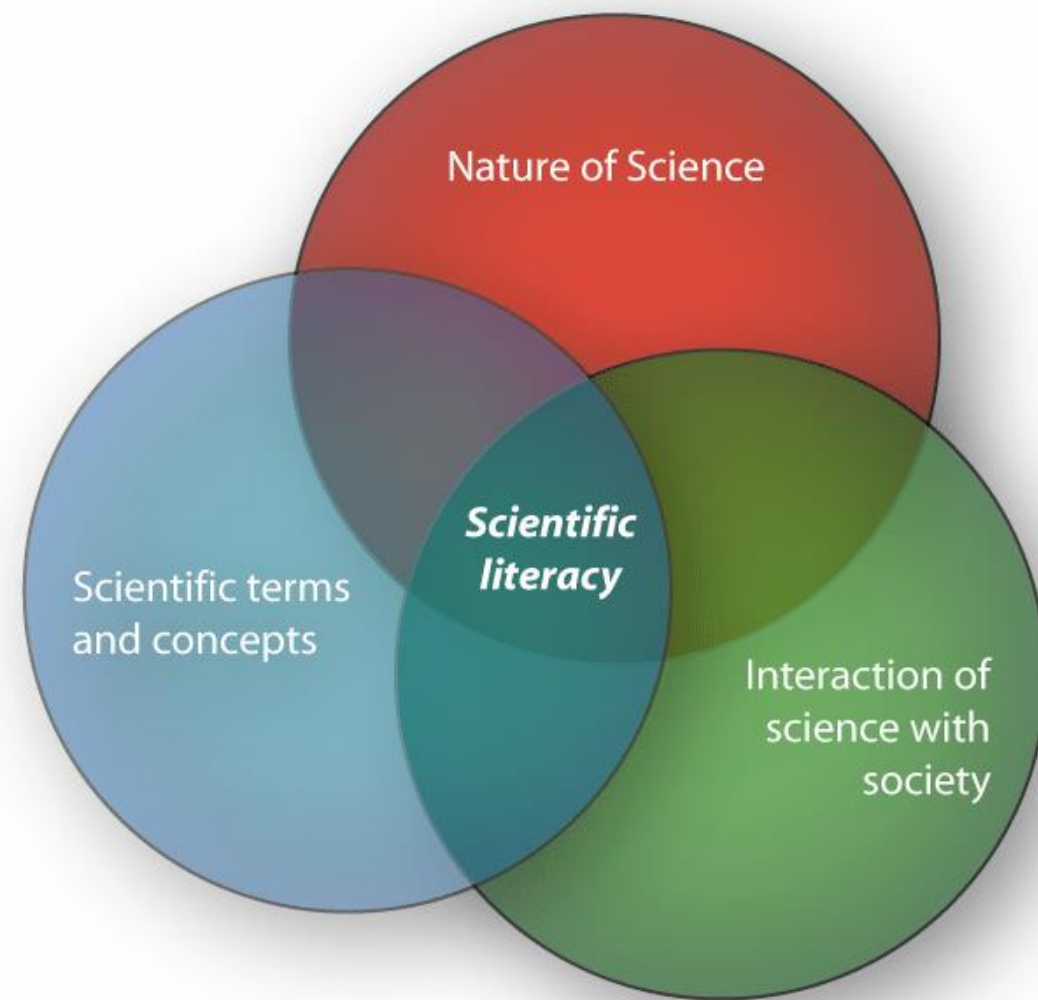




Science Communication and Literacy

What is science literacy?

Interacting elements of scientific literacy



Source: Murcia, 2006

= "familiarity with the enterprise and practice of **science**" (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine, 2016)

- Critical to understand scientific results and evidence-based recommendations
- Allows for judgment of the quality of scientific studies and results
- Enables integration of evidence into own judgment, decision-making and behavior

Relevance of science literacy for emergency preparedness & response

Emergencies are characterized by:

- High level of uncertainty
- High and imminent risk
- Emotionally loaded and high stakes
- Rapidly evolving science and overabundance of information (infodemic)

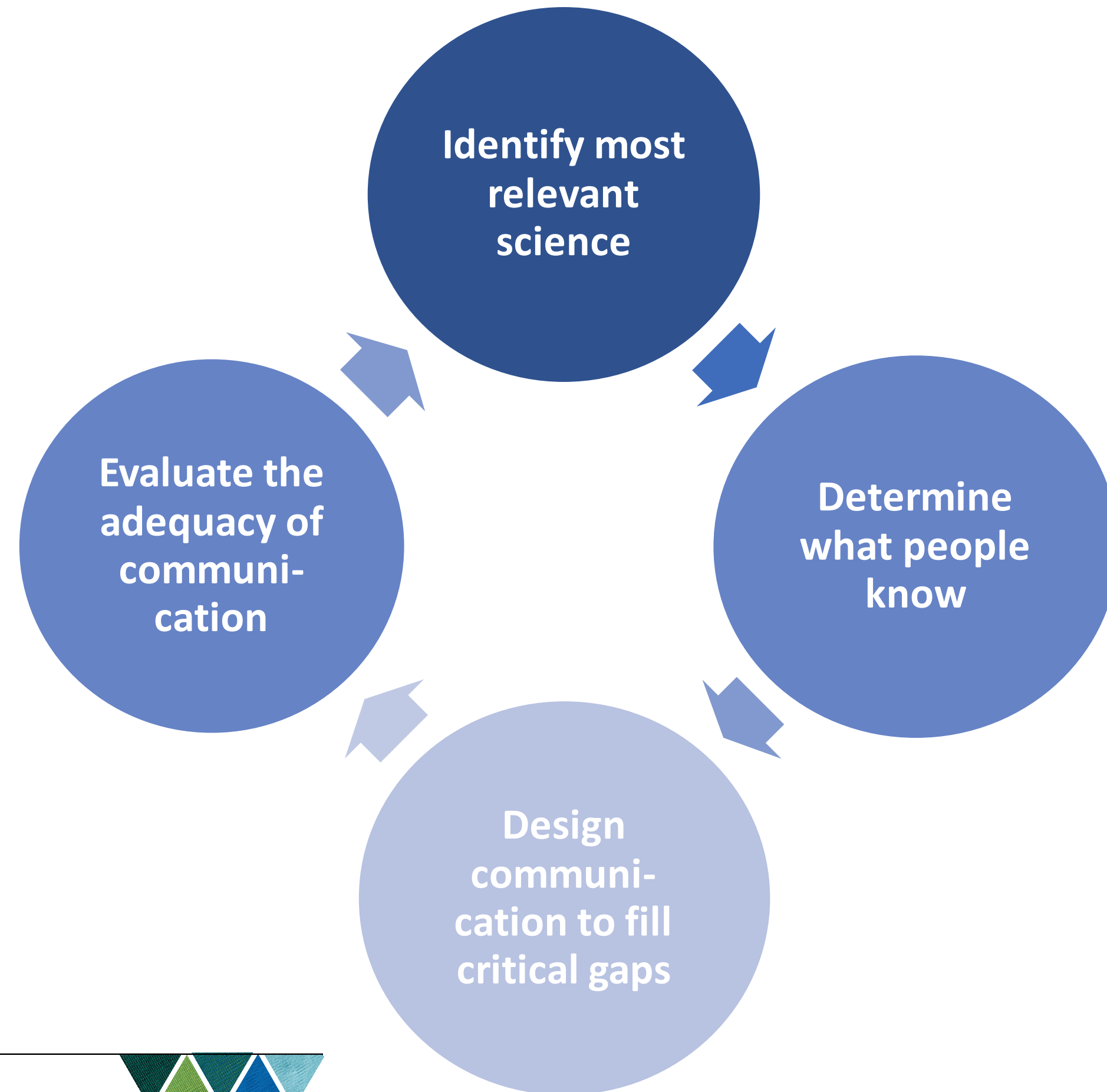
Science literacy acts like a protective umbrella:

- Facilitates understanding of the science underlying public health measures
- Reduces susceptibility to mis- and disinformation
- Promotes evidence-based judgments and decisions
- Facilitates uptake and adherence to evidence-based public health measures



Source: <https://tasteofsavoie.com/2019/05/15/le-flacon-carouge-geneva/>

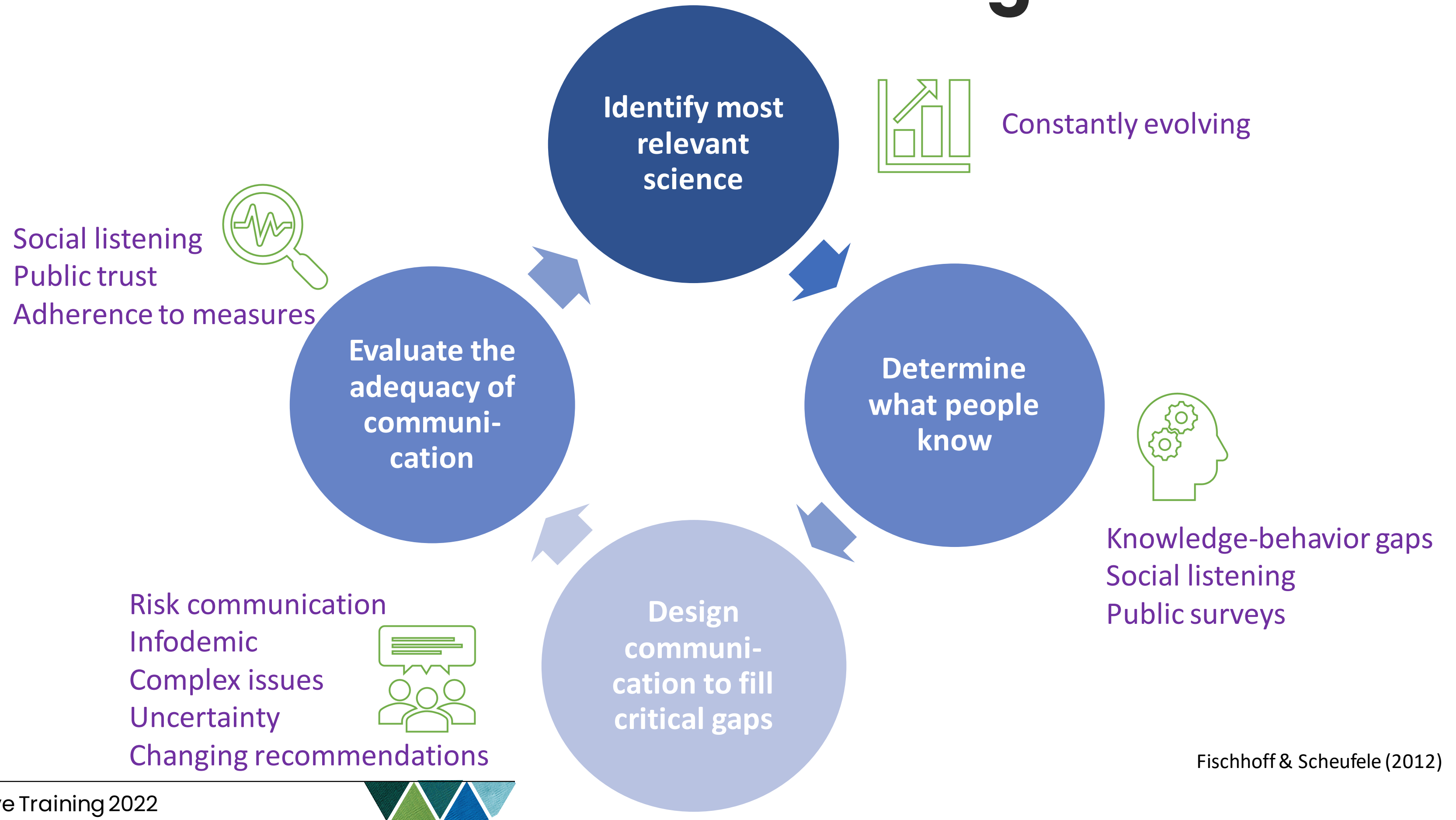
Science communication – the OBJECTIVES



Fischhoff & Scheufele (2012)



Science communication during COVID-19



Fischhoff & Scheufele (2012)



Metrics and evaluation

When the crisis is over, it is important to evaluate the performance of the communication plan, document lessons learned, and determine specific actions to improve crisis systems or the crisis plan. A crisis is a very important learning opportunity. Failure to learn the lessons from it increases the chance of a failed response in the future. It is easy for us to focus on the level of tactics and implementation and not consider our overall communication strategy. When the crisis is over:

- Evaluate responses, including communication effectiveness.
- Document and communicate lessons learned—what worked and where were the challenges?
- Determine specific actions to improve crisis communication and crisis response capability.
- Create linkages to pre-crisis activities



Communications activities at different levels of engagement



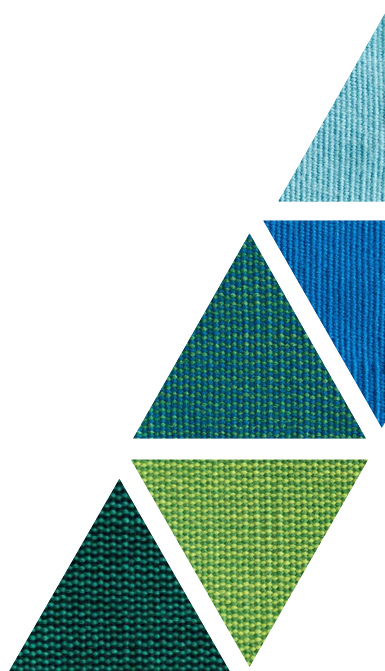
- Website updates
- Social media updates
- Press releases

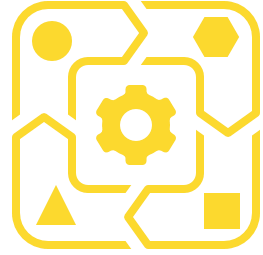


- Newsletters
- Email blasts
- Microsite for web syndication
- Radio PSAs
- Factsheets & billboards



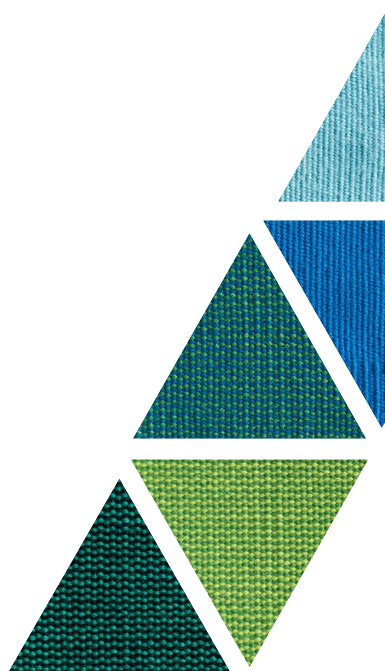
- Advisory groups
- Community forums
- Hotlines
- Press conferences & telebriefings





Resources

- Crisis & Emergency Risk Communication (CERC): <https://emergency.cdc.gov/cerc/>
- Emergencies: Risk communication: <https://www.who.int/emergencies/risk-communications>
- EPI-WIN: WHO Information Network for Epidemics: <https://www.who.int/teams/epi-win>
- WHO global conference on communicating science: <https://www.who.int/news/item/06-07-2021-who-global-conference-on-communicating-science-during-health-emergencies-sparks-enormous-public-interest>



Group work



Discuss with your group how these CERC principles can be put into practice to increase confidence in COVID-19 vaccines.

What actions could you take to:

- Be First
- Be Right
- Be Credible
- Show Respect

- 1**  **Be First:**
Crises are time-sensitive. Communicating information quickly is crucial. For members of the public, the first source of information often becomes the preferred source.
- 2**  **Be Right:**
Accuracy establishes credibility. Information can include what is known, what is not known, and what is being done to fill in the gaps.
- 3**  **Be Credible:**
Honesty and truthfulness should not be compromised during crises.
- 4**  **Express Empathy:**
Crises create harm, and the suffering should be acknowledged in words. Addressing what people are feeling, and the challenges they face, builds trust and rapport.
- 5**  **Promote Action:**
Giving people meaningful things to do calms anxiety, helps restore order, and promotes some sense of control.³
- 6**  **Show Respect:**
Respectful communication is particularly important when people feel vulnerable. Respectful communication promotes cooperation and rapport.



Extra slides

Science communication – the WHAT and WHY

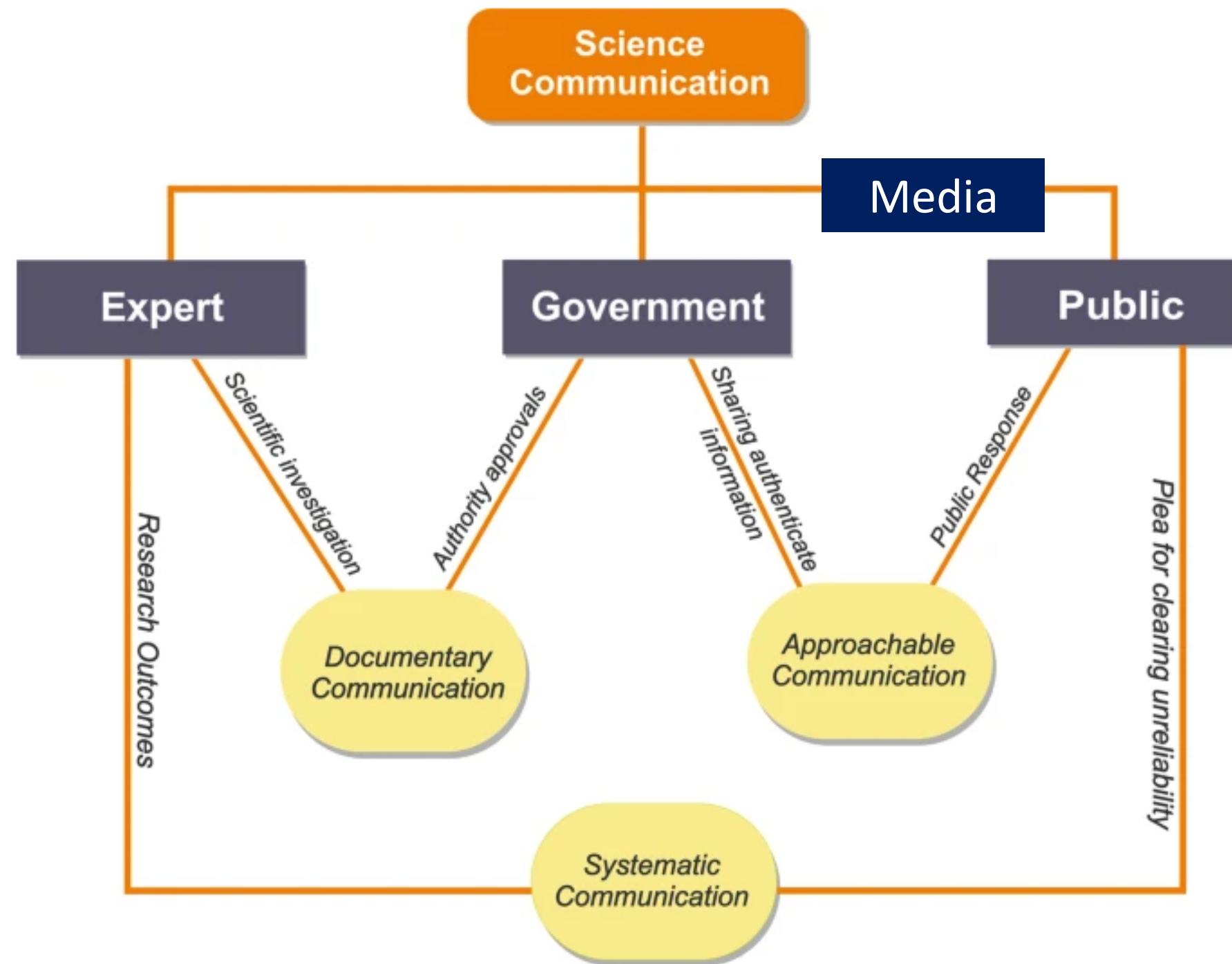
“The **use of appropriate skills, media, activities, and dialogue** to produce one or more of the following personal responses to science:

- **Awareness**, including familiarity with new aspects of science;
- **Enjoyment** or other affective responses, e.g. appreciating science as entertainment or art;
- **Interest**, as evidenced by voluntary involvement with science or its communication;
- **Opinions**, the forming, reforming, or confirming of science-related attitudes;
- **Understanding** of science, its content, processes, and social factors.”

Burns et al. (2003)



Science communication – Building bridges



A model defining science communication between Government, Expert and Public t (Zhang et al., 2020).

Source: Matta, G. Science communication as a preventative tool in the COVID19 pandemic. Humanit Soc Sci Commun 7, 159 (2020).

