



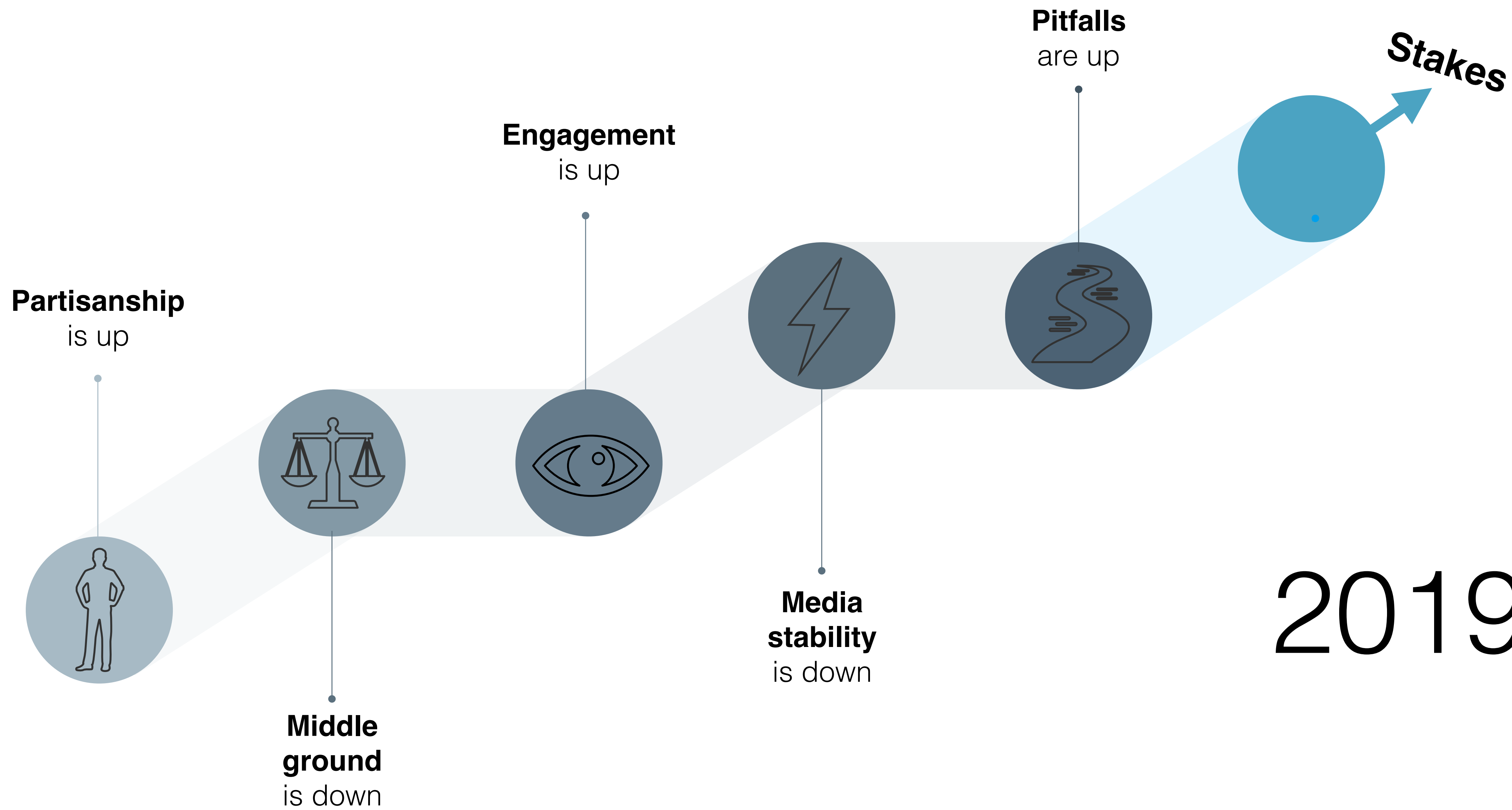
MESSAGING AND THE MEDIA: PART 2

NCSHA ANNUAL CONFERENCE | OCTOBER 2019

AGENDA

- ▶ 2019 Landscape
- ▶ Delivering Your Message
- ▶ Overcoming Challenge
- ▶ Speaking with Authority

THE LANDSCAPE



But...

Opportunity is abundant.

DELIVERING
YOUR MESSAGE

DELIVERING YOUR MESSAGE



Discovery

Planning

Execution

Measurement

Interviews + documents

Media audits

Landscape analysis

Strategies

Messaging

Tactics

Media relations

Social and content

Events

Targets

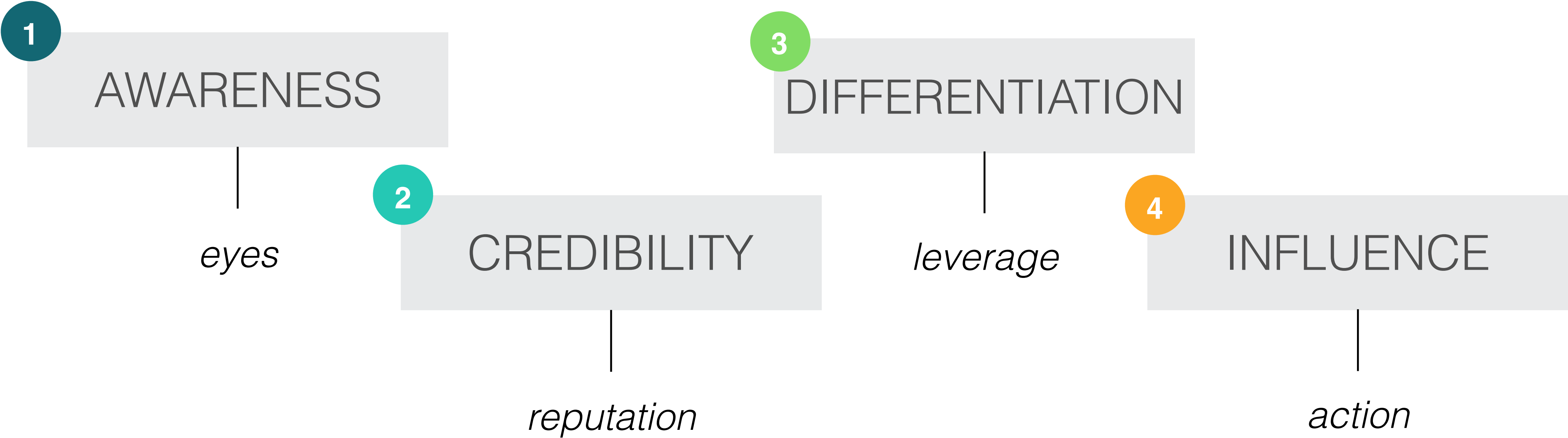
Metrics

Ongoing assessment

What's your objective?

↳ organizational/programmatic **first**... then PR

DELIVERING YOUR MESSAGE



Who are your audiences?



What's your message?

↳ Start with *why* (not what).

How are you delivering the message?

MEDIA	SOCIAL	PUBLISHING	EVENTS
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Credibility	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Directness	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Control	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Engagement
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Reach	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Flexibility	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Depth	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Authority
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Control	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Scaling	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Reach	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Cost

Gaining traction in affordable housing

- ☒ Publicize property events and deal closings.
- ☒ Be a resource for commentary.
- ☒ Write letters to the editor.
- ☒ Partner with an unlikely ally on an op-ed.
- ☒ Release new data.

OVERCOMING CHALLENGE

What's a PR hazard?

OVERCOMING CHALLENGE



GLOBAL

An external circumstance that runs counter to your mission and affects many organizations.



DIRECT

An external circumstance that specifically threatens your organization — often related to funding or operations.



INTERNAL

An internal circumstance that has the potential to produce unfavorable public outcomes.

OVERCOMING CHALLENGE



GLOBAL

- Policy changes
- HUD developments
- Broad funding cuts
- Public opinion shifts



DIRECT

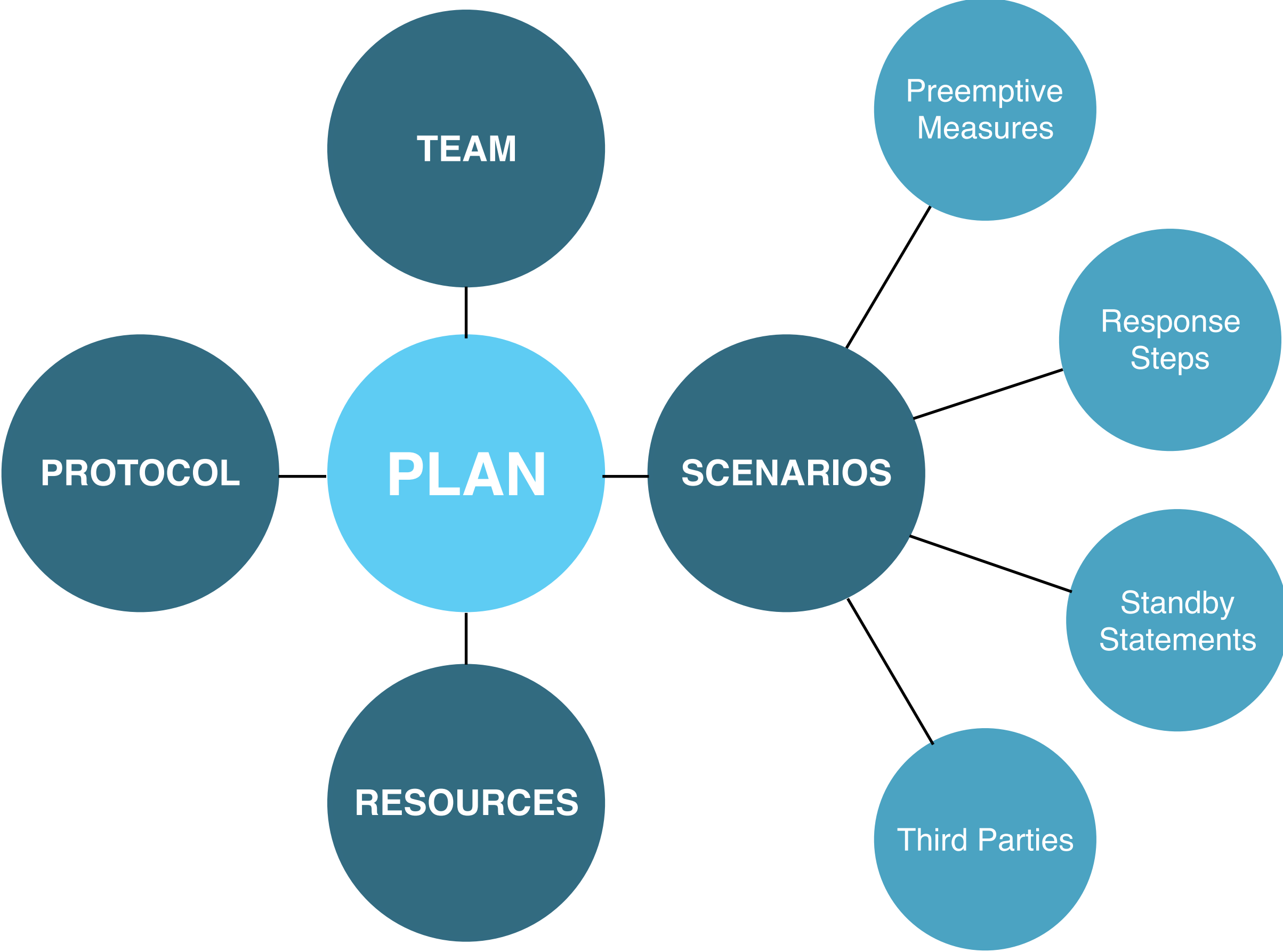
- Targeted funding cuts
- Targeted political opposition



INTERNAL

- Financial challenges
- Deal / project roadblocks
- Partner problems
- HR issues

Create a plan.





- ✓ Contain the root problem.
- ✓ Convene your team. Act fast.
- ✓ Be transparent, factual, and non-defensive.
- ✓ Show contrition when warranted.
- ✓ Take the long view.
- ✓ When in doubt, do the right thing.



Proactive or reactive?

- ▶ Generally, communicate first — on your terms.
- ▶ How likely is the situation to be covered?
- ▶ Can you better tell the story and balance the public record with a proactive approach?



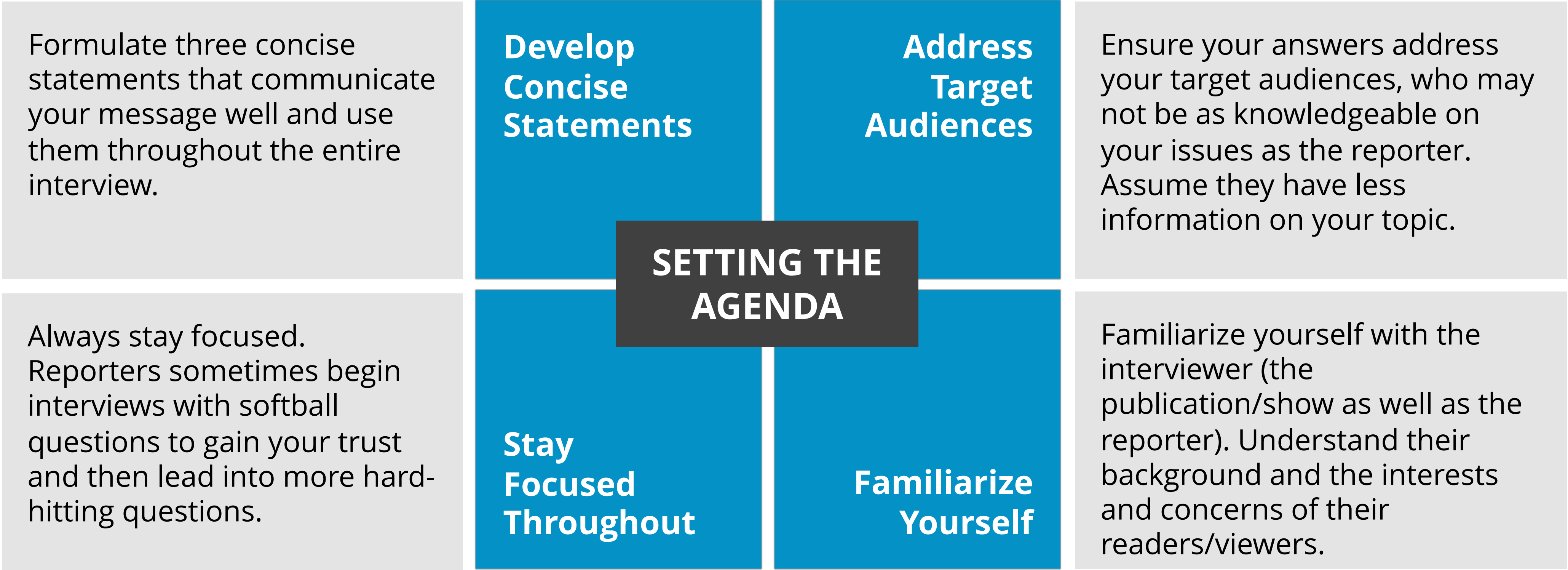
Engage or don't?

- ▶ Most times, some form of engagement — even if off-record — will improve the outcome.
- ▶ How likely is the reporter to write the story regardless?
- ▶ Will your perspective positively influence the outcome?
- ▶ How will your inclusion in or absence from the story impact the perception of your organization?

Every crisis is a challenge
to do better.

SPEAKING WITH AUTHORITY

SPEAKING WITH AUTHORITY



1

Follow your prepared agenda. Insert your key messages into each answer. Do not wait for the reporter to bring up your target topics because it may not happen.

2

Be honest and direct. A minor misrepresentation can become a major problem and convey the wrong message.

3

Speak a common language. Simplify concepts that are difficult to understand and sum up complicated answers in a couple of short sentences. Do not use jargon or overly technical language the audience is unlikely to be familiar with.

4

Be yourself. Give your personality a chance to come across. Speak in your normal conversational tone.

5

Make sure you and the reporter are on the same page. Do not hesitate to ask the reporter to rephrase or clarify the question.

1 **Neutralize and bridge.** To answer a difficult question, neutralize the negative frame first, then bridge to one of your key points. This will help move the conversation back to your agenda.

Useful Phrases

- *“But perhaps an equally important issue here is....”*
- *“It’s too soon to tell, but what we do know is....”*
- *“Well, that’s just part of the story....”*
- *“It’s important to remember....”*
- *“Actually, in my experience....”*

2 **Answer all questions.** In nearly all cases, do not answer a question with “no comment.” There is almost always a better response.

3 **Be aware of your tone.** Tone is key; defensiveness is an immediate red flag for a reporter.

4 **Avoid loaded questions.** Don’t feel obligated to accept the premise of a loaded question. Don’t get pressured into answering hypotheticals. If you’re asked an “a” or “b” question, feel free to reject both options and state a separate position.

Off the record:

WHAT YOU SAY IS NOT FOR PUBLICATION.

Many journalists consider off-the-record information **fair game** if they can independently source or corroborate the information with a third party. While it won't be sourced to you, **you shouldn't disclose** information that you would never want to see published—even if it's off the record.

On background:

WHAT YOU SAY CAN BE QUOTED OR PARAPHRASED IN A STORY, BUT NOT ATTRIBUTED TO YOU BY NAME.

The reporter might attribute the quote or characterization to “a person familiar with the situation” or “an industry insider.” Since definitions of “on background” vary, you should **always clarify the terms** and the exact attribution before proceeding.

Your key messages require evidence—proof points—to bring them to life and make them resonate. Pair a proof point with each of your key messages.

FOR EXAMPLE:

<p>Share someone’s story to humanize your message</p> <p>“After 30 years as a public school teacher in our community, Jane Doe found that her retirement income couldn’t keep up with rising rents.”</p>	<p>Offer data</p> <p>“Nationwide, 75 percent of extremely low-income families are forced to spend more than half their income on rent.”</p>	<p>Make an analogy</p> <p>“It’s like trying to fill a leaky bucket—at current funding levels, the affordable housing supply will never meet the demand.”</p>
<p>Quote third parties, or validators, when they support your position</p> <p>“The Low-Income Housing Tax Credit has always had bipartisan support; that’s why Senators Hatch and Cantwell introduced a bill to expand it in 2016.”</p>	<p>Offer your relevant personal experiences</p> <p>“We’ve created thousands of affordable homes in the last decade, and it’s clear that...”</p>	

ABOUT GROUP GORDON

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Best-in-Class
Writers

Assertive
Tacticians

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Reputation management
Campaign development
Thought leadership
Messaging

Media Relations

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Trend stories
Media tours
Expert commentary
Op-eds

Content

Media / marketing materials
Visuals
Original research
Video
Speeches / presentations

Social

Website content
Blogs
Community management
Campaigns
Paid social

“Group Gordon has a reputation as one of the industry’s **good guys**, both in terms of the **clients** it represents...and in terms of its own employee **culture**.”

-Paul Holmes, Chair, The Holmes Report



Top Five Corporate Agencies in
North America: 2017-2018



A Best Agency To Work For in
North America: 2011–2018

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