



Risk Awareness Toolkit for Federal Risk Practitioners

Tips for Raising Risk Awareness at Your Agency

Introduction

The Risk Awareness Toolkit for Federal Risk Practitioners is part of an ongoing collaboration between risk management professionals from the Enterprise Risk Management Community of Practice (ERM CoP), Association for Federal Enterprise Risk Management (AFERM), and AFERM Small Agency Community of Practice (SACoP). This document provides several tips for raising risk awareness and will expand in the future to contain examples and lessons learned from agencies' successful risk awareness campaigns. Federal risk management practitioners are encouraged to leverage these tips and future examples, customizing them to align with their agency's culture, norms, and other characteristics.

This document is not intended to serve as guidance, nor is it intended to be an enforceable standard against which an agency's ERM program can be assessed. This document is only intended to provide an overview of some practices that have been implemented to foster risk aware cultures at several Federal agencies.

Creating a Risk Aware Culture

Organizational culture is the beliefs, attitudes, and desired behaviors of an organization—it informs the perception of risk and risk management and underpins the success of efforts to manage risk and achieve strategic goals. Federal government agencies, like many other organizations, can seek to improve their culture by fostering risk awareness and transparency. By doing so, these organizations promote the timely flow of risk information and increase the likelihood that risks can be identified and managed effectively.

Communications and trainings are some of the tools that agencies can use to promote a risk aware culture. Often, the purpose of these activities include:

- Encouraging employees to escalate issues and potential risks without fear of retribution; and
- Establishing and communicating roles and responsibilities related to risk management and the achievement of strategic goals. This includes providing messaging that managing risk is everyone's responsibility and is important to the agency's achievement of its mission, vision, and strategy.

The items listed below are tips that federal risk practitioners may wish to consider when developing a strategy for creating and/or maintaining a risk aware culture.

Tips for Raising Risk Awareness

Tip #1: Develop intentional risk management communication and training strategies tailored to different audiences in your organization.

Developing a communication strategy or plan for risk management helps to ensure that information about risks and risk management is being communicated in a timely and consistent manner to the appropriate stakeholders. Likewise, a training plan provides clear learning objectives aimed at providing attendees with information needed to perform their risk management roles and responsibilities. These communications and trainings should be tailored to the specific audience. For example, a communication aimed at managers and another aimed at the employees they supervise can be developed using much of the same basic information on risk; however, the purpose and intended takeaways may differ and require changes to content and/or delivery. Developing intentional strategies for communication and training, rather than developing these items ad-hoc, helps to reduce duplication, improve resource planning, and results in more comprehensive and effective messaging around risks and risk management.



Tip #2: Provide resources for risk management stakeholders to learn more about ERM and risk management.

Some recipients of risk management communications and trainings may wish to learn more about ERM and/or risk management. This serves as an opportunity to reinforce and promote internal resources, such as policies, knowledge management sites/libraries, and other communications or trainings. There are also many external resources that provide additional guidance on ERM and/or risk management in the Federal government. These include: [OMB Circular A-123](#), [ERM for the U.S. Federal Government Playbook](#), [AFERM's Areas of Practice Guidance](#), and GAO's report titled [ERM: Selected Agencies' Experiences Illustrate Good Practices in Managing Risk \(GAO-17-63\)](#). Agencies may also wish to share information on [AFERM](#), [AGA](#), [RIMS](#), and other professional organizations that provide events, trainings, and guidance on ERM and risk management.

Tip #3: Use communications from senior leadership to demonstrate support for ERM and risk management.

Leadership sets the tone for the organization and conveys the organization's values and priorities. Messaging from senior leadership can help to reinforce the importance and value of ERM and risk management activities. Some agencies have communicated leadership support through memos, emails, newsletters, remarks, and video messages from leadership.

Tip #4: Vary the medium of communication.

While emails and memos may be some of the most commonly used forms of communication, there are a number of other forms of communication that risk management professionals can use to encourage risk awareness. These include posters, video messages, townhalls, and podcasts. Depending on the communication objectives and the culture of an organization, these channels may be more efficient and/or effective at promoting risk awareness.

Tip #5: Consider organizing a Risk Awareness Week.

Federal Risk Awareness Week was established to raise awareness and build support for risk management in Federal agencies. Those tasked with coordinating ERM activities for their agency may wish to consider demonstrating their commitment to managing risks and promoting a risk aware culture by arranging an agency-level risk awareness week that coincides with Federal Risk Awareness Week. This serves as an opportunity to host trainings, distribute risk management information, and otherwise promote risk management activities.

Join the [AFERM mailing list](#) for announcements on the dates and planned activities for future Federal Risk Awareness Weeks.

For more suggestions or more information on this Toolkit, contact: programs@aferm.org.
