

HOW TO DEBRIEF

Debriefing is a key activity that groups engage in around their plans and actions. Remember all the enthusiasm and debates around a particular action or event? This energy should be brought to a debrief where a group moves from the “hypothetical” to the actual.

Groups should seek to debrief:

- The difference between their plans and what actually happened (logistics, timing, etc).
- Establish a sense of “what happened” from each role/ perspective. What worked, what didn’t work.
- The intended outcomes in media and actual outcomes (framing and key messages, which ones were picked up and why, did you get stumped/ boxed in? Too many messages? Off-message? Tricky/ unanticipated questions? Were spokespeople prepared/ did they see the press advisory? Did they get a key messages document to work from?)
- If you had a public call out for people to attend your action, how did that go? Was it broadcast? Were invites sent out? Was an event set up with enough time? Were reminders posted? Who was responsible for this?
- The responsibilities people took on, how did it go for them? Did they need support? Were they new in taking on this role? How could they be supported more? Did they have time and capacity to take on the role or were they stuck with it? Did some roles get dropped in the process?
- What could have been better? (without a whole lot of blame, take responsibility for what you could have done better to support people and in your own role). Be accountable for what you did and didn’t do and don’t blame people for any shortcomings. Identify if there were any steps missing.
- Ask yourself: did I live up to my commitments? Did I do what I said I would do? Did I do it well, or did I leave it to the last minute? Who could I have harmed by not doing my job well?
- So now what? Even if things went wrong, is the group okay? What did the error cost? Are apologies in order? Are we okay? Have a group check-in.
- Too much/ too little: is there a sense that there are a handful of people with a lot of responsibilities, and another part of the group with few responsibilities? What does the division of labour look like? Do people want to transition into roles and out of roles? Make a plan to make this happen.
- Did the action make sense? Was it timely? Was it strategic? Was it rushed? Were there other events or news stories that you did or didn’t know about that competed with your action? Did you survey the landscape (ie. did you try to have a rally on the day the legislature re-opened and half the media didn’t talk to you because they were covering the throne speech?)
- What were the highlights, funny parts or bloopers? Don't forget to laugh if you can!