



THE
PUBLIC GOOD
INSTITUTE

Learning in Service of Tomorrow.

CHECKLIST

Public Trust Under Pressure Checklist

A practical tool for organizations responding to complaints, incidents, scrutiny, service failures, data issues, AI errors, or trust breakdowns.

Prepared by The Public Good Institute

Learning in Service of Tomorrow

PUBLIC RESOURCE | 2026 Launch Library



Purpose

Public trust is not built by saying "trust us." It is built through practice: how organizations communicate, document, respond, learn, repair, and change after pressure, complaints, incidents, errors, or scrutiny.

Use this tool when...

There is an incident, complaint, public concern, service failure, media scrutiny, funder concern, board escalation, internal whistleblowing concern, community conflict, data issue, AI error, or trust breakdown.

First 24 Hours: Stabilize and Clarify

Done	Trust Action	Notes
☐	What happened, and what do we know for sure?	Notes / owner / due date
☐	Who may be affected or at risk?	Notes / owner / due date
☐	What immediate safety, privacy, service, or communication steps are required?	Notes / owner / due date
☐	What must be preserved, documented, or escalated?	Notes / owner / due date
☐	Who is responsible for coordinating the response?	Notes / owner / due date

Truth and Transparency

Done	Trust Action	Notes
☐	What can be shared now, and what cannot yet be confirmed?	Notes / owner / due date
☐	Are we clearly distinguishing facts, assumptions, and unknowns?	Notes / owner / due date
☐	Are we avoiding defensive, vague, or minimizing language?	Notes / owner / due date
☐	Are affected people receiving information before others where appropriate?	Notes / owner / due date
☐	Are we communicating with dignity, accountability, and care?	Notes / owner / due date

Documentation and Evidence

Done	Trust Action	Notes
☐	Are key decisions and timelines being recorded?	Notes / owner / due date

Done	Trust Action	Notes
[]	Are source records preserved without alteration?	Notes / owner / due date
[]	Are we documenting the rationale for immediate actions?	Notes / owner / due date
[]	Are we avoiding speculation, blame, or unnecessary personal detail?	Notes / owner / due date
[]	Can a future reader understand what was known, done, decided, and why?	Notes / owner / due date

Learning and Repair

Done	Trust Action	Notes
[]	What contributed to the issue?	Notes / owner / due date
[]	What policy, practice, supervision, documentation, training, staffing, or governance issue needs attention?	Notes / owner / due date
[]	What does accountability require beyond apology?	Notes / owner / due date
[]	What changes will be made, by whom, and by when?	Notes / owner / due date
[]	How will the organization know the change worked?	Notes / owner / due date

Public Trust Language Bank

Use language that...	Example
Names responsibility	We are reviewing what happened, what should have happened, and what must change.
Avoids premature certainty	At this stage, these are the facts we can confirm.
Centers affected people	Our first priority is the safety, dignity, privacy, and wellbeing of those affected.
Commits to action	We will provide a further update once the immediate review is complete and the next steps are confirmed.

Source Notes

These Public Good Institute resources are original educational and implementation materials. They are informed by public policy, governance, workforce, digital government, and Indigenous data governance sources, including the following:

Government of Canada - AI Strategy for the Federal Public Service 2025-2027

<https://www.canada.ca/en/government/system/digital-government/digital-government-innovations/responsible-use-ai/gc-ai-strategy-overview.html>

Canada - National Artificial Intelligence Strategy: AI for All

<https://ised-isde.canada.ca/site/ised/en/canadas-national-artificial-intelligence-strategy-ai-all>

Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat - Directive on Automated Decision-Making

<https://www.tbs-sct.canada.ca/pol/doc-eng.aspx?id=32592>

Government of Canada - Guide on the use of generative artificial intelligence

<https://www.canada.ca/en/government/system/digital-government/digital-government-innovations/responsible-use-ai/guide-use-generative-ai.html>

OECD - Governing with Artificial Intelligence

https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/governing-with-artificial-intelligence_795de142-en.html

FNIGC - The First Nations Principles of OCAP

<https://fnigc.ca/ocap-training/>

Health Canada - Pan-Canadian AI for Health Guiding Principles

<https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/corporate/transparency/health-agreements/pan-canadian-ai-guiding-principles.html>

Health Canada - Reduced administrative burden: Nursing retention toolkit

<https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/health-care-system/health-human-resources/nursing-retention-toolkit-improving-working-lives-nurses/reduced-administrative-burden.html>

Imagine Canada - People First: A Portrait of Canada's Nonprofit Workforce

<https://imaginecanada.ca/en/research/people-first-canada-nonprofit-workforce>

Important Use Note

This resource is for learning, planning, governance, and implementation support. It is not legal advice, privacy advice, procurement advice, clinical advice, or a substitute for organization-specific professional review. Organizations should adapt all tools to their legal, regulatory, contractual, cultural, community, and operational context.