



Disinformation Response and Risk Management

Institute for Infrastructure in Society
www.nextgenengagement.org

Ika Trijsburg
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Ms Irem Kizilca

I2S Research PhD Candidate and Fellow

Irem Kizilca is a Harvard and Sorbonne-trained economist with more than a decade of experience working in multilateral development banks, including AIIB. She is a PhD Candidate with I2S at the Crawford School of Public Policy, the Australian National University.



Professor Sara Bice, I2S Director

Sara is Co-Founder and Director of I2S, based in the Crawford School of Public Policy, where she is a professor. Sara is past-President, IAIA (2017-2020) and in 2020 she was honoured to receive the IAIA Outstanding Service Award.



**Dr Ruth O'Connor
I2S Research Fellow**

Dr Ruth O'Connor is an engagement and evaluation specialist at I2S where she is working with Industry partners to develop indicators for best practice infrastructure engagement. Ruth's research interests revolve around participatory processes undertaken to address complex problems. She is particularly interested in how we can meaningfully evaluate these processes in ways that capture diverse values and enable learning and improvement.

Course Facilitators

IKA TRIJSBURG

Ika Trijsburg is I2S/MAV Research Fellow at the ANU Institute for Infrastructure in Society in the Crawford School of Public Policy. Ika is Head of Democracy and Diplomacy at the Municipal Association of Victoria. She also holds a Visiting Fellowship with the German Marshall Fund of the United States and is a Research Associate with the Initiative for Peacebuilding at the University of Melbourne.



About ANU I2S



I2S is the world's leading social science research institute working to transform the relationship between major projects and communities.

Home of the Next Generation Engagement program.

Based in the Australian National University Crawford School of Public Policy.

Our aims:

- inform improved community engagement
- address cumulative impacts of major infrastructure projects
- support improved social risk management
- shape public policy for societal benefit.

I2S works in direct partnership with industry, government, civil society and communities.





Walking on the roof is not allowed. Please do not drink alcohol on the roof. Thank you.

WHEN
YOU LEAVE
THIS
SESSION,
YOU WILL:

BETTER UNDERSTAND DISINFORMATION:

- WHAT IS IT?
- WHY DOES IT MATTER?
- HOW IS IT AFFECTING IMPACT ASSESSMENT?

BE BETTER ABLE TO IDENTIFY DISINFORMATION:

- WHAT'S THE NARRATIVE?
- WHY HAS THIS GAINED TRACTION?
- WHAT'S PROMPTED IT NOW?

BE FAMILIAR WITH THREE PHASES OF RESPONSE:

- ANTICIPATORY: BUILD YOUR FOUNDATIONS
- ACTIVE: RESPONDING IN REAL TIME
- RECOVERY: HOW TO RECOVER AND BUILD RESILIENCE

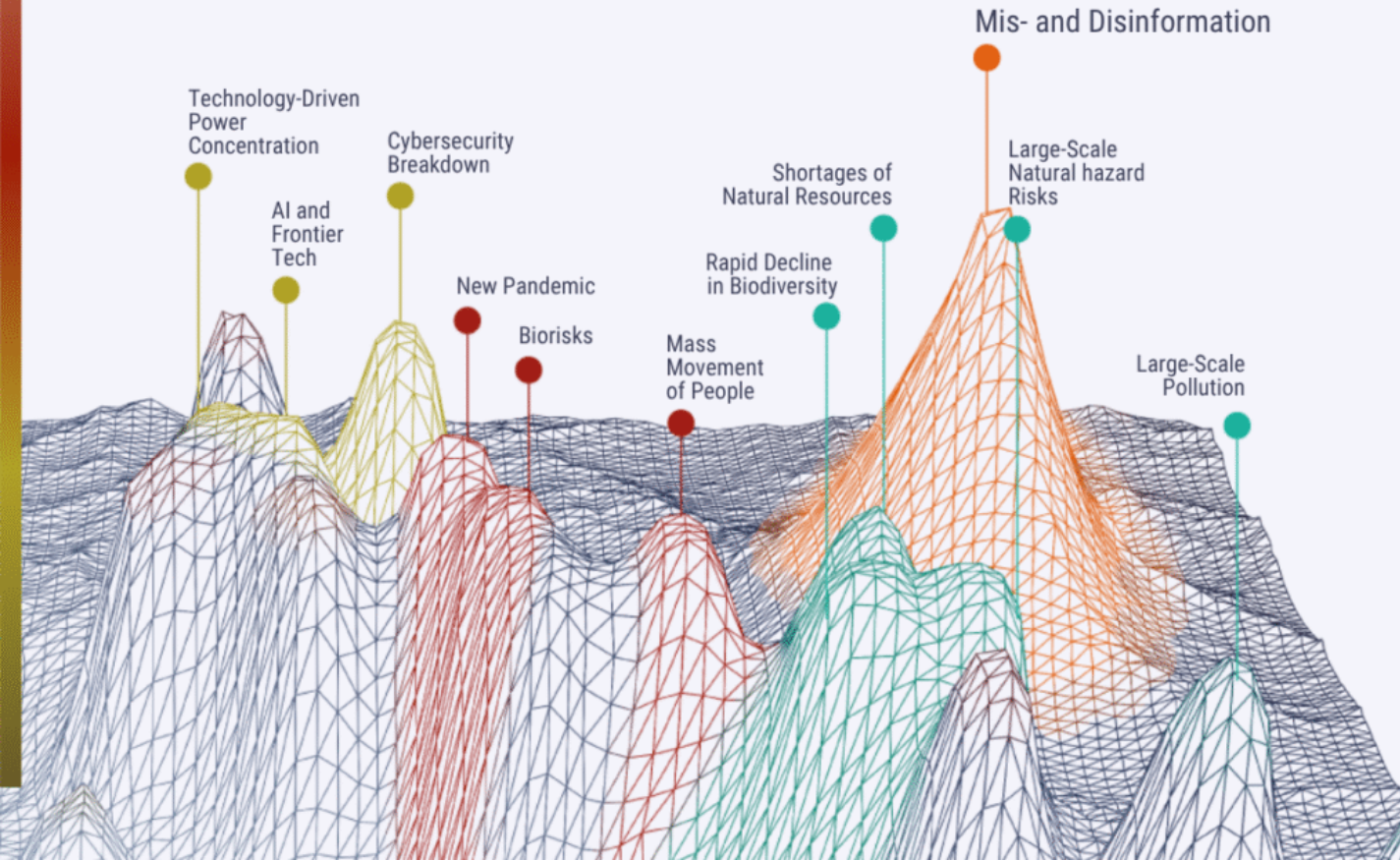
"Information integrity is the mother of all battles.

Win this, and we can win the rest. Lose this, and we lose everything."

~Nobel Peace Laureate Maria Ressa. United Nations General Assembly, September 2025



We are living in an age of increasingly complex and interconnected global risks, and we are not sufficiently prepared









MISINFORMATION

Question of intent

Inaccurate information unintentionally held
and/or shared



DISINFORMATION

Malicious intent

Concerted fabrications that are deliberately misleading

“An attack on the integrity of knowledge”

~Marta Perez-Escolar et al, 2023



Politically-motivated creators seek to mobilise a target audience towards a particular view or (in)action, often with polarising effects. In a highly interconnected world, this can originate from geographies far beyond the city limits, yet have significant local consequences.



Economically-motivated creators produce content for financial gain. Profit is often generated through advertisements included in the disinformation source (e.g., website, blog, online media). Here, click-bait is used to generate online traffic and increase advertising revenue.

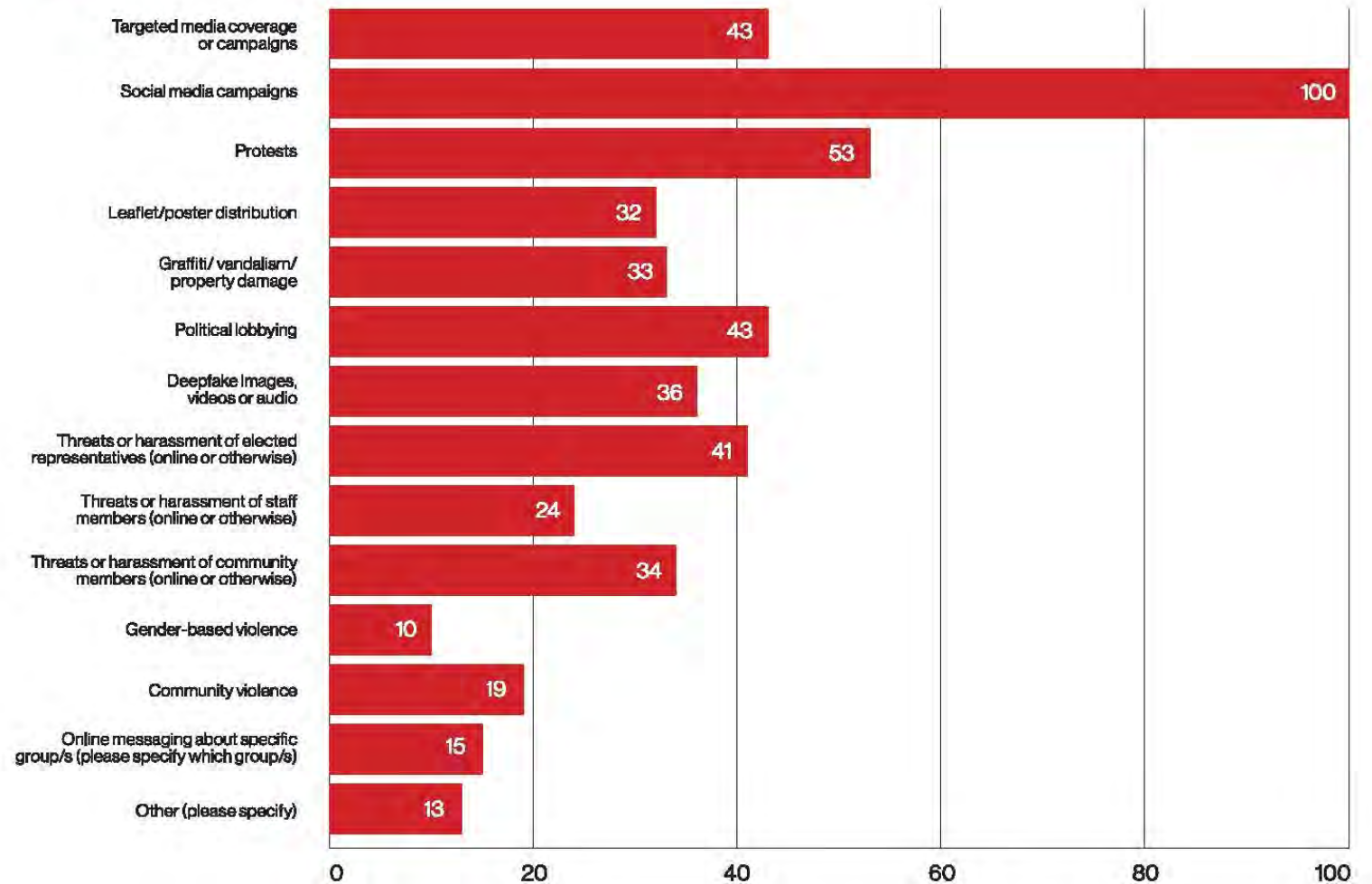
Disinformation: Main Drivers



Why the rise in
mis/disinformation?

HOW DOES DISINFORMATION MANIFEST

Figure 4: Local manifestations of disinformation (n=120)



DISINFORMATION

Level of controversy
Cumulative effects
Politicisation
Engagement and
Communications quality

Impact importance
Cultural heritage and First
Nations Land Rights
Land acquisition and
resettlement

DISINFORMATION & SOCIAL RISK



Common sparks

HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Anti-vaccines:
Measles
&
COVID 19

GENDER AND SEXUALITY

Anti-trans
&
targeting
female leaders

CLIMATE & SUSTAIN- ABILITY

Climate
Emergency

FIRST NATIONS, MIGRANTS, CULTURE & RELIGION

The Voice
Referendum
&
Southport riots

URBAN PLANNING

15 min cities
&
Smart cities
&
Infrastructure

DISINFORMATION LIGHTNING RODS

Elections

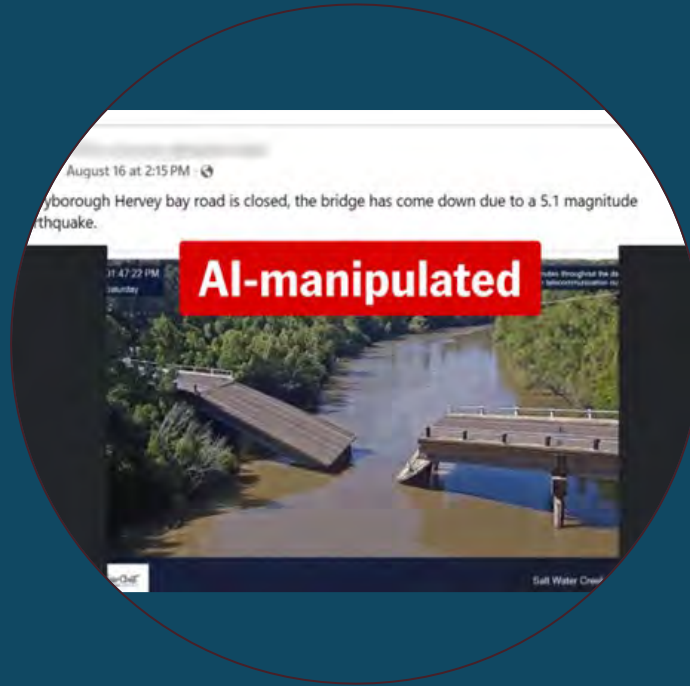
Policymaking

Current Events – global
and local

Disasters and crises

Major events

Transitions



DEEPPFAKES & AI MANIPULATION

A deepfake is a digital photo, video or sound file of a real person that has been edited to create an extremely realistic but false depiction of them doing or saying something that they did not actually do or say.



CONSPIRACISM & ASTROTURFING

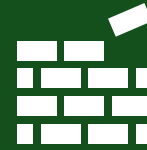
Astroturfing is the deceptive practice of creating a fake, artificial "grassroots" appearance of widespread public support for a policy, product, or candidate, usually funded by corporate or political interests.

ANTICIPATORY



March 26, 2024, Francis Scott Key Bridge, Baltimore
Image credit: Harford County Md Fire & EMS PIO

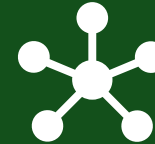
[Francis Scott Key Bridge collapse](#)



BUILD YOUR
FOUNDATIONS



KNOW YOUR
ENVIRONMENT



PREPARE YOUR
INFRASTRUCTURE

ACTIVE



Image credit: MediaNBC Boston

[FEMA response to natural disasters](#)



VERIFY INFORMATION
& ACTORS



ENGAGE, INFORM
& SUPPORT



PREVENT
THE SPREAD

RECOVERY



Image credit: AP

Southport riots



RESPOND TO INFORMATION
& GRIEVANCES



COLLABORATE &
PROTECT



SUPPORT COMMUNITY
RECOVERY & RESILIENCE



Image Credit: Getty Images

Anatomy of a Rumour

How disinformation on social media fueled the Southport Riots



Image Credit: DAWN



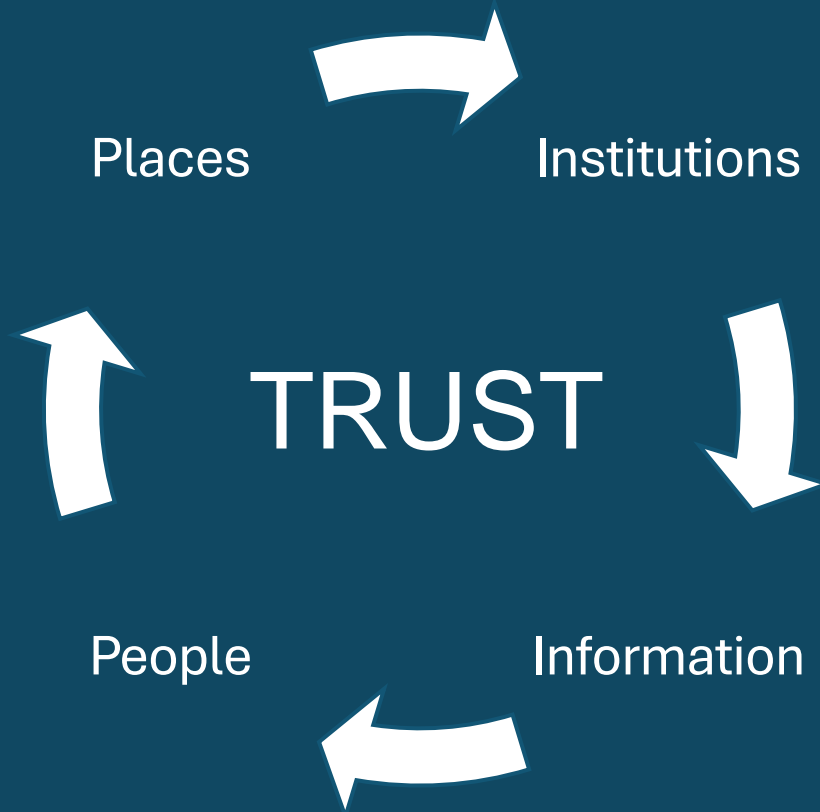
Responding

DISINFORMATION IN THE CITY RESPONSE PLAYBOOK

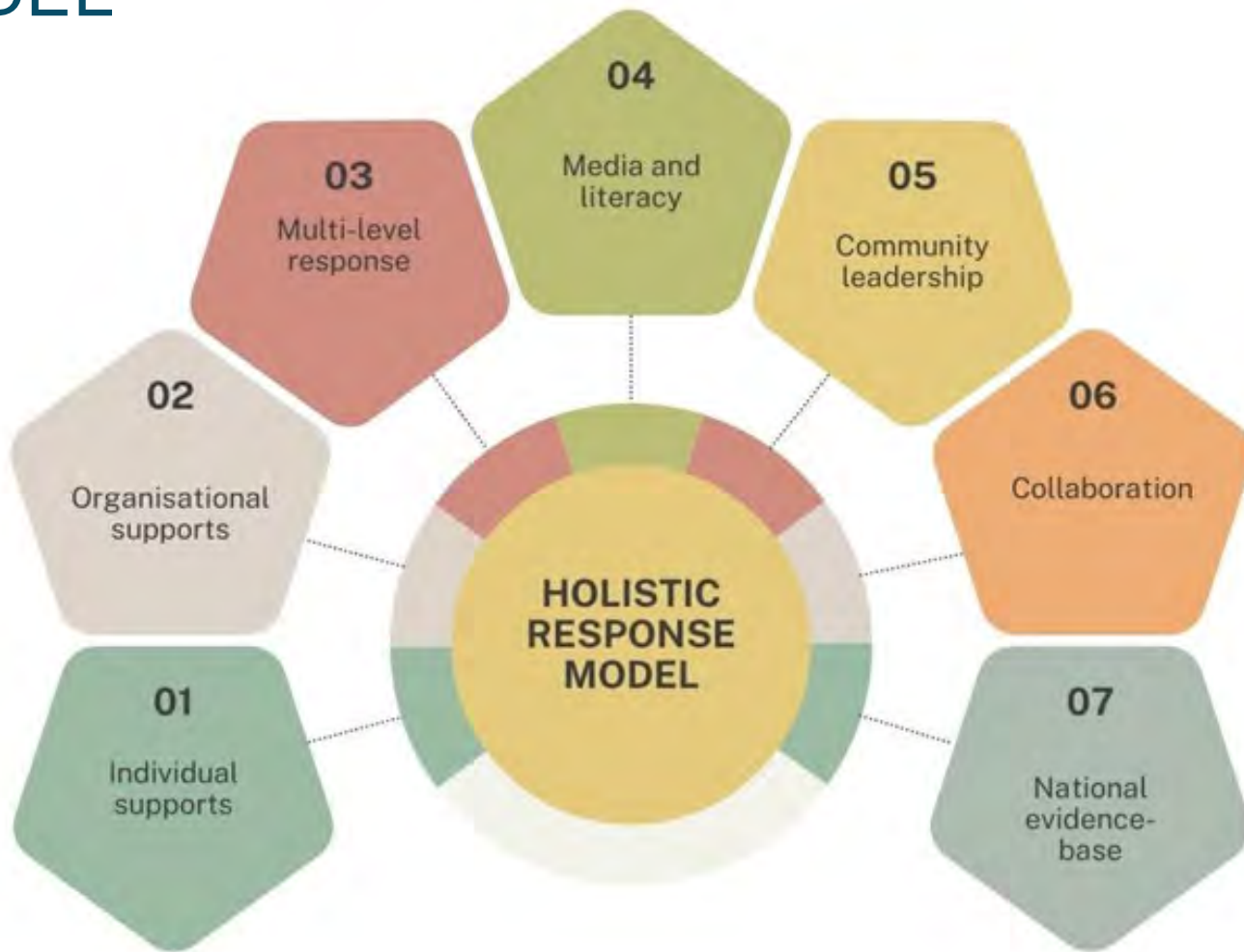


Download the Playbook here





HOLISTIC RESPONSE MODEL



Trijsburg, I. & Costello, P. (2026) *Information Manipulation and Harassment of Local Leaders: Impacts and Implications*. Australian Resilient Democracy Research and Data Network Discussion Paper 16, Australian National University

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



WHO NEEDS TO BE ON BOARD?

WHAT DO THEY RESPOND TO?

Mapping a disinformation narrative...

What is the disinformation?

Who is the target audience?
(There will likely be multiple)

What is the grievance that's exploited?

Why is this group/community susceptible to this? (History, Controversy, Politicization, Engagement, Impact importance, Displacement and Land...)

Who is creating this? What do they gain from creating this?

Who is sharing this? What do they gain from sharing this?

Trying it out

Mapping a disinformation narrative

A decorative graphic on the left side of the slide, consisting of white lines and circles on a blue background, resembling a circuit board or data network.

MISINFORMATION: WORKING CASE

THE BATTERY THAT DIVIDED NARRABRI



ABC NEWS: "THE BATTERY THAT DIVIDED NARRABRI"

10 PRINCIPLES

1. Trust is paramount
2. Responses must be non-partisan to be effective
3. Responses must be ongoing and constantly building adaptive capacity and resilience to disinformation
4. Sharing knowledge and experiences is key to improved outcomes

10 PRINCIPLES

5. Disinformation in cities has individual, organisational and societal consequences. All three must be addressed.
6. Don't try to change beliefs or diminish the rightful and essential democratic expression of dissent
7. Cities can't address disinformation in isolation. Responses must integrate into a broader multi-sectoral and multi-level response system.
8. Cities need ongoing access to real time, rapidly deployed guidance

10 PRINCIPLES

9. Cities must be able to innovate and experiment... this may require courage in low trust, volatile environments.
10. There is no single way to address. Efforts need to include a combination of responses and should be continuously evolved to meet the context.

BUILD YOUR TOOLKIT



Community outreach programs.



Community outreach is an effective tool for reaching community where they are, including those not otherwise communicating with city governments. This enables cities to understand shifts in sentiment as they occur, the impacts on targeted communities, and assist in providing targeted supports and maintaining communication during and after disinformation-fueled events. Outreach should include groups prone to creating and sharing disinformation, and groups targeted.



Social media analysis.



Monitoring social media discourse is important for identifying disinformation both in relation to city initiatives and more broadly. It includes flagging specific content, terms and behaviours to identify and anticipate issues. Collaboration across sectors, levels and cities is particularly useful for providing real-time insights into trends and terms to flag.



Map the disinformers landscape.



Often disinformers use repeat tactics and narratives. They also often connect with known groups and platforms locally and globally. Proactively catalogue offenders, narratives and tactics to pre-empt future disinformation campaigns, understand who is involved, and who might be vulnerable to messaging.



Assemble advisors.



Assemble advisory bodies and brains trust early. Ensure this network of advisors is sufficient to inform your understanding of different communities and sectors across the city. Invest in the onboarding process to develop trusted relationships between advisors. Engage these groups to test information and see if they're appropriate and effective.



Increase frequency of messaging in the lead up to key events.

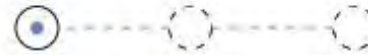


In the lead up to key events, such as policy decisions, key events or elections, increase communications around potential points.

BUILD YOUR TOOLKIT



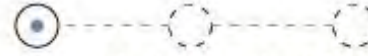
Increase critical literacy.



Invest in education campaigns and opportunities, both within the organisation and in the community. This includes education-based programs and games-based platforms.



Be fun(ny) with it.



If done well, humour can be an effective tool for approaching sticky subjects. Humour can break down barriers, disarm tension, create connections, and be a memorable source of information. However, timing is critical. Humorously framed communication during crisis situations – even low-severity crises – has been shown to negatively impact trust in cities.



Fill the information vacuum.



Proactively and immediately provide people with clear, comprehensive and factual information – especially after key events. This reduces the risk that the information ecosystem becomes saturated with confusing, false and conspiratorial information.



De-platforming creators.



De-platforming is a tool used in attempt to limit the influence of disinformation campaigners. De-platforming is usually achieved by blocking a social media profile or banning disformers from speaking in public forums.



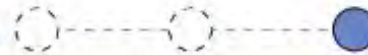
Support those affected.



Provide psychologically safe spaces and services for communities affected by disinformation. These can be online and in person. Cities should also provide clear messaging to support targeted groups or individuals, to publicly demonstrate that it does not endorse harmful and false narratives.



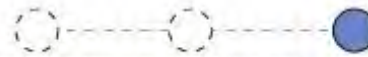
Sticky facts & counter-information.



Use robust data and 'sticky facts' - simple, evidence-based content delivered in ways that people will remember to counter disinformation.



Providing counter-narratives.



Counter-narratives incorporate counter-information, but engage people through storytelling and personalisation. Counter-narratives can be more effective than simply presenting the facts because they engage people emotionally.

WHAT ARE YOUR RISK AREAS?

- External: Faultlines and social risks
- External: Information use and literacy
- External: Trust profile
- Internal: Systems vulnerabilities
- Internal: Information use, points of connection and literacy

WHO ARE YOUR PARTNERS?

- Knowledge
- Capacities
- Connections and Legitimacy

HOW WILL YOU WORK WITH THEM?

- Anticipatory
- Active
- Recovery

WHAT DO YOU NEED TO MAKE THIS HAPPEN?

- Structural and relational
- Skills and resources

BRINGING IT TOGETHER: YOUR RESPONSE FRAMEWORK

Mapping the disinformation response landscape...

Where does this community get – and share – information? (This will likely differ by demographics, political views and locations)

Which institutions will this community likely trust?
How trustworthy are they?

Who trusts you? Who doesn't?

Which people does this community trust? How trustworthy are they?

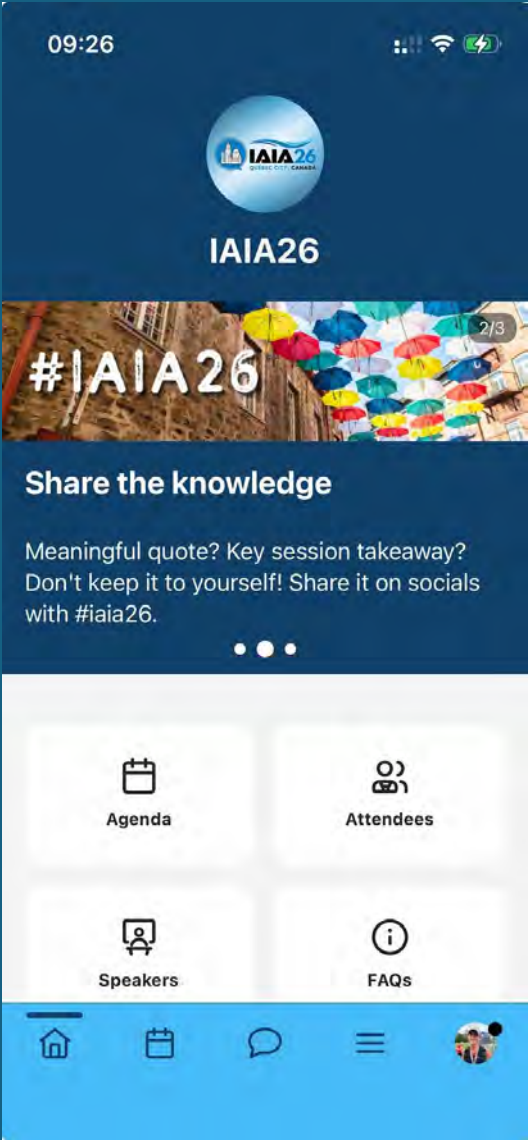
Which places and settings are trusted by this community? Which are not trusted?

Who are your potential trusted allies? Locally and beyond?

Your Response Framework

Mapping your disinformation response landscape

We value your feedback





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