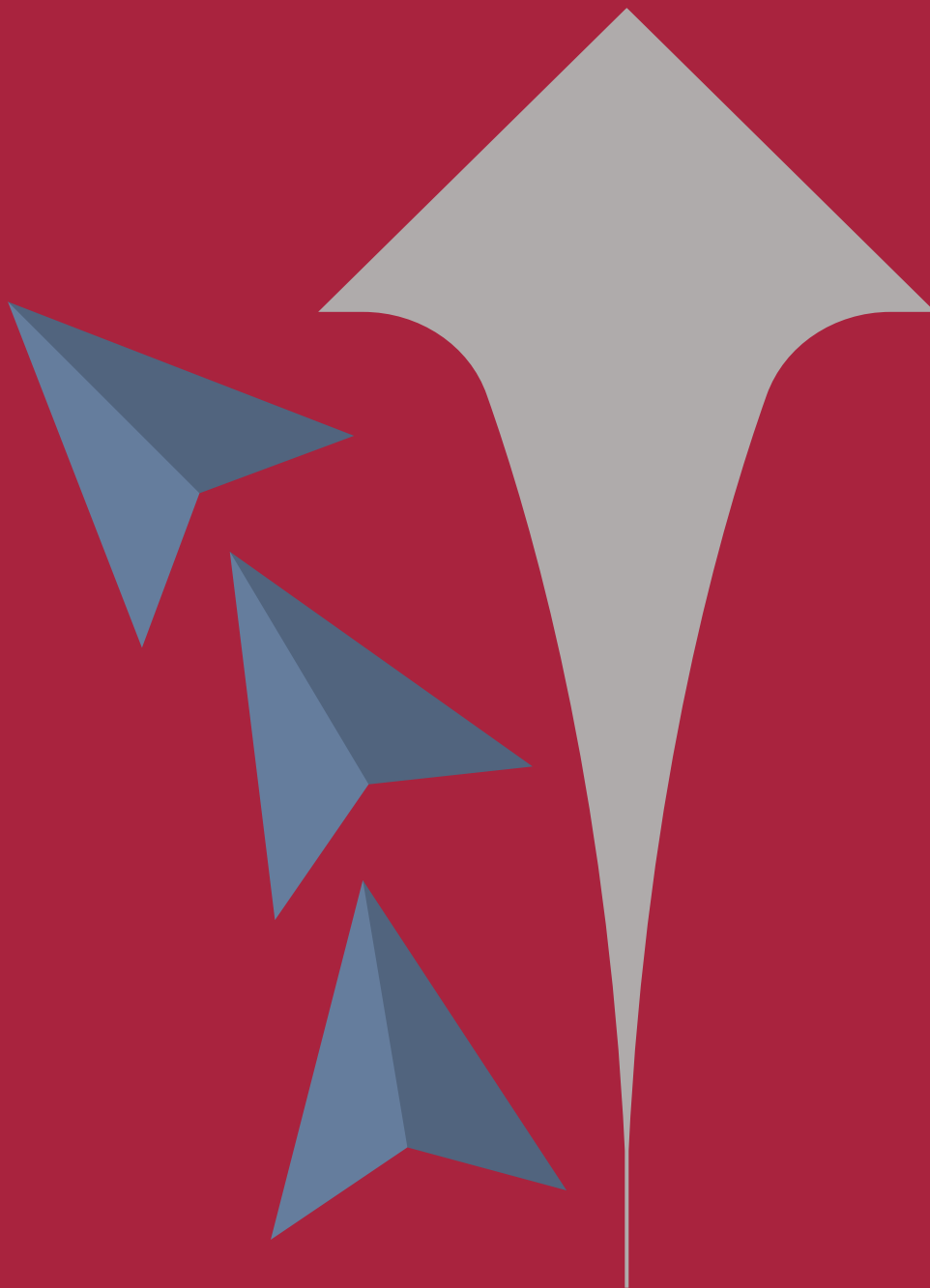


# Navigating Resistance



2022 Summer Evaluation Institute

# What can resistance to organizational change look like?



*The table that follows describes the resistances that may show up, the cause, and the response.*

Like how people can change, organizations can change as well. However, the evolution of these organizations is not always met with a positive response. In many scenarios, workers may reject organizational change and instead choose to resist it. There are five major types of change resistance regarding organizations; passive change resistance, active change resistance, attachment change resistance, uncertainty change resistance, and overload change resistance. Each of these types of resistances arises due to various causes and various responses. When researching change resistance, it's crucial to recognize the need in the context of purpose and ask questions such as "what is the real need?" and "Why are we here?" before deciding to do something new or different.

# Navigating Resistance



Type	Cause	Response
Passive change resistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Response to a threat activates fear in the brain.</li> <li>Fear can be manifested in four different behaviors: fight, flight, freeze, or freak-out.</li> <li>When someone displays passive resistance, you see a 'flight' or 'freeze' response (hide or move away from the threat not to be affected)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Silence isn't always acceptance. The most silent may be struggling the most internally.</li> <li>Threats are not the only factor that activates fear; imagined threats may also cause fear.</li> <li>The goal is to make sure they don't create their fear by imagining negative impacts from the change.</li> <li>Imagined negative consequences are the first and most strong threat responses</li> <li>Encourage people to externalize their thoughts so they can find a more realistic and balanced perspective</li> <li>One-on-one conversations OR conversations in group environments can help people to externalize.</li> </ul>
Active change resistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Active resistance is often triggered by a threat that they want to "fight" to eliminate.</li> <li>The change can cause them to lose control or feel unfairly treated. In response, active resistance attempts to reassert some lost autonomy.</li> <li>It can also pose a risk to something they hold dear (e.g., a threat to status, job, intellect) or conflict with something with a hold over their beliefs or priorities.</li> <li>Active change-resistant behaviors can be viewed as change progress or when the impact of the change is imminent.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understanding the potential threat your proposed change may present for people is crucial. It may vary from person to person, so reflect on this question early in your planning.</li> <li>If the threat is real, the best approach is to surface it with them and explore together how it can be addressed. However, in some cases, the threat is imagined, and getting close to active change resisters early in the process enables you to understand their perceived concern better.</li> <li>Externalizing one's thoughts allows them to reflect on them with greater clarity and realize a more balanced perspective. By addressing fight responses early, frankly, and directly they lose most of their aggression.</li> <li>To avoid heightening the tension, resist the urge of "fighting" back.</li> </ul>
Attachment change resistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strong sense of ownership for existing practices/processes</li> <li>Strong emotional ties to it or passionate about the "values" in it. May also connect it with their success</li> <li>Brain can't hold 2 conflicting views simultaneously (anchoring bias, confirmation bias), this makes it very difficult for them to see the need for change, or to have a positive response to a replacement process.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>These people genuinely believe in the current process, making them unconsciously "blind" to what others may see as the drivers for change.</li> <li>No amount of argument about the process will convince them. Your best approach is igniting a fresh reflection on the root problem you are trying to address.</li> <li>You want to build from first principles, looking at it all 'as if for the first time.'</li> <li>You can only loosen the grip of the "anchoring bias" and the "confirmation bias" by not triggering them in the first place.</li> <li>The goal is to create a whole new neural network around a new solution to provide the basics to form a new picture.</li> </ul>

# Navigating Resistance



Type	Cause	Response
Overload change resistance	<p><b>Change is common in most workplaces now.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>While change is 'normal', the amount of change in life isn't as constant as that experienced in organizations.</li> <li>Fast pace, series of changes, busy schedules, and change' is like the last grain of sand toppling the dune.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In many cases, you are trying to introduce your specific change with no influence over the other changes that are contributing to the stress.</li> <li>The real cause of resistance to your particular change proposition is that people have reached the limit of their attention resources and have nothing to give.</li> <li>Pushing back is a natural reaction to stop the flow of information that is fighting for attention.</li> <li>Slim chance of becoming "priority one," you should work with positive attention grabbers, build personal connections, and focus on positive outcomes that help them. Most importantly, be present with them and what is going on in their world so you can see your window of opportunity and get your timing right for pushing your change forward.</li> </ul>
Conflict Entrepreneur <sup>2</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>People who inflame conflict for their ends. Sometimes they do this for profit, but more often for attention or power. They don't exist in every organization, more common in certain workplaces, such as hospitals, universities, and political or advocacy organizations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Know when to pause. Know when to disengage. Focus on feeding the narrative and culture you want to grow in your organization.</li> <li>Scope the importance of this relationship in the context of your organization. Gauge what depth of interaction might be needed in relation to the ultimate goal---advancing equity in your organization through behaviors and actions.</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> Note: some people can experience a 'grief' response when change replaces something strongly invested in. Strong emotional reactions might be an indicator of this response. Be conscious of reasons that might make them strongly attached; here's a simple overview of how the stages of grief might apply to an organizational change situation.

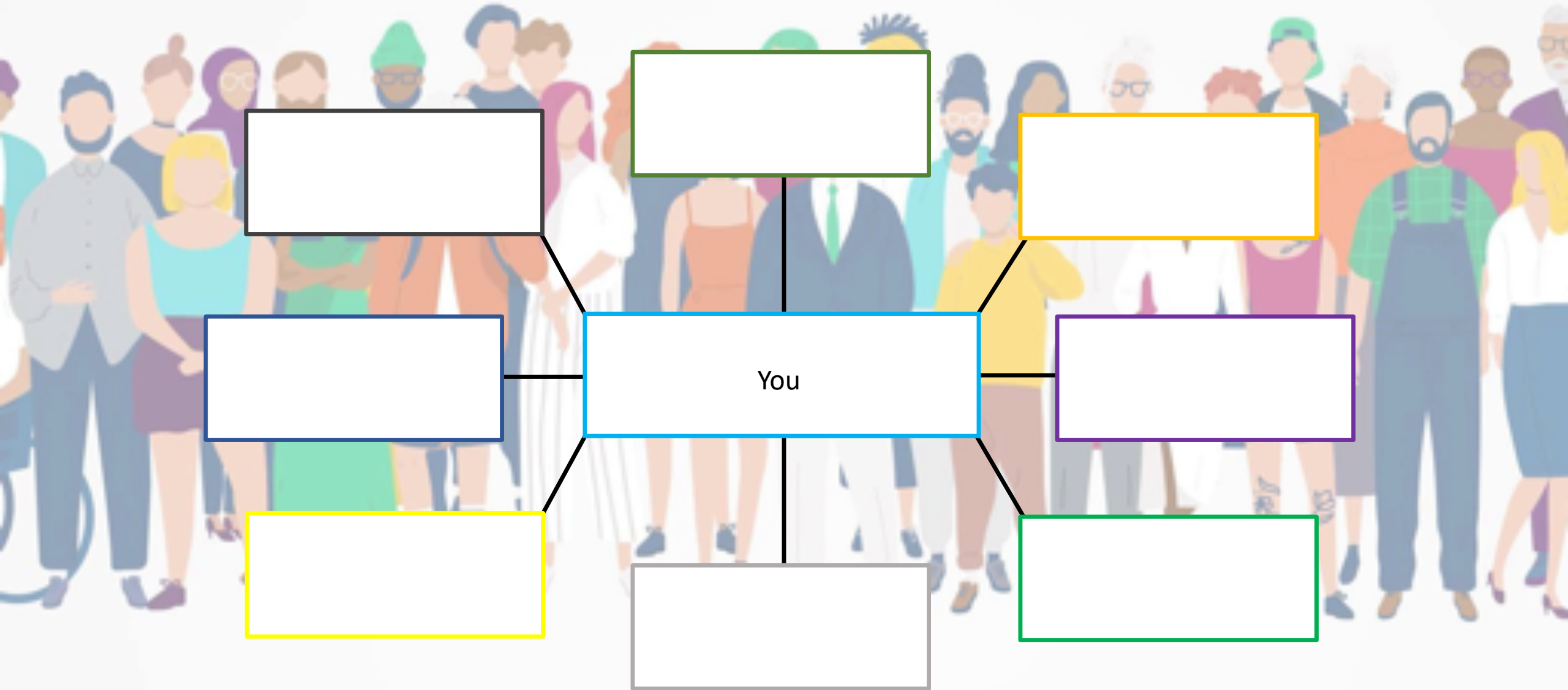
<sup>2</sup> Note (threat, risk, danger, urgency) will work, but only for a short and immediate need. If used when the driver is not truly critical or used for too long, you will only exacerbate the stress and lose people's confidence.



## Before You Begin Ask Yourself

- What are your current connections and relationships?
- Where do I need to challenge my mental models?
- How and what areas do I need to educate myself?

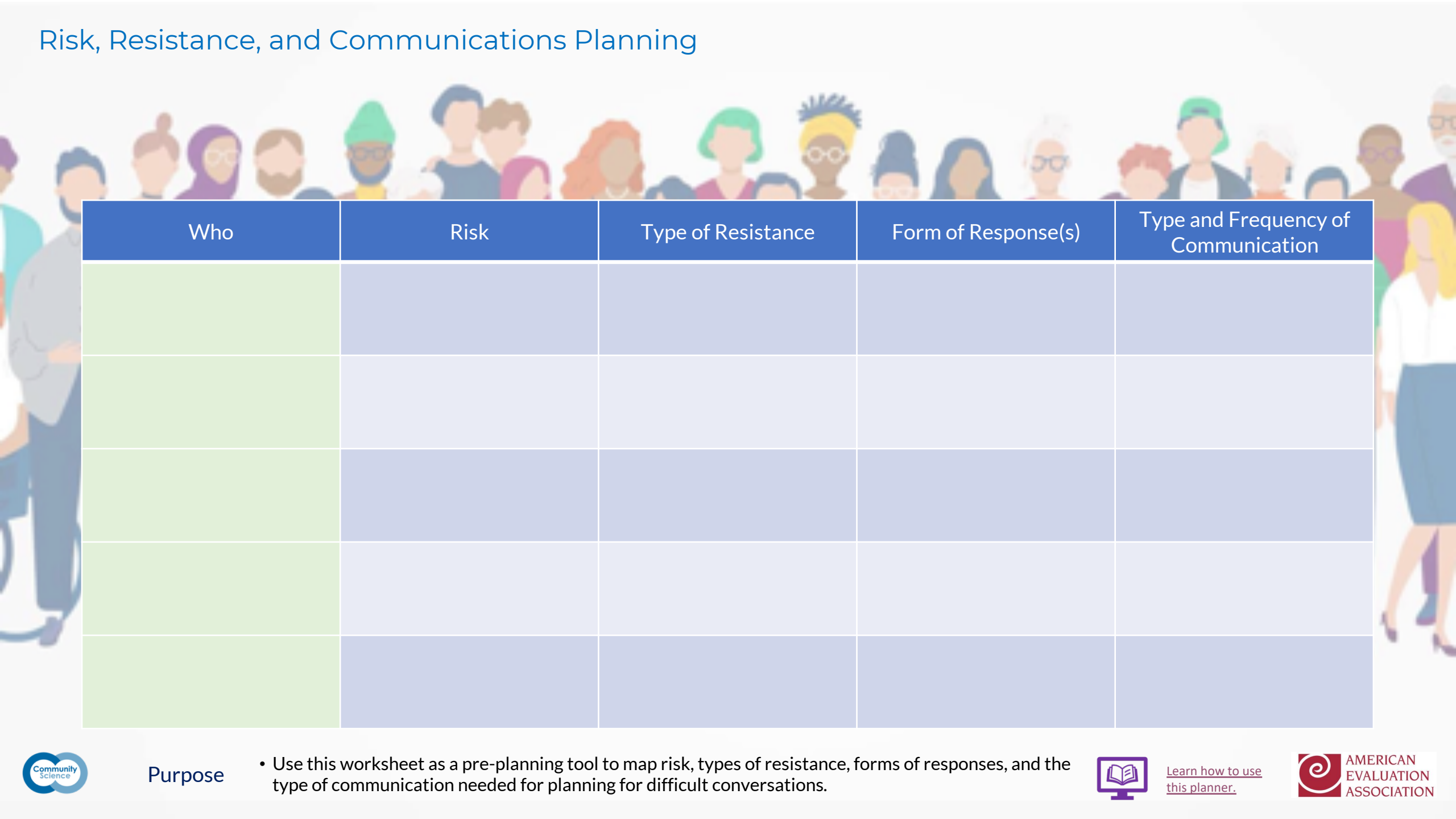
# Scoping Relationships: Your Work



## Questions to Ask Yourself

- What mental models shaped on concepts of workplace culture?
- Where are my agency identities?
- Where are my target identities?

# Risk, Resistance, and Communications Planning



Who	Risk	Type of Resistance	Form of Response(s)	Type and Frequency of Communication



## Purpose

- Use this worksheet as a pre-planning tool to map risk, types of resistance, forms of responses, and the type of communication needed for planning for difficult conversations.



[Learn how to use this planner.](#)





# Navigating Resistance



**Amber Trout, PhD, MPH**, Managing Associate has expertise in organizational and leadership development, change management, and capacity building of nonprofit and philanthropic sectors, emphasizing awareness of context as a crucial component to advance equity and inclusivity in organizations and in the communities they serve. Amber is an experienced facilitator in racial equity and organizational change to promote systemic transformation at the leadership, organization, and community levels. At Community Science, she manages the evaluation of the Racial Equity Anchor Collaborative, composed of nine national racial justice organizations to improve the education, health, and economic security of children of color through enhanced civic engagement, disaggregated data, and cross-racial messaging. She manages the evaluation of the Bush Foundation's Change Network, a new cohort style leadership program that started with the goal of helping leaders in Minnesota, North Dakota, and South Dakota to build their skills toward effectively leading systems change. Additionally, she manages the development of an organizational learning agenda for the Institute for Nonprofit Practices (INP) where she manages the daily implementation to define INP's learning agenda, develop the evaluation framework and data collection strategies, as well as provide capacity training.

Previously, Amber served as the director of the Race, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Initiative (REDI) at NeighborWorks America. She also led the REDI National Advisory committee of executive directors of community development and their equity teams to create action plans to advance equity and inclusiveness. She has been a university instructor in urban planning and public health, community health practitioner in multiple communities, incorporating health education, community planning, place-making strategies, and community engagement and planning. She was also a fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, Emerging Leaders in Science & Society. Amber has been a community health faculty member at Western Washington University and earned her Master of Public Health in environmental health from Drexel University and PhD in the built environments from the University of Washington.

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**Jasmine Williams-Washington, Ph.D.**, Associate, specialty is in implementing and evaluating community organizing and organizational capacity building initiatives. Her organizational capacity-building strategy is grounded in community organizing principles from over a decade of organizing experience, using community and organizational power to make systemic change. She also has experience in quantitative and qualitative data analyses, including thematic and grounded theory analyses. Professionally, she has a variety of experience with evaluations including, developmental, summative, and programmatic evaluations.

At Community Science, Dr. Williams-Washington has over six years of facilitation experience, during which time she has facilitated the process of gaining consensus on organizational strategic plans. She also has assisted organizations in developing logic models and measurement frameworks that reflect the program goals and the larger organizational goals of a variety of organizations (e.g., economic development and workforce development). She is the lead evaluation capacity builder on the Kellogg Foundation's Place-based Evaluation, for which she provides evaluation capacity building TA to grantees in Mississippi and New Orleans. In this capacity, she has developed training, technical assistance, and supporting materials and conducted a variety of capacity-building efforts to increase the capacity of community organizations to collect and utilize data for assessment, planning, and evaluation. Dr. Williams-Washington is a member of the core evaluation team for the Central Valley Community Foundation Community Engagement Plan, facilitating community conversations on shifting power to residents on community and economic development strategies in Fresno. Additionally, she has served as a coach and thought partner to leaders and staff leading equity as they navigate the cultural and power dynamics required for implementation. Dr. Williams-Washington serves as the deputy project director on the equity strategy development and implementation process for Banyan Communications. She also skillfully conducts site visits, interviews, focus groups, and data analysis for several of Community Science's community development projects.

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