
PAPER STREET

SOLUTIONS

Early Warning Signals: A Leadership Readiness Checklist

This checklist is not an evaluation. It is intended to help leaders notice early organizational signals that often appear before larger challenges emerge.

Governance & Decision-Making

- ☐ Board discussions regularly return to the same unresolved issues
- ☐ Roles between governance and operations feel blurred or situational
- ☐ Decisions are delayed due to uncertainty or risk sensitivity
- ☐ Leadership time is increasingly spent managing tension rather than direction

Capacity & Workload

- ☐ Staff are technically coping but visibly fatigued
- ☐ Informal workarounds have become normalized
- ☐ Key roles rely heavily on a small number of people
- ☐ New initiative are added without removing others

Strategy & Direction

- ☐ Strategic priorities exist but feel disconnected from daily operations
- ☐ Planning conversations feel aspirational rather than grounded
- ☐ There is pressure to “do something” without clarity on readiness
- ☐ Timing concerns are present but rarely voiced

Culture & Communication

- ☐ Feedback is cautious or filtered
- ☐ Staff engagement varies widely across teams
- ☐ Change fatigue is reference indirectly rather than openly
- ☐ Leadership senses hesitation but cannot fully name why

Risk & Resilience

- ☐ Emerging risks are discussed informally rather than structurally
- ☐ Reactive decision-making is increasing
- ☐ Leaders feel responsible for holding complexity alone

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- ☐ There is little shared language for organizational risk

Reflection

If multiple items resonate, it may indicate:

- Readiness constraints rather than performance issues
- Structural pressure rather than individual resistance
- A need for clarity before momentum
- To pause before launching new initiatives or planning processes

These signals are common in public institutions navigating complexity and often go unaddressed until stress increases.

Optional Next Step

Some organizations choose to explore these signals further through a structured **Operational Risk & Readiness Snapshot**, which helps surface patterns and context before decisions are made.