

TRUST in Action

Managing Rumors and Building Trust: Implementation and Evaluation

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**Center for
Health Security**



Today (in 20 minutes!)



Tools to address rumors and build trust



Public health training implementation and evaluation results



TRUST in Action project – expanding reach to new partners and topic areas

Disclosure and Conflict Management

- I have no conflicts of interest to report
- Funding for this work was provided by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the de Beaumont Foundation
- The views and opinions expressed in this presentation are those of the presenter and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of funders.

Tools to Manage Rumors and Build Trust

Practical Playbook to Address Health-Related Rumors

The playbook provides guidance on ways public health and medical professionals can:



Prepare for health-related rumors



Decide when to act to address misleading rumors



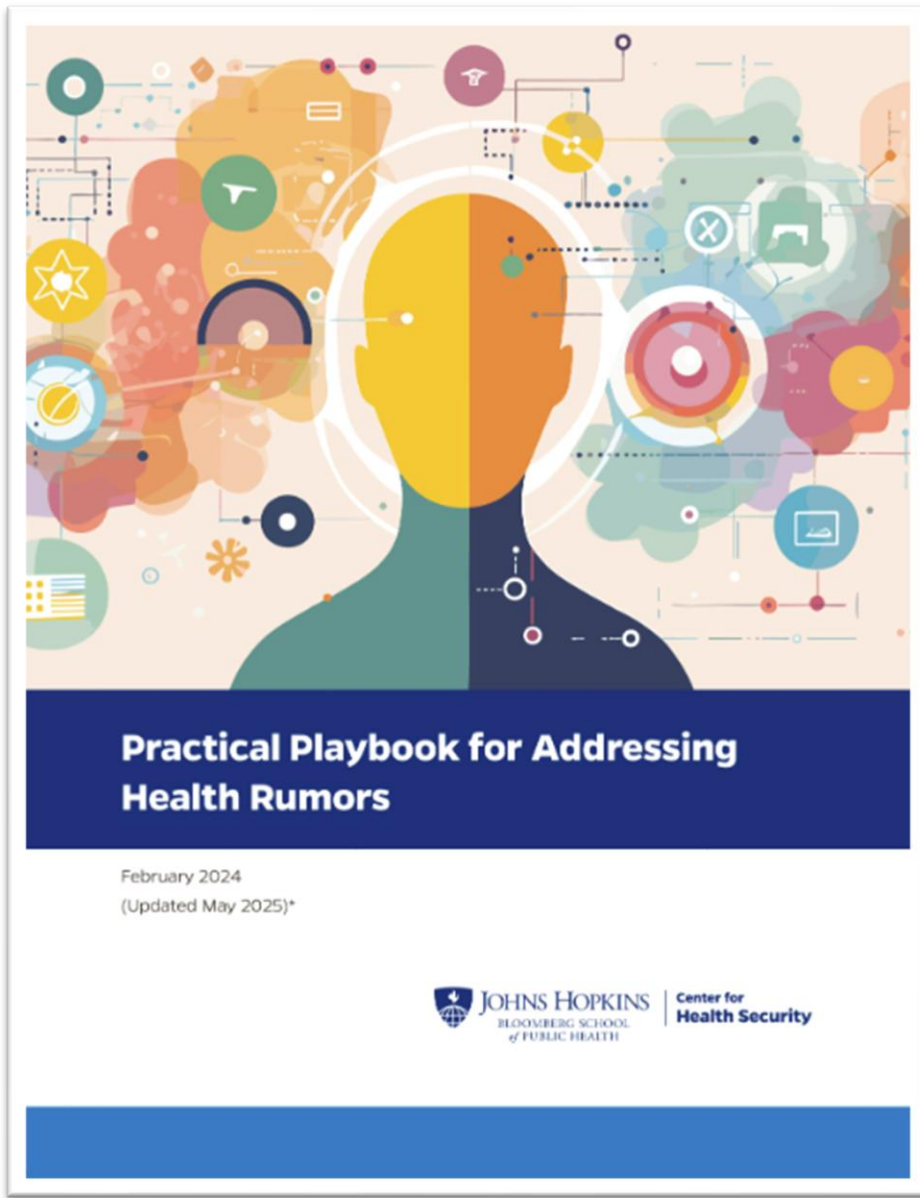
Determine which actions to take to address misleading rumors

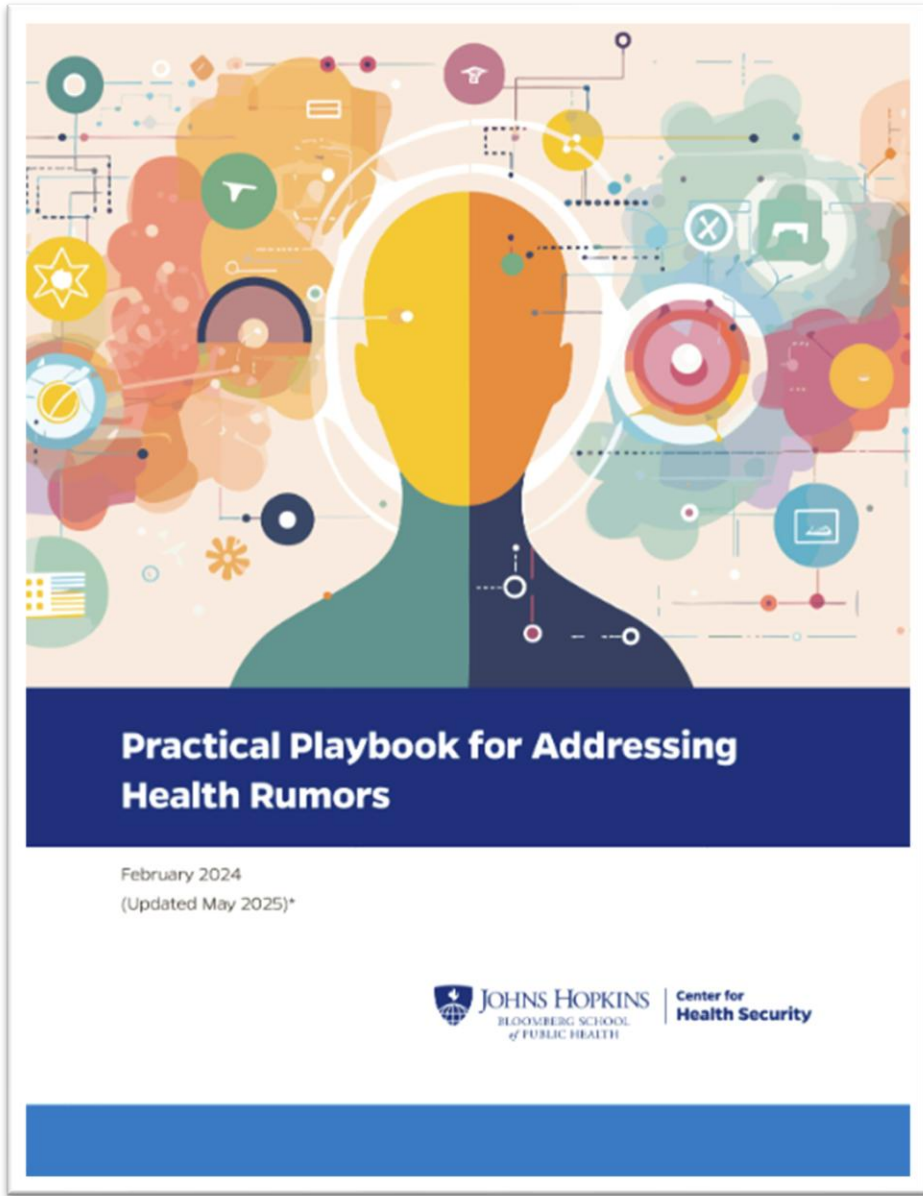


Develop messages to address misleading rumors

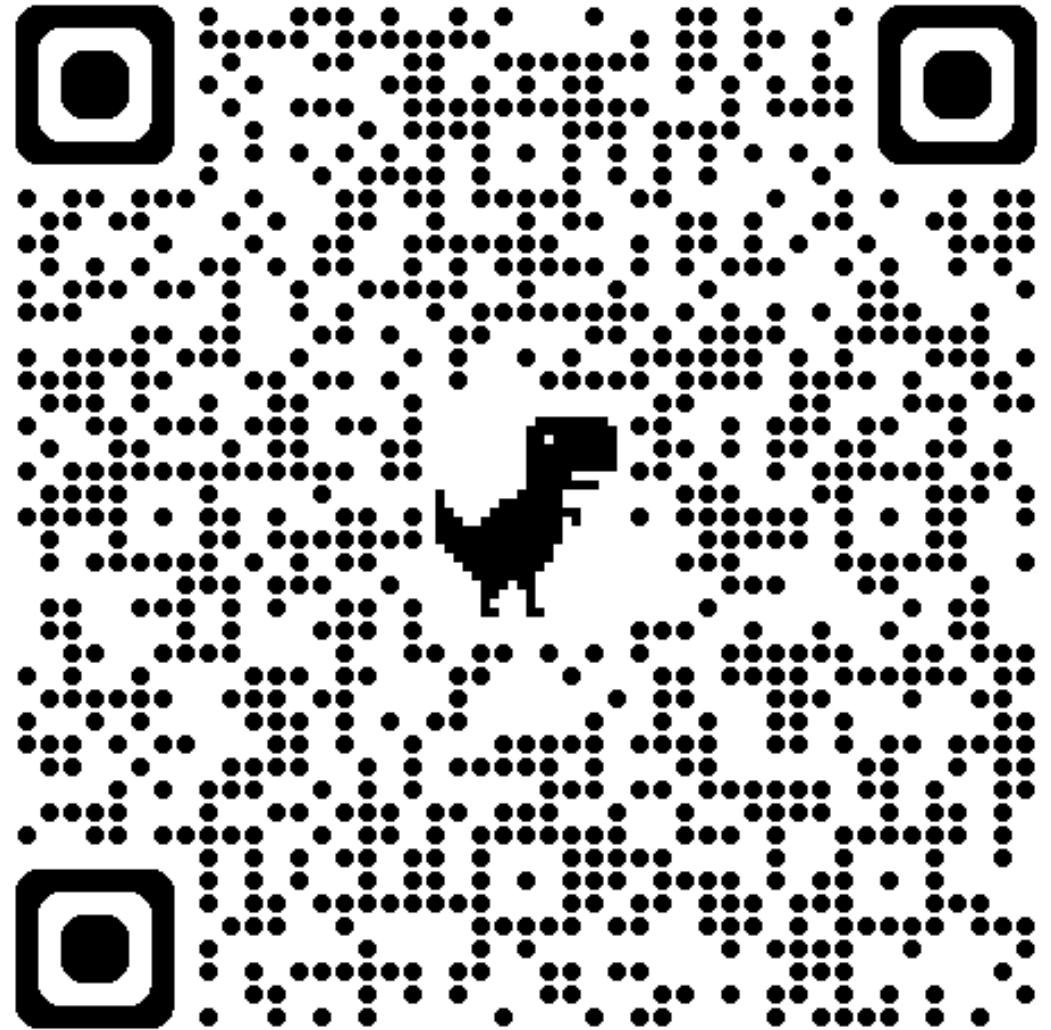


Gather feedback on messages

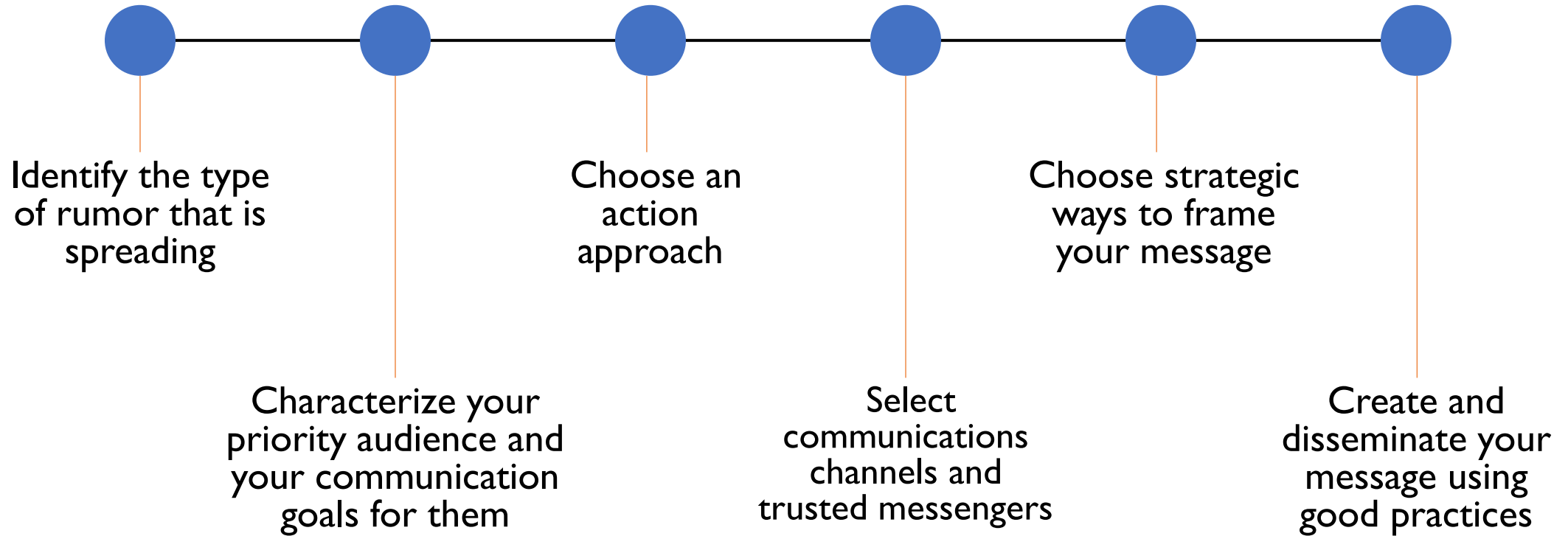




FOLLOW ALONG:



Take action to address rumors



Choose an action approach



Amplify accurate information



Fill information voids



Leverage trusted messengers
and engage communities



Refute, fact-check, or debunk



Prebunk and inoculate



Improve health and
science literacy

Navigating uncertainty

ACKNOWLEDGE UNCERTAINTY



Share what is known, unknown, and what is being done to fill gaps



Acknowledge uncertainty at the start of an event



Educate people early on scientific processes being taken to fill knowledge gaps



Prioritize in-person briefings or recorded comments by health officials



Foster empathy, connection, humility, and relatability: “we don’t know”

PREPARE AUDIENCES FOR EVOLVING GUIDANCE



Set expectations early that current guidance are based on the best available information, but changes will likely occur as the situation evolves



Develop processes and plans for communicating changes in a timely and transparent way



Establish a regular cadence for communication



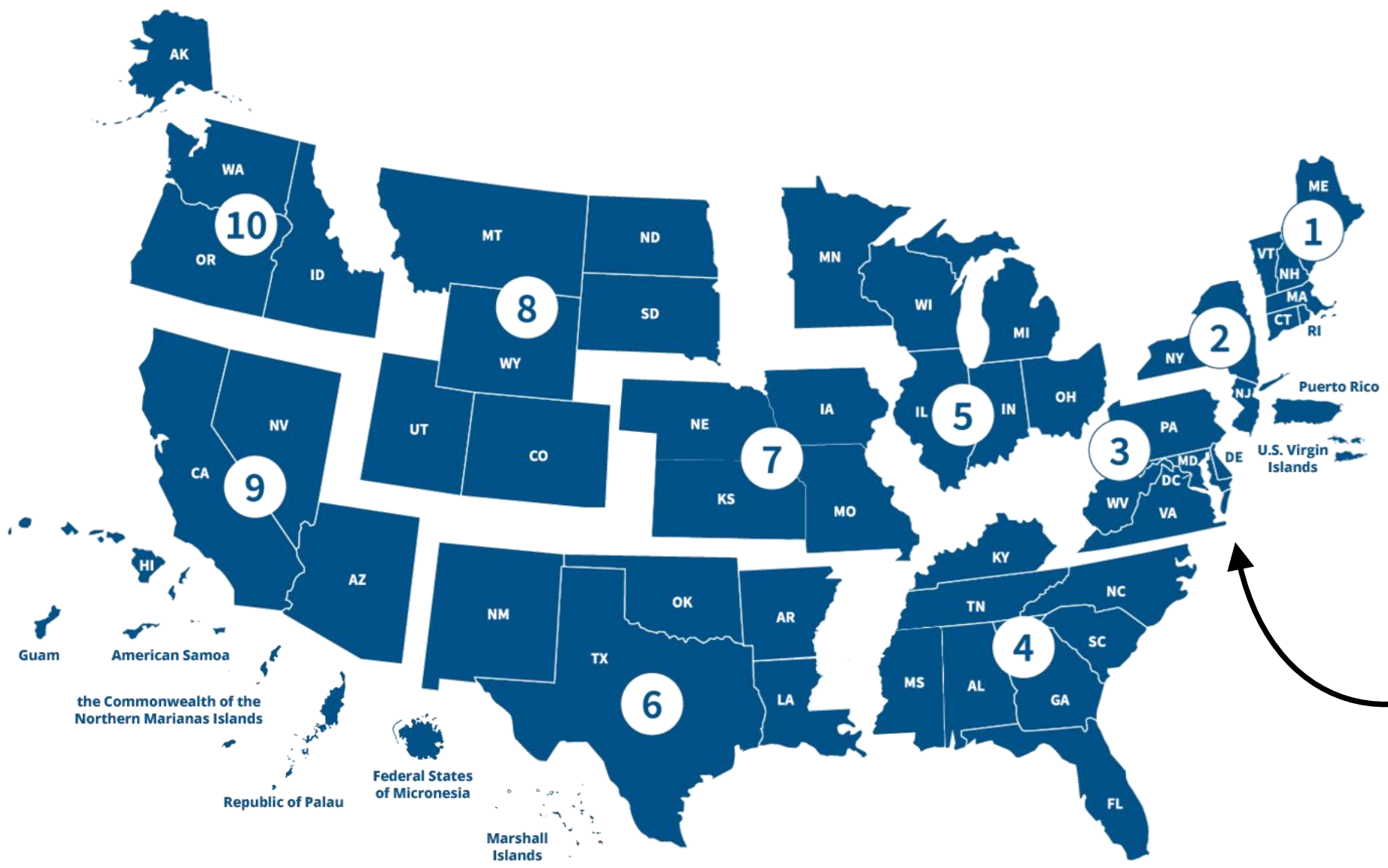
Repeat your main messages

Initial Implementation

US Health and Human Services Region 3 Public Health Preparedness
Center

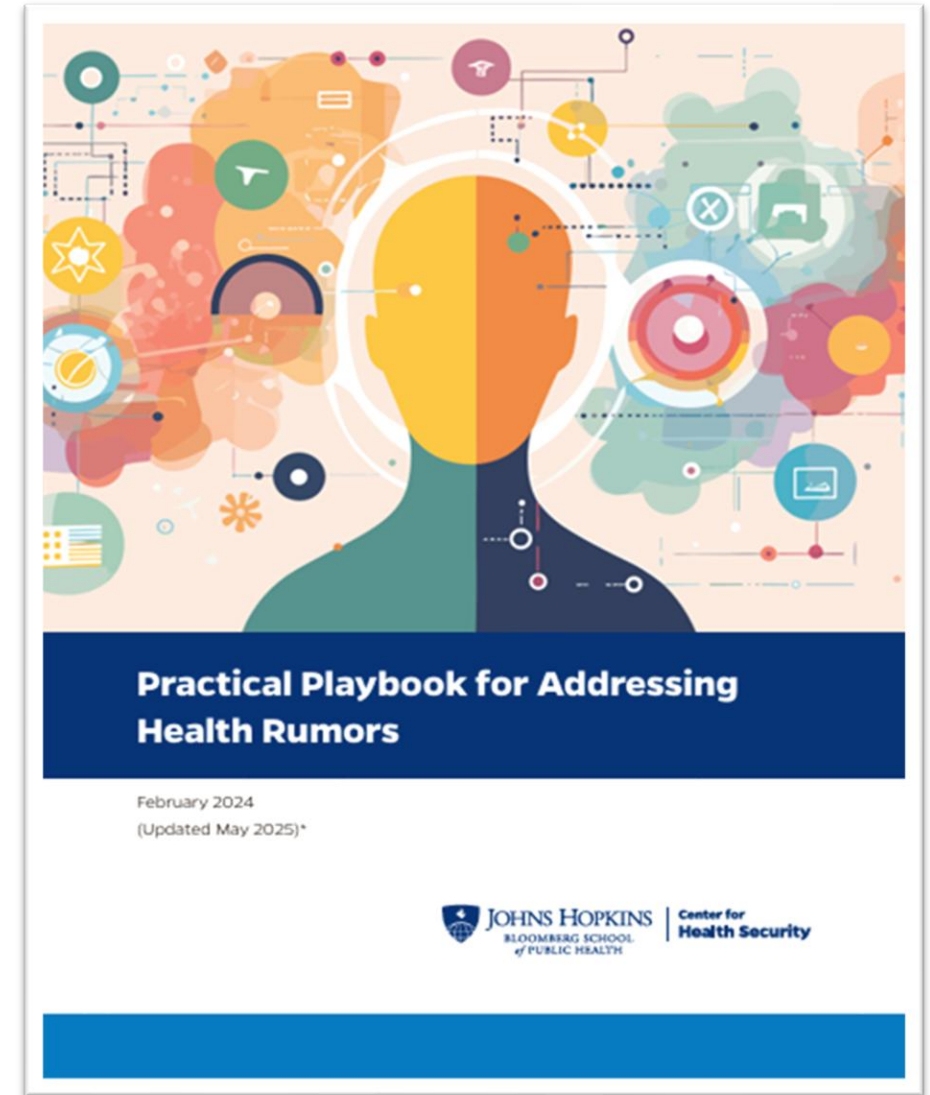


CDC Region 3 PHPR Center

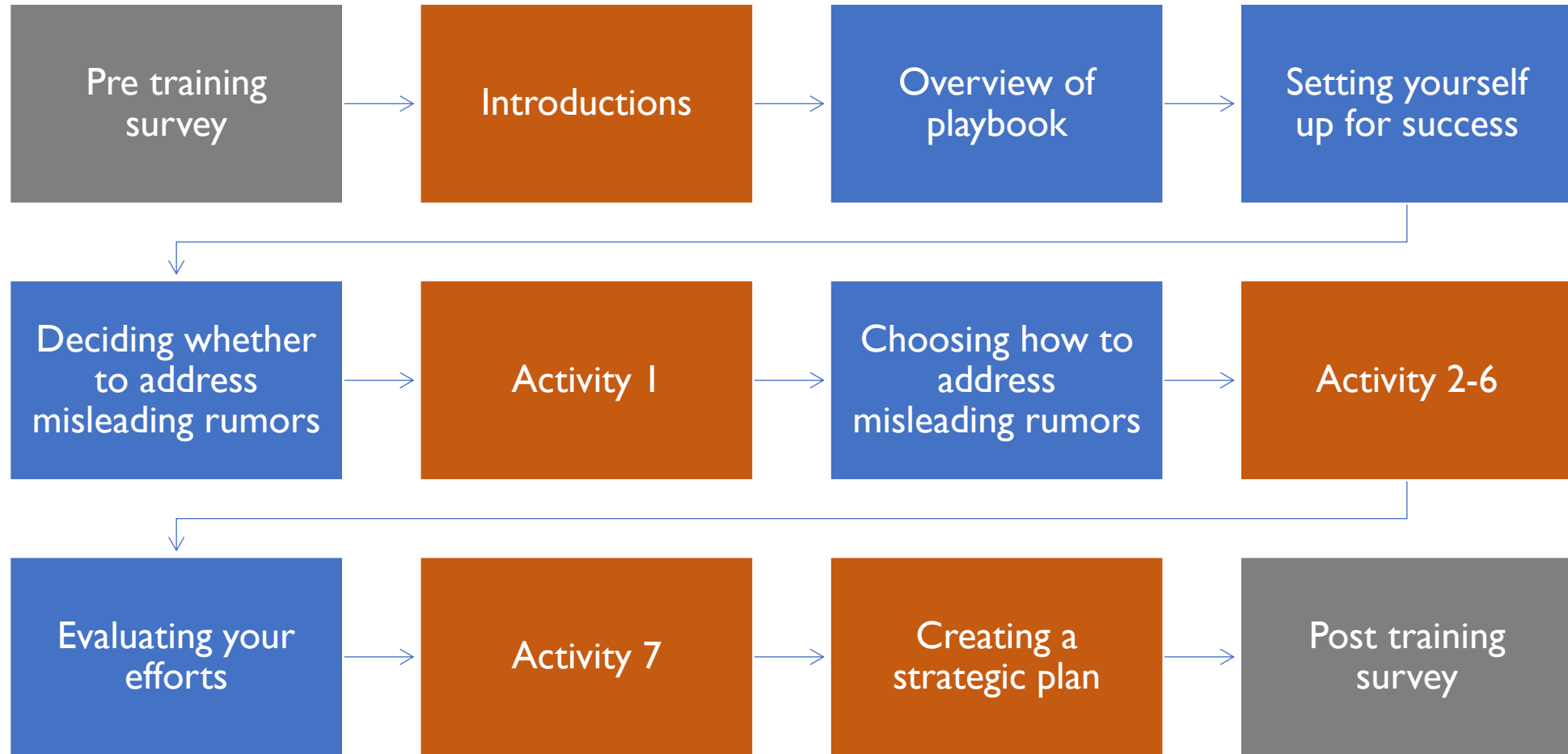


Action Plan to Address Public Health Rumors

- Engaged practitioners through strategic planning sessions and TA to improve their ability to strategically counter misleading & harmful rumors
- Implemented **11** sessions with **240** practitioners from **47** jurisdictions
- In region 3: **8** sessions, **99** practitioners **19** jurisdictions



Strategic planning sessions



evacuation orders are fake—it's a land grab

measles is just a rash, it's nothing to worry about

CDC quietly announced H5N1 has likely gone human-to-human transmission

emergency alert messages are a form of digital surveillance

vitamin A can prevent measles

vaccines cause autism

the boil water advisory is over but the water is probably still unsafe

firefighters are letting homes burn on purpose

raw milk protects from bird flu

the CDC hides data due to corporate influence

you have to pay to get rescued or receive FEMA aid

we should blame immigrants for bringing measles

my friend wore masks but still got COVID, so masks don't work

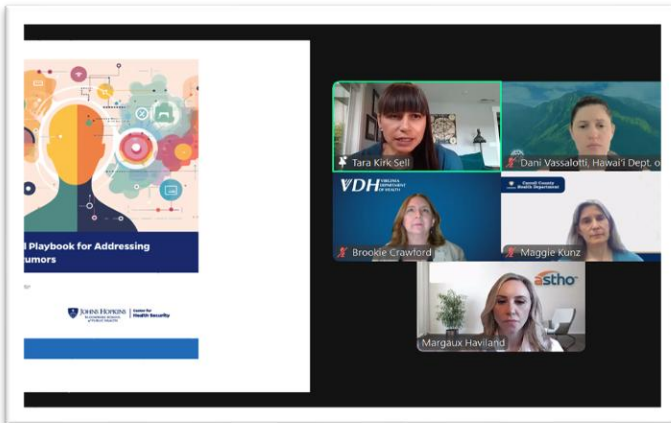
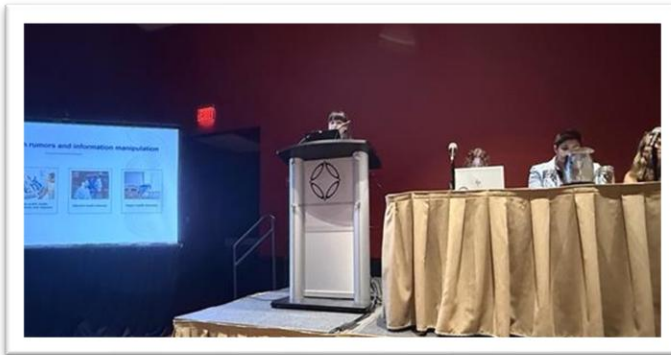
the MMR vaccine hasn't been tested for safety

Evaluation Findings

Gains in:

- Knowledge of approaches to counter harmful rumors
 - New knowledge attributable to the intervention
 - Learned practical and effective technical strategies
- Preparedness to counter rumors and implement common approaches
- Likelihood to counter rumors
- Intention to implement multiple rumor management approaches
- Capability to implement rumor management strategies
- Translating intention to future action
- Interest in pursuing partnerships and/or joint communication strategies for rumor management
- Confidence around managing rumors during crises and more empowered to streamline operations
- Interest to spur and sustain organizational change around better rumor management (one participant created internal SOPs for LHD)

However, for intention to turn into action/ sustained behavior change, **several operational and institutional barriers will need to be addressed**



Region 3 Success Stories



Jurisdictional level SOPs and rumor management templates developed by one participant



Integration into existing public health campaigns such as harm reduction



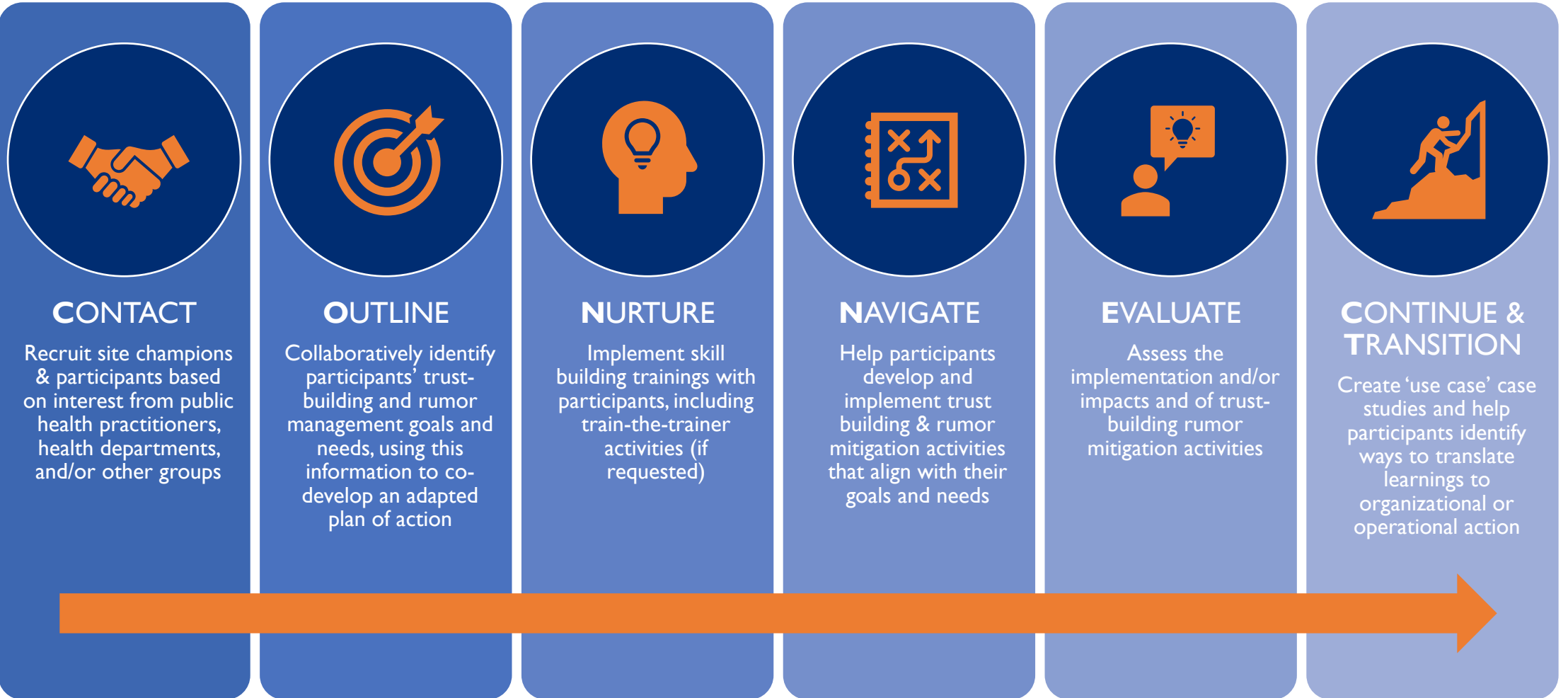
Incorporation into updated communication plans

Tackling Rumors and Understanding & Strengthening Trust in Public Health (TRUST) in Action

A large, light blue graphic on the right side of the slide. It features a stylized globe at the bottom with a grid of latitude and longitude lines. Above the globe is a flame-like shape, possibly representing a rumor or a fire. The entire graphic is composed of simple, rounded lines.

Partnering With Communities To Counter Health Rumors

Our Process - CONNECT



Implementers



**Cameron
County, TX**
(survey +
training w/
partners)



**Kitsap
County,
WA**
(focus
groups)



**Talbot
County,
MD**
(templates
+SOPs)



**Puerto
Rico**
(survey +
train the
trainer)



Vermont
(focus
groups +
training)



Hawai'i
(training
community
facing PH
workers)

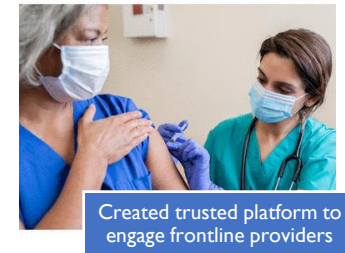
Range of Topic Areas

- **Cameron County:** Manage rumors and increase trust related to HPV vaccines
- **Kitsap County:** Integrate sudden unexpected infant death (SUID) rumor management in existing campaign
- **Talbot County:** Leverage local partners to strengthen rumor mitigation efforts
- **Puerto Rico:** To help regional personnel manage local rumors and strengthen community inclusion in public health
- **Vermont:** Address misconceptions about TB transmission among new arrivals to the state
- **Hawai'i:** Assist public facing public health workers address rumors and build trust

Project impacts

- Engaged 6 HDs in structured reflection and gap analysis
 - Offered agencies a rare, dedicated forum to identify concrete needs and bespoke solutions
 - Shifted discussions from general frustration about misinformation to specific rumors and operational challenges
- Site-specific resources and progress so far
 - Lit review and social media analysis of SUID behavioral drivers
 - Pre-meeting surveys in English & Spanish
 - Assisted with focus group development
 - Convened a virtual consultation session with 34 providers on HPV-related rumors, producing rich qualitative insights

Thinking ahead: expanding sites and solutions







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