PARTICIPANT WORKBOOK

MANAGING NONPROFIT RISK REASONABLY

Two-part, 90-minute workshop | Your practical companion to the presentation

PART 1 19 principles from practice **PART 2** Filter a risk • choose a response • plan • communicate

Reasonable, not perfect. Nonprofits should take worthwhile risks while protecting people, services and the mission.

THE 19 PRINCIPLES AT A GLANCE

1. **Protect four assets**
   People, property, income and goodwill.
2. **Take the right risks**
   Use organized common sense; people matter more than policy binders.
3. **Name the elephant**
   Discuss the risk everyone knows but avoids.
4. **Four fear busters**
   Incorporation, insurance, dashboard and compliance calendar.
5. **Protect your mission**
   Watch donor pressure and mission creep.
6. **Busyness is not impact**
   Know what to stop, measure and reconsider.
7. **Watch financial resilience**
   Know unrestricted cash and major funding dependencies.
8. **Manage people promptly**
   Hire carefully, address conduct and prepare new managers.
9. **Culture is a risk control**
   Teach people when and how to escalate.
10. **Protect staff and volunteers**
    Watch workloads, lone work, safety and supervision.
11. **Prepare for key-person loss**
    Create backups for critical people and duties.
12. **Screen smartly**
    Match checks, boundaries and supervision to the role.
13. **Privacy is bigger than IT**
    Include paper, conversation, email, cloud and AI.
14. **Trust is not a control**
    Verify payments, boundaries and backups independently.
15. **Test three low-cost basics**
    MFA, file restoration and changed bank details.
16. **Invite complaints and ideas**
    Make it safe and easy to raise concerns.
17. **Find the patterns**
    Track incidents, complaints and near misses together.
18. **Leaders must lead**
    Management maintains the dashboard; the board oversees.
19. **Give the next step an owner**
    A concrete action, warning signal, owner and date.

How to use this: Take notes on what matters to you. The detailed 16-risk reference and editable tools are free at **nonprofithelp.ca/risk**.

PART 1 — REFLECTION

NAME THE RISK THAT MATTERS

For presentation slides 12–13 and 18 | Keep personal reflections private

A. THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM

Choose a prompt. Do not write names, allegations or identifiable client details here. Follow proper reporting routes for actual safety concerns.

UNNAMED RISK
What important risk is difficult to discuss?

FINANCIAL CANDOUR
What might surprise our strongest supporters?

PROGRAM RELEVANCE
Which longstanding activity is losing its value?

KEY PEOPLE
What would stop if a senior leader left suddenly?

A RISK WE MAY BE AVOIDING

WHAT EVIDENCE OR PERSPECTIVES ARE NEEDED TO DISCUSS THIS FAIRLY?

B. THE 90-DAY FUNDING TEST

Exercise from slide 18: If our largest funder left, what would our first 90 days look like? Use approximate figures if needed.

Largest-funder share of revenue: _____ % **Unrestricted cash available:** _____ weeks / months

FIRST 30 DAYS
What must we verify or protect?

DAYS 31–60
What would we reduce or renegotiate?

DAYS 61–90
What longer-term decision might be needed?

PART 1 — SELF-CHECK

DO OUR SAFEGUARDS WORK IN PRACTICE?

A brief conversation starter based on the presentation | Not a validated risk score

THE FOUR FEAR BUSTERS (SLIDE 14)

INCORPORATION
Current corporate records

INSURANCE
Relevant coverage checked

RISK DASHBOARD
Owned and updated

COMPLIANCE CALENDAR
Key legal and funder dates

ORGANIZATIONAL SELF-CHECK

Circle a response. If you mark Partly or No, decide who will follow up. Some safeguards require greater attention where harm could be serious.

CHECK	YES	PARTLY	NO	N/A
1. We check mission fit and full costs before making commitments.	○	○	○	○
2. We know unrestricted cash and major funder dependence.	○	○	○	○
3. Supervisors know when to escalate workload, conduct and safety risks.	○	○	○	○
4. Critical payroll, executive and service responsibilities have backups.	○	○	○	○
5. Higher-risk roles have appropriate screening, boundaries and supervision.	○	○	○	○
6. Privacy checks include paper records, access, cloud tools and AI.	○	○	○	○
7. Bank activity and changes to payment instructions are independently checked.	○	○	○	○
8. Critical accounts use MFA, and backup files have been restored in a test.	○	○	○	○
9. Complaints, incidents and near misses can be reported and reviewed for patterns.	○	○	○	○
10. Management updates our dashboard; the board reviews it at least twice a year.	○	○	○	○

ONE SAFEGUARD WE NEED TO VERIFY OR IMPROVE

PART 2 — STEPS 1 AND 2

FILTER THE RISK. CHOOSE A RESPONSE.

Use the risk you named in Part 1, or a different serious risk facing your organization

RISK TO CONSIDER

There is a risk that ... which could lead to ...

STEP 1 / APPLY THE FOUR FILTERS (SLIDE 38)

1 MISSION & VALUES

Does the activity or risk make sense in light of our mission and values?

NOTES:

2 POLICY & PROCEDURES

Can we put the required safeguards, policies and procedures in place?

NOTES:

3 STAKEHOLDER TEST

Could we explain the decision reasonably if something went wrong?

NOTES:

4 INSURANCE

Do we need insurance, and do we have appropriate coverage?

NOTES:

STEP 2 / CHOOSE WHAT TO DO (SLIDE 39)

○ KEEP	○ ELIMINATE	○ REDUCE	○ TRANSFER
Accept as it is	Stop the activity	Change how it works	Shift part of the risk

Remember: Even if someone else delivers the service, your organization may retain legal, contractual or reputational risk.

WHY IS THIS THE REASONABLE RESPONSE FOR OUR ORGANIZATION?

PART 2 — STEP 3

MY ONE-PAGE RISK ACTION PLAN

From presentation slide 36 | Involve people most affected; adapt policies rather than starting from scratch

Write specifically enough that someone can later verify whether the safeguard was put in place and worked.

RISK STATEMENT
There is a risk that ... which could lead to ...

WHO OR WHAT COULD BE HARMED?
People, property, income, goodwill, essential services or mission

WHAT SAFEGUARDS ALREADY EXIST?
What do people actually do today (not only what a policy says)?

ACTION 1 / OWNER / DUE DATE
One practical step we can take immediately

ACTION 2 / OWNER / DUE DATE
One stronger improvement to follow through

EARLY WARNING / THRESHOLD
What event or number tells us the risk is becoming worse?

FIRST RESPONSE / ESCALATION
Who acts first, and when must management or the board be notified?

EVIDENCE / REVIEW DATE
How and when will we check that the actions worked?

PART 2 — STEP 4

COMMUNICATE, WATCH AND FOLLOW THROUGH

Finish with one change that matters by November 27, 2026

STEP 4 / COMMUNICATE, TRAIN AND WATCH (SLIDE 41)

COMMUNICATE

How will we explain the positive reason for this change?

TRAIN

Who needs to learn or practise the new safeguard?

WATCH

How will we ask people if it works and verify results?

KEEP BOARD AND MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITIES CLEAR

MANAGEMENT / ED / CEO

Identify, assess and manage risk; maintain policies, safeguards and the dashboard; test performance and escalate major concerns.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Monitor whether strong practices exist and work. Review the risk dashboard **at least twice annually** and address significant exceptions.

Recommended rhythm: Management updates risks routinely; urgent issues are reported promptly; a fuller risk review takes place about every three years (or earlier if needed). The twice-yearly board review and three-year refresh are recommendations, not statutory intervals.

MY 30-DAY COMMITMENT (SLIDE 42)

One significant risk. Two practical actions. One accountable person. One date to check progress.

ONE SIGNIFICANT RISK

TWO PRACTICAL ACTIONS

ONE PERSON RESPONSIBLE

DATE TO CHECK PROGRESS