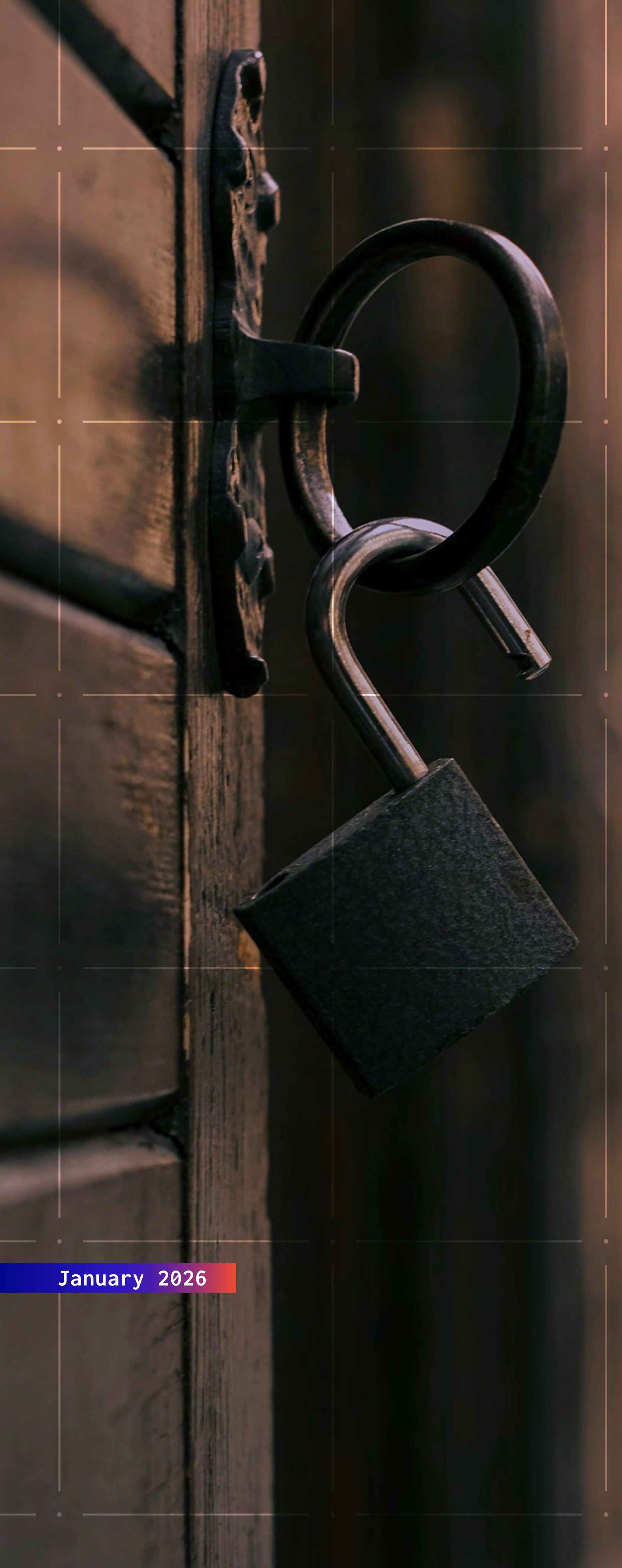

RISK IDENTIFICATION AND MITIGATION TOOL

Risk Management Workshop

OPEN NORTH

January 2026

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION

Data risk management has become a critical issue for organizations. In a context where legal compliance, privacy protection, and organizational reputation are interdependent, it is essential to have practical and accessible tools to identify, assess, and mitigate these risks.

The "Risk Matrix" will help your organization adopt a data-driven and risk management perspective without getting bogged down in technical jargon or overly complex projects.

The goal is to:

- Identify key data risks (financial, operational, personal, etc.);
- Determine which ones could most harm your mission, members, finances, or reputation;
- Set realistic priorities for mitigating these risks;
- Develop concrete and motivating courses of action.

The workshop is based on a **visual template from Open North**, "Workshop – Risk Matrix," available in PDF format and in Canva.

The framework is divided into four main sections:

- Five large coloured areas numbered from 1 to 5 (blue, green, red, purple, and yellow);
- A section dedicated to risk categories (financial, operational, reputational, data security, and personal information);
- An area for calculating probability and impact, including a simplified 2×2 matrix and more detailed models;
- A space reserved for risk mitigation measures, structured according to the columns Prevention, Detection, and Response.

The purpose of this guide is to provide you with a ready-to-use facilitation scenario, whether you are part of:

- Senior management;
- Project coordination;
- The board of directors;
- The salaried or volunteer team responsible for data governance on an interim basis or by necessity.

Figure 1 - Overview of the framework

2. BEFORE THE WORKSHOP – LOGISTICS AND PREPARATION

2.1. Format and duration

Recommended format:

- **In person:** ideally a room with a large wall or board to display the canvas;
- **Online:** use a collaborative whiteboard tool (e.g., Miro, Mural, or Figma) by importing the canvas PDF as a background and using virtual sticky notes.

Recommended duration (full version):

- **2.5 to 3 hours** to complete the 5 steps optimally.

An accelerated version (1.5 hour) is possible:

- Steps 1, 2, and 3: Completed as a full group during the session.
- Steps 4 and 5: Completed afterward in smaller breakout groups or as independent "homework" to be finalized outside the session.

2.2. Number of participants

- **Recommended group size:** 3 to 12 participants.
- **Small groups (3–4 people):** discussions should be held as a full group to maintain momentum and a fluid dynamic.
- **Larger groups (12–25 people):** it is recommended to break into sub-groups for Steps 2, 3, and 5 to ensure everyone can contribute.

2.3. Roles to assign during the workshop

Note: These roles can be combined for smaller groups.

- **Facilitator:** guides discussions and provides instructions.
- **Timekeeper:** ensures the schedule is maintained and provides time checks for each activity.
- **Scribe/Documentation:** records key decisions and captures screenshots or photos of the canvas at the end of the session.

2.4. Materials to prepare

In person:

- The canvas printed in large format (A0, A1, or several sheets tiled together);
- Sticky notes, ideally in two or three different colours;
- Broad-tip/thick markers for better legibility;
- Masking tape or sticky tack to mount the canvas on the wall:
- A large sheet of paper or board to record the final list of priority risks and mitigation measures.

Online:

- The canvas PDF imported as a background into your collaborative whiteboard or shared on-screen;
- Pre-formatted virtual sticky notes, colour-coded in advance (e.g., distinct colours for risks vs. expectations);
- An assigned person proficient with the tool to assist participants as needed.

2.5. Preparing the canvas

The canvas consists of the following elements:

Zone 1 (blue): Workshop objectives and expectations

- Left section: a large blue space titled "Objectives/ Expectations" to capture participant sticky notes;
- Right section: a dark blue box detailing the "Open North Workshop Objectives" and the overall goals of the process;
- Far right (grey square): a section titled "Risks, Data, and NPOs" that outlines the relevance of these issues to your audience (e.g., privacy protection, maintaining public trust, legal compliance, and mission sustainability).

Zone 2 (green): Identification and classification of risks

- Left section: a large green space presenting the facilitation instructions (For instance, "Read the table on the right" or "Move the sticky notes to the columns in the table");
- Right section: a classification table structured according to the following data categories:
  - Financial data;
  - Operational data;
  - Reputation and data;
  - Data security;
  - Personal data.

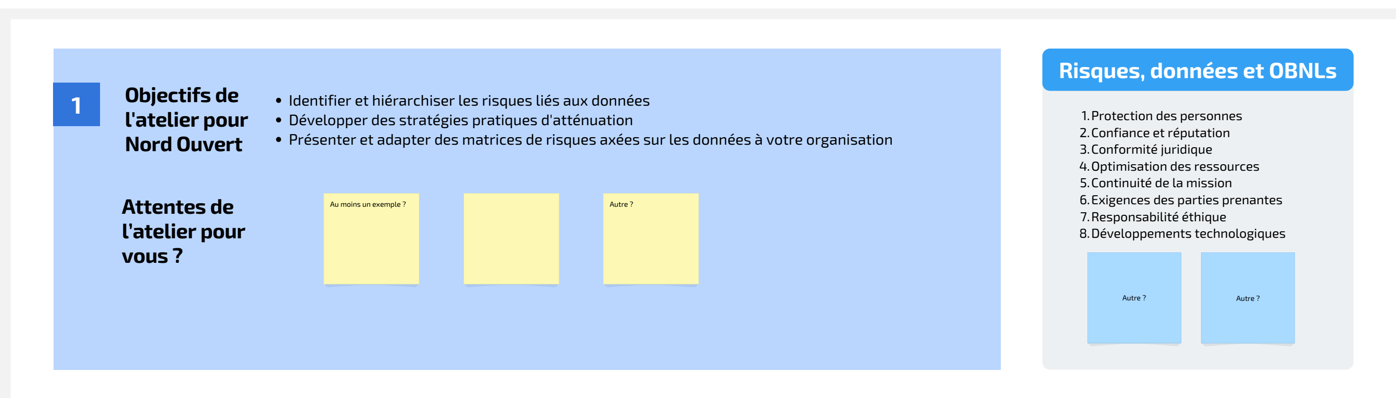

Figure 2 - Zone 1 : Objectives and expectations

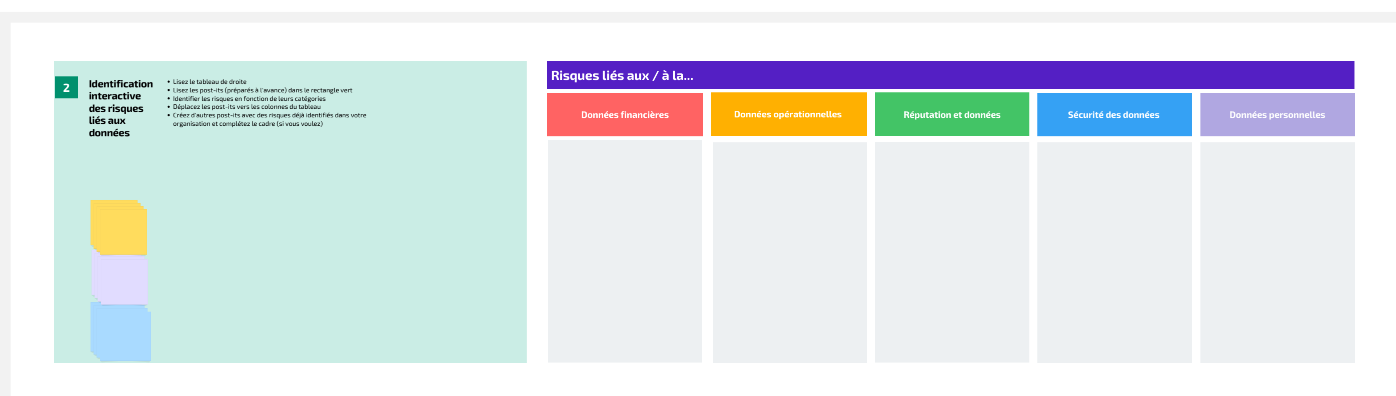

Figure 3 - Zone 2 : Risk identification

Zone 3 (red): Prioritization using the Probability/ Impact matrix

This section is dedicated to risk assessment and includes:

- Left section: a large red space for gathering the sticky notes selected for analysis;
- Center section: two grey blocks labeled "Non-priority risks" and "Priority risks" to help filter the identified issues;
- Right section: a primary "Probability/Impact" area featuring a 2×2 decision matrix, along with several detailed colour-coded matrix templates for reference.

Zone 4 (purple): Collaborative assessment and risk register

This section includes:

- Left section: a box providing guidelines for work to be completed outside the session (asynchronous "homework");
- Right section: a screenshot of a sample risk register template (spreadsheet format) for participant reference.

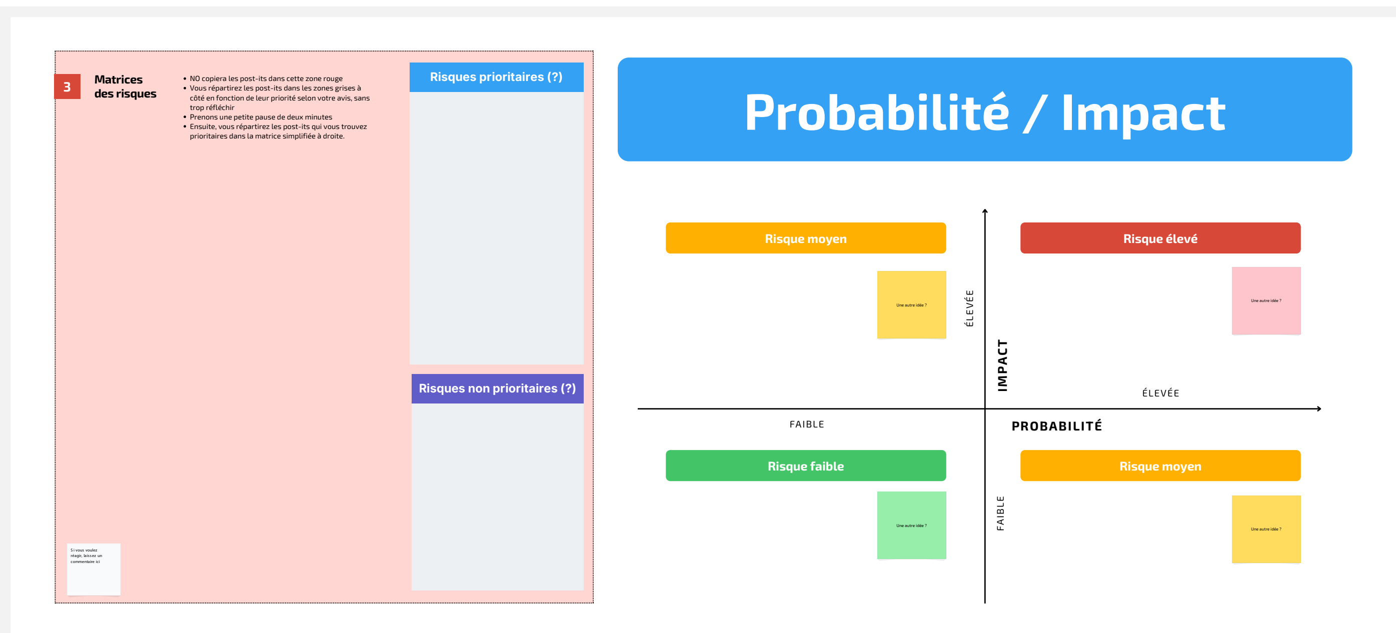

Figure 4 - Zone 3 : Risk prioritization

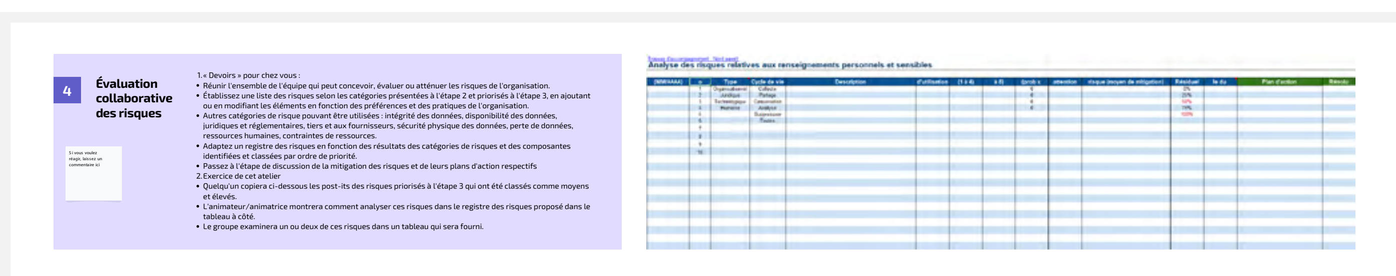

Figure 5 - Zone 4 : Risk register

Zone 5 (yellow): Risk mitigation measures (Prevention-Detection-Response)

- Left section: a box titled "Risk mitigation actions" providing detailed instructions for developing a response plan;
- Right section: three distinct columns for categorizing measures by their function: Prevention, Detection, and Response.

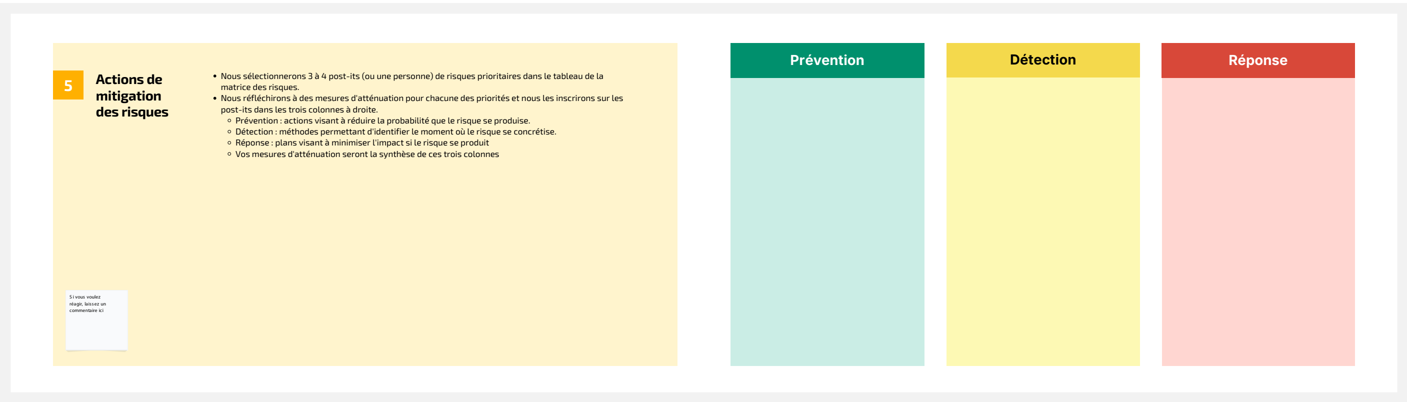

Figure 6 - Zone 5 : Risk mitigation

2.6. Preparing risk examples (pre-filled sticky notes)

To help the group get started in Step 2:

1. Prepare **6 to 12 sticky notes** featuring real-world risks relevant to your non-profit organization (NPO) :
   - **Financial data:** "inadequate backup of accounting files";
   - **Operational data:** "registration system interruption during peak periods";
   - **Reputation and data:** "sending a communication to the wrong mailing list";
   - **Data security:** "sharing passwords over email";
   - **Personal information:** "participant file left visible in a common area."
2. Place these notes in the space provided in Zone 2 (green rectangle) before participants arrive.

3. OVERVIEW OF THE 5 STEPS

The following is an overview of the workshop schedule, with durations estimated for a **2.5-hour** total session.

STEP	CANVAS AREA	MAIN OBJECTIVE	SUGGESTED DURATION
1. Objectives and expectations	Zone 1 – blue	Clarify the objectives of the meeting and gather participants' expectations	15–20 min
2. Identify and classify risks	Zone 2 – green	Identify data risks and classify them into 5 categories.	30–40 min
3. Prioritize risks (Probability/Impact)	Zone 3 – red	Decide which risks are priorities for the organization.	40–50 min
4. Risk register	Zone 4 – purple	Start or plan to create a simple risk register.	20–30 min (or as homework)
5. Mitigation (Prevention – Detection – Response)	Zone 5 – yellow	Identify concrete actions to reduce priority risks.	30–40 min

4. DETAILED STEP-BY-STEP FACILITATION

4.1. Step 1 – Objectives and expectations (blue zone)

Objective of the step: Establish a shared understanding of why data risk management matters and gather participants' expectations for the session.

Suggested duration: 15–20 minutes

Area of the canvas: the **blue zone** at the top of the canvas:

- Left section: a space for sticky notes titled "What are your expectations for the workshop?"
- Right section: the "Open North Workshop Objectives" block and the list of core goals (e.g., protecting individuals, maintaining trust and reputation).

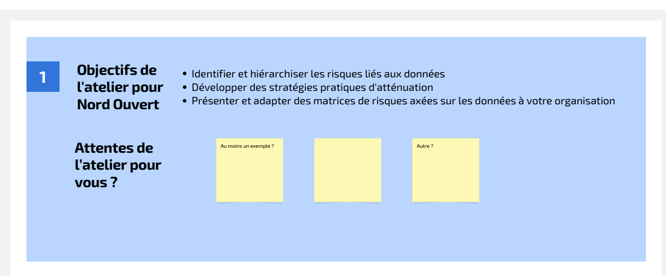

Figure 7 - Zone 1 for Step 1

4.1.1. Proposed schedule

1. Welcome participants (2–3 min)

- Briefly introduce the session and its purpose.

> *"Hello everyone, and thank you for joining us. Today, we are going to take a structured look at the data-related risks within our organization. Our goal isn't to create alarm, but rather to collaborate on the best ways to protect our work and honor the trust that our community and stakeholders place in us."*

2. Present the overall goal of the workshop (3–4 min)

- Refer to the right-hand block, "Open North Workshop Objectives":

> *"On the right side of the blue section, you can see our primary objectives for this workshop. In short, we are here to:*
> - *better protect the people behind the data we handle;*
> - *keep our reputation strong and maintain the trust people place in us;*
> - *make sure we're meeting our legal requirements;*
> - *and use our resources wisely to stay focused on our core mission."*

3. Write down the date and time (1 min)

- In the designated "Date and time" area, quickly note the current date and the planned duration of the session.

4. Gather the group's expectations (8–10 min)

- **In-person:** distribute one or two sticky notes to each person and ask them to write down what they hope to get out of the workshop.
- **Online:** ask participants to add their expectations using virtual sticky notes or by typing in the chat, then move those ideas into the blue "Expectations" box.
- **Suggested instructions:**

> *"Please take a moment to write down one or two expectations you have for this workshop. For example, you might want to 'better understand our specific risks' or 'leave with a concrete action plan.' To keep our discussion organized, please make sure to write only one idea per note."*

- Once everyone has finished writing, invite participants to post their notes in the **"What are your expectations for the workshop?"** section.

5. Summarize the expectations (2–3 min).

- Read the sticky notes aloud and group those that deal with similar topics.
- **Suggested instruction:**

> *"I see quite a few expectations focused on [e.g., personal information protection] and [e.g., knowing where to begin]. We will keep these themes in mind throughout the session and circle back at the end to ensure we've addressed your key interests."*

4.1.2. Small/large group variations

- **Small group (3–4 people):** each person reads their expectation(s) aloud.
- **Large group (more than 15 people):**
  - Ask participants to write their notes in silence;
  - The facilitator reads through the notes and summarizes recurring themes for the room rather than having each individual speak.

4.2. Step 2 – Identification and classification of risks (green zone)

Objective of this step: Identify real-world data risks **specific to your organization** and categorize them into five key risk areas.

Suggested duration: 30–40 minutes.

Area of the canvas: The large **green zone** titled "Interactive Identification of Data Risks," including:

- A dedicated space on the left containing participant instructions (e.g., "Review the category table on the right" and "Sort your sticky notes into the corresponding columns").
- On the right, the table "Risks related to..." with five columns of categories.

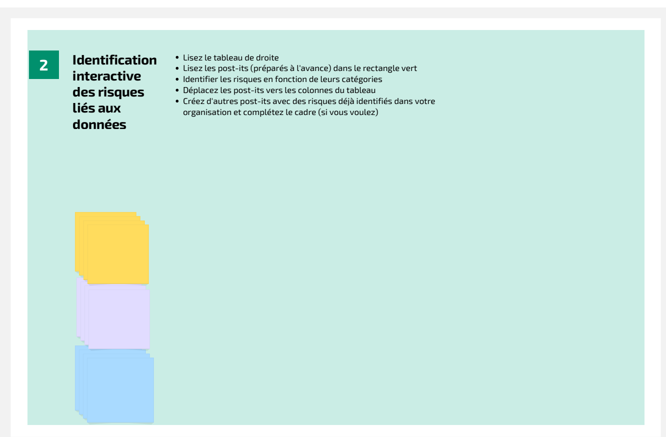

Figure 8 - Zone 2 for Step 2

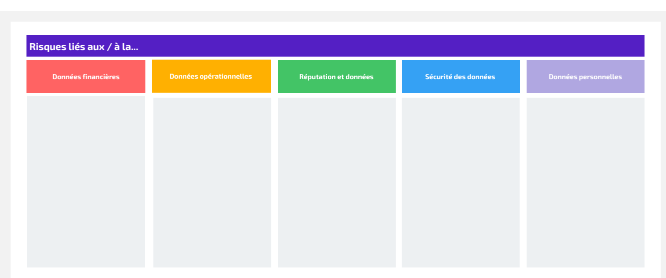

Figure 9 - Table of risk categories

4.2.1. Explain the categories to the group

- Use the table on the right-hand side of the canvas to walk the group through the following definitions:
  - **Financial data**

    > *"Everything related to the organization's finances: accounting records, donations, grants, tax receipts, and banking information."*

  - **Operational data**

    > *"The data that keeps us running day-to-day, such as volunteer lists, schedules, registration systems, and project files."*

  - **Reputation and data**

    > *"Situations where a data mishap could damage public trust, such as email errors, poor communication during an incident, or unauthorized leaks."*

  - **Data security**

    > *"Technical risks that could lead to data loss or theft, including viruses, weak passwords, stolen hardware, or a lack of backups."*

  - **Personal data**

    > *"Any information about an identifiable individual, such as names and addresses, as well as sensitive data like health status, financial history, or background."*

- **Please specify:**

  > *"You might find that some risks fit into more than one category. For this exercise, don't worry about finding the perfect match, simply choose the one category that feels most relevant or where the impact would be felt most strongly."*

4.2.2. Proposed procedure

1. Read the table of categories (3–5 min)

- **Suggested instructions:**

> *"To get us started, we will walk through the risk categories in the table on the right together. This will help us analyze our daily activities through a shared lens and ensure we are all using a common language as we identify potential risks."*

2. Read the sticky notes you have prepared as examples (5–7 min)

- Point to the green rectangle where the sticky notes made during the preparation stage are grouped together.
- **Suggested instructions:**

> *"To help us get started, I've put together a few examples of typical risks on these sticky notes. Let's look at them together. As we go through these, think about any similar situations or data challenges you run into in your own day-to-day work."*

3. Identify organization-specific risks (10–15 min)

- **In person:** distribute 4 to 5 sticky notes per person (or per subgroup).
- **Online:** create blank virtual sticky notes in the green zone and invite participants to fill them in simultaneously.
- **Suggested instructions:**

> *"Write one risk per sticky note. Ask yourself: what could go wrong with our data? It could be something you've already experienced, or something that worries you."*

4. Sort and categorize the risks (10–15 min)

- Follow the visual cues in the green zone to help the group organize their thoughts.
- **Suggested instructions:**

> *"Now, let's categorize these risks using the table on the right. You can come up and stick your notes in the column that feels like the best fit, or simply call out where they should go and I'll place them for you."*

- **Tip for the facilitator:** While the participants are doing this, start grouping together notes on identical or very similar topics to make the table easier to read.

4.2.3. Small/large group variations

- Ask a few questions:
  - "Which columns have the most sticky notes?"
  - "Are there any types of risks that we haven't mentioned before?"

4.2.3. Variations petit / grand groupe

- **Small group:** Encourage open and spontaneous discussion while participants collectively sort the sticky notes.
- **Large group (more than 12 people):**
  - Divide the participants into **subgroups** and assign each of them a specific category, such as "financial data" or "personal information";
  - Have each subgroup fill out their assigned column with relevant risks and then present **2 to 3** of their most significant risks to the rest of the participants.

4.3. Step 3 – Prioritization and Probability/Impact matrix (red zone)

Objective of this step: Determine which identified risks represent the **highest priority** for the organization to address at this time.

Suggested duration: 40–50 minutes

Area of the canvas:

- The large **red zone** designated for prioritization, which includes the following key instructions:
  - Les consignes suivantes:
    - "One person will copy the sticky notes into this red zone."
    - "You will distribute the sticky notes in the gray boxes."
    - "Let's take a short two-minute break."
  - Two gray areas: **"Non-Priority Risks"** and **"Priority Risks"**;

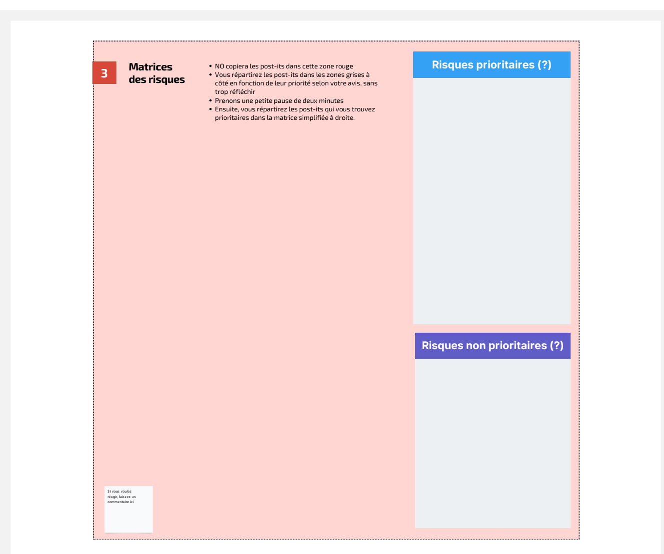

Figure 10 - Zone 3 for Step 3

- **The Probability/Impact matrix:** a 2 x 2 grid used to position risks according to their frequency and severity.
  - Horizontal axis: **Probability – low/high**
  - Vertical axis: **Impact – low/high**
- To the right of the main matrix, you will find examples of more detailed matrices to help guide the group if more granular scoring is required.

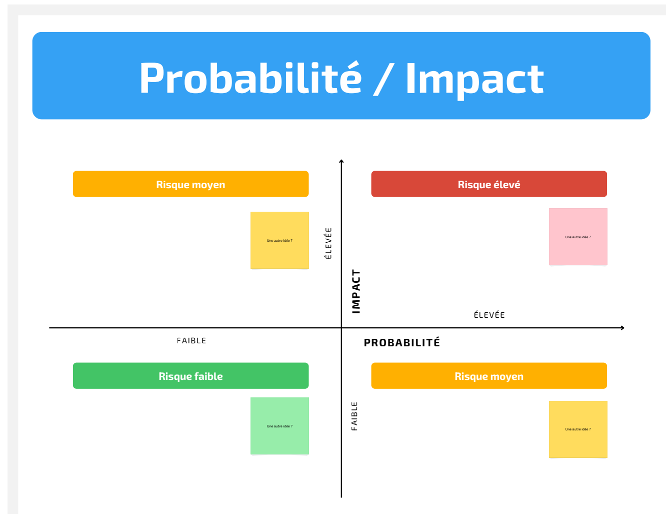

Figure 11 - Probability/Impact matrix

4.3.1. Explain the concepts of probability and impact

Explain simply:

- **Probability (potential frequency):** this involves assessing the likelihood that the risk will materialize.
  - **Examples of indicators:**
    "It already happens often" → high probability;
    "It has never happened, but it could happen" → low or medium probability.
- **Impact (severity of consequences):** This involves measuring the extent of the damage if the risk were to materialize.
  - Does it compromise:
    - The safety or dignity of individuals?
    - The reputation of the non-profit organization?
    - Its ability to carry out its mission?
    - Its finances?

- **Suggested guideline:**

> *"We're not looking for perfect science here. We just want to capture a common impression: relative to everything else on the board, what is more serious and more likely to happen?"*

4.3.2. Proposed procedure

1. Move the risks to the red zone (5–10 min)

- **In person:** physically move the sticky notes from the green zone to the red zone to prepare for the matrix exercise;
- **Online:** duplicate the notes to keep a record in the original classification table while adding a copy to the prioritization zone.

2. Sort by priority level (10–15 min)

- Label the two gray spaces "Priority Risks" and "Non-Priority Risks."
- **Suggested instruction:**

> *"Now, let's do a quick sort. Without overthinking it, I'd like to ask: which of these risks are truly concerning for our organization over the next 12 to 18 months? We'll move those into the **'Priority Risks'** area. The others will go into **'Non-Priority'** for now. Don't worry, those are still documented, but this helps us decide exactly where to start our work today."*

- Let the participants move the notes or do it yourself while asking for their reactions in real time.

3. Short break (2–3 min)

- Repeat the written instruction: "Let's take a short two-minute break." This break is essential to mark the transition from the **observation** phase to the **planning** phase.

4. Review the priority risks (5–10 min)

- Look only at the "Priority Risks" area.
- Ask the following questions:
  - "Is there a really important risk missing here?"
  - "Is there a sticky note that should be moved to the other side (to the non-priority area)?"

5. Position the risks on the 2×2 matrix (15–20 min)

- Show the simple matrix in the center of the "Probability/Impact" area, highlighting the four quadrants defined by the "low" and "high" axes.
- **Suggested instruction:**

> *"We are now going to place our priority risks onto this matrix. We are looking at two factors: how likely the risk is to occur, and how significant its impact would be. We want to base our placement on what we actually know about our organization today, rather than on the worst-case scenario imaginable."*

6. For each priority risk:

- Ask the group:
  - **Probability**: "Is it rather low or rather high in our reality?"
  - **Impact**: "If it does happen, is it fairly manageable or very damaging?"

7. Place the sticky note in the correct quadrant:

- **High probability / High impact** → top right corner (red);
- **Low probability / High impact** → top left (yellow);
- **Low probability / Low impact** → bottom right corner (green);
- **High probability / Low impact** → bottom right corner (yellow).

8. Look at the more detailed matrix examples (5 min – optional)

- In the same area, on the right, show the small coloured matrices (3×3, 3×4, and 5x5).
- **Suggested instruction:**

> *"Here, you can see examples of more detailed matrices with additional levels for probability and impact. You can use these as inspiration later if you want to refine your analysis, for example, by adding a 'medium' level between low and high. For our workshop today, we are focusing on the simplified matrix to help us make concrete and operational decisions quickly."*

Figure 12 - Other risk matrix models

4.3.3. Small/large group variations

- **Small group:**
  - You can discuss each risk until a consensus is reached.
- **Large group:**
  - Divide the priority risks between two or three subgroups;
  - Each subgroup places its risks in a copy of the matrix (or works on a portion of the sticky notes);
  - Then proceed with consolidation.

4.4. Step 4 – Risk register (purple zone)

Objective of the step: Transform the list of priority risks into a **risk register** that will serve as a basis for monitoring.

A **risk register** is a **spreadsheet** where each row corresponds to a risk and each column provides essential details: description, causes, consequences, probability, impact, responsibility, measures in place, etc.

Suggested duration:

- 20–30 minutes for a live demonstration during the workshop;
- Detailed completion to be finalized by your team as "homework" following the workshop.

Canvas area:

- The section entitled "Homework" outlines specific next steps to maintain momentum, including: gathering your core team to review the workshop findings, drawing up a formal list of prioritized risks based on today's matrix, and adapting or create a risk register for the organization.
- An **example of a register** in the form of an Excel table is shown on the right.

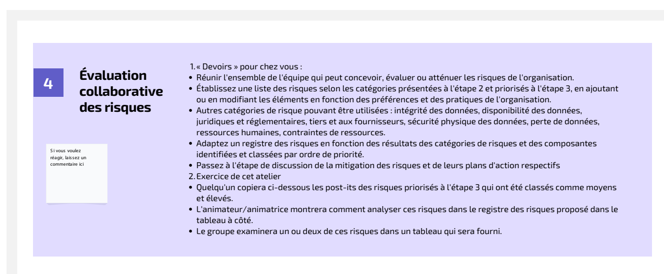

Figure 13 - Zone 4 for Step 4

Figure 14 - Example of a risk register

4.4.1. Proposed procedure

1. Present the concept of the register (3–4 min)

- **Suggested instructions:**

> *"Up until now, we've been working mostly with sticky notes to get our ideas out. To make sure this work actually sticks and is easy to update and share, we need something more permanent. That's where the risk register comes in.."*

2. Show the example on the canvas (2–3 min)

- Point to the Excel table on the canvas;
- Indicate the columns you want to keep, for example:
  - Risk name/simple description;
  - Category (from the 5 columns in Step 2);
  - Probability (low/medium/high);
  - Impact (low/medium/high);
  - Risk level (e.g., low, medium, high - probability and impact);
  - Responsible party;
  - Measures in place;
  - Next steps.

3. Work through an example together (10–15 min)

- Choose **1 to 2 risks** from those in the most critical quadrant of the matrix (high probability/high impact);
- Fill in the columns of the register together using a flipchart or projected file.
- **Suggested instructions:**

> *"We are going to fill in the register for one risk together so that we can fully understand the method. You can then complete the exercise for the other priority risks with your team."*

4. Plan the work outside the session ("homework") (5–10 min)

- Using the instructions in the "Homework!" section, explain the following:

> *"After the end of the workshop, you can:*
> *› Gather the key people on the team;*
> *› Complete the list of risks by category;*
> *› Adapt a risk register to suit your circumstances;*
> *› Rank the risks by priority;*
> *› Prepare for the discussion on mitigation actions."*

4.4.2. Variations

- **If you are short on time:**
  - Provide **only one complete example** in a plenary session;
  - Entrust the finalization of the register to a select committee (e.g., management, IT manager, and finance manager).
- **If you have more time (half a day or more):**
  - Have several sub-groups fill out the register, and assign each sub-group a series of priority risks so that they can collaboratively complete the corresponding lines in the register.

4.5. Step 5 – Risk mitigation (yellow zone)

Objective of this step: Transform priority risks into **concrete**, realistic **actions** for the organization.

Suggested duration: 30–40 minutes

Area of the canvas:

- The large **yellow area** titled **"Risk Mitigation Actions,"** structured in three columns: **Prevention**, **Detection**, and **Response**.
- An explanatory text specifies the function of each column:
  - Prevention: action aimed at reducing the likelihood of the risk occurring;
  - Detection: measures to quickly identify when the risk occurs;
  - Response: procedures to limit the impact if the risk occurs.

Terminology: in this context, "mitigation" refers to the actions taken to reduce or minimize the impact of a risk.

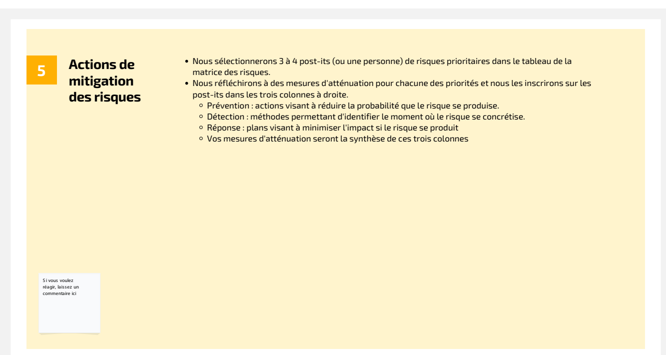

Figure 15 - Zone 5 for Step 5

Figure 16 - Prevention - Detection - Response columns

4.5.1. Proposed procedure

1. Choose the risks to work on (5–10 min)

- Return to the matrix from step 3;
- As a group:
  - Identify the 3 to 4 most important **risks**;
  - Or divide a **specific risk among sub-groups.**
- **Suggested instruction:**

> *"We won't try to solve everything today. We're going to choose a few key risks that are most critical to us, and we're going to look for ideas for concrete actions."*

2. Explain the three columns (5 min)

- Pointing to the yellow area:
  - **Prevention:**
    - "What can we put in place to prevent this risk from occurring?"
    - Examples include training, new procedures, change of tools, clear policy.
  - **Detection:**
    - "How can we quickly detect the problem?"
    - Examples include alerts, regular checks, log monitoring, monthly review.
  - **Response:**
    - "If the problem does occur, how will we limit the damage? Who does what, and in what order?"

3. Work in subgroups or as a whole group (20–25 min)

- **In subgroups** (recommended if there are more than 6 people):
  - Each subgroup takes charge of a **specific risk**;
  - Each group generates at least **two or three ideas** for each column (Prevention, Detection, Response);
  - Participants write down the actions on sticky notes or directly in the yellow area.
- **As a full group:**
  - The facilitator reads the risk aloud;
  - The group suggests ideas for each column;
  - The facilitator records the responses in the appropriate column.
- **Suggested instruction:**

> *"We are looking for measures that are realistic for us. No need for $50,000 software! These can be simple things: an automatic reminder, a procedure, a checklist, a team training session, or other practical steps."*

4. Summarize (5–10 min)

- For each risk, ask:

> *"Of all these ideas, which ones are really priorities and realistic for the next 6 to 12 months?"*

- Visually identify these key actions by circling them or marking them with a distinctive symbol (a star, for example).

4.5.2. Variations to adapt Step 5 to your situation

Step 5 is very flexible. You can adapt it according to the size of the group, the time available, and the format (in-person or online), while keeping the structure of the framework. Choose 3 to 4 priority risks and define **prevention**, **detection**, and **response** measures for each one.

Here are some possible variations:

a) Small group (3–5 people)

- Stay in as a full group for the entire duration of the exercise.
- Work on only **1 to 2 risks**, but in greater depth.
- You can conduct this step almost like a conversation: everyone discusses, and one person records the ideas in the three columns of the framework (Prevention, Detection, Response).
- **Suggested instructions:**

> *"Since we're a small group, we'll keep it simple: we'll take one risk at a time, discuss it, and I'll write down your ideas in the three columns. We're aiming for a few realistic actions, not a perfect list."*

b) Medium or large group (6–20 people)

- Working in subgroups is highly recommended to maximize participation. Here are two simple options:
  - **One risk per subgroup:**
    - Each subgroup chooses or is assigned a priority risk;
    - The team fills in the three columns (Prevention, Detection, Response) for that single risk;
    - Then, each group presents **1 to 3 key actions** to the rest of the group.
  - **Same risk, multiple subgroups:**
    - All subgroups work on **the same critical risk** (e.g., the one with the highest probability and impact);
    - Bring the teams back together to compare their different strategies and select the most effective priority actions.
- **Suggested instructions:**

> *"We're going to split into small groups. Each group will work on one risk and try to come up with some prevention, detection, and response measures. Afterwards, we'll share our ideas and decide together what we really want to keep."*

c) Online workshop

- Use a **collaborative whiteboard** (Miro, Mural, Jamboard, etc.) with the canvas in the background and virtual sticky notes.
- If participants are not comfortable with the tool, you can:
  - Ask them to respond aloud or via the chat box;
  - Appoint a "scribe" to record these ideas into the correct columns of the canvas in real time.
- **Suggested instruction:**

> *"If you're not comfortable with the tool, that is no problem: just share your ideas out loud or via the chat, and I'll put them in the correct columns for you."*

d) When time is very limited

- If the workshop is short or already coming to an end:
  - Limit the exercise to a maximum of **one or two risks**;
  - Ask the group to suggest **one or two key actions** per column, no more;
  - Save secondary ideas or remaining risks for later work to be completed by a smaller committee.
- **Suggested instruction:**

> *"We don't have much time left, so we're going to choose a single risk and focus on one or two really important actions for prevention, one for detection, and one for response. The goal is to come away with something feasible."*

e) When you have more time (half a day or more)

- Work on **more risks** (e.g., 4 to 6).
- Take the time to structure the implementation in concrete terms:
  - Appoint people **to be responsible** for certain actions;
  - Set realistic **deadlines**;
  - Link these actions to the NPO's **risk register** and **action plan**.
- **Suggested instruction:**

> *"Since we have some extra time, let's take this a step further. For our priority actions, we'll assign a clear lead and set a realistic target date to make sure these ideas actually move forward."*

5. ADAPT THE RISK MATRIX TO YOUR ORGANIZATION

On the canvas, the "Probability/Impact" area presents two complementary approaches:

- A **simplified** 2×2 matrix (low/high probability, low/high impact);
- Examples of **more detailed matrices** (with more boxes, colours, and levels).

You can keep the 2×2 matrix as a visual aid while adapting the internal definitions to reflect the reality of your organization.

5.1. Choose your probability levels

For example, choose a **3-level** scale:

- **Low:** "We think it could happen, but it is unlikely to happen in the next three years."
- **Medium:** "It could happen from time to time, say once every 1 to 3 years."
- **High:** "This risk is already occurring or is likely to occur every year."

You can keep the **low/high** axes on the visual matrix to help the group position risks intuitively, while recording the specific level (e.g., **medium**) in your formal risk register.

5.2. Choose your impact levels

For example:

- **Minor:** little to no impact on people, limited impact on the mission;
- **Moderate:** some impact on people, some disruption to activities;
- **Major:** significant damage to trust, mission, or finances;
- **Critical:** jeopardizes the survival of the NPO, the safety of individuals, or causes a major public crisis.

Again, the visual matrix can remain simple (low/high), but your detailed definitions can be included in the register.

5.3. Linking the matrix to the overall level of risk

To ensure consistent management, it is essential to define how the combination of probability and impact determines the **overall risk level.** You can adopt the following logic:

- High probability + high impact = **very high risk** (priority 1);
- Low probability + high impact = **medium risk** (but to be monitored, priority 2);
- High probability + low impact = **medium risk** (priority 3);
- Low probability + low impact = **low risk**.

Record this legend in your risk register so that it is consistent from year to year.

6. CREATE AND USE A RISK REGISTER

Although an example of a register appears on the template, your organization may decide to use a **simple spreadsheet** (Excel, Google Sheets, LibreOffice, etc.) for tracking purposes.

6.1. Recommended columns

You can start with the following columns:

- Risk **ID** (R1, R2, R3, etc.)
- **Risk description** (clear sentence, in plain language)
- **Category** (financial, operational, reputation, security, personal, or other)
- **Probability** (low/medium/high)
- **Impact** (low/medium/high)
- **Risk level** (low/medium/high, combining probability and impact)
- **Primary responsible party** (name or role, e.g., management, IT coordinator)
- **Measures in place** (what you are already doing)
- **Additional actions to be implemented**
- **Deadline** (date or period)
- **Status** (to do / in progress / completed)

6.2. How to complete the register based on the workshop

- **Take the risks placed in the matrix** in Step 3.
- **For each priority risk**, create a row in your register.
- As a team, discuss how to fill in the context and responsibility columns.
- Use the **mitigation actions** from Step 5 to fill in the "Actions to be implemented," "Deadline," and "Status" columns.

6.3. How to update the register

- Designate a specific person to be responsible for the register, such as a member of management or the individual in charge of personal information protection.
- Review the register:
  - At least **once a year;**
  - Or when you launch a **major new project** (new system, new sensitive data, etc.).

7. ACTION PLAN AND FOLLOW-UP

The workshop produces a significant amount of information. To transform these ideas into a concrete and operational action plan, follow these steps:

7.1. Prioritize mitigation actions

- Refer to the **Prevention – Detection – Response** columns in the yellow zone.
- For each risk:
  - Circle the actions considered to be **priorities** for the next 6 to 12 months;
  - Set aside those that are too burdensome, costly, or complex for the time being.

7.2. Turn actions into tasks

Create a tracking table (integrated into your register or another file) to structure implementation with the following columns:

- Action
- Related to which risk (register ID)
- Task owner
- Resources required (time, budget)
- Deadline
- Status

Try to limit yourself to **5–10 actions** for the next 12 months, in order to remain realistic.

7.3. Integrate the action plan into the life of the organization

- The action plan must be linked to existing processes such as:
  - The team's **annual objectives;**
  - **The strategic plan;**
  - The **compliance** plan with **Law 25** (for personal information), if necessary.
- Schedule **regular follow-ups** and integrate risk monitoring into existing cycles, such as quarterly management or board of directors (BOD) meetings.

8. ADDITIONAL EXAMPLES

8.1. Examples of risks by category

Here are a few ideas to fuel your discussions (adapt them to your situation).

Financial data:

- Loss of accounting files due to a broken hard drive that was not backed up;
- Unauthorized access to the organization's online bank account;
- Error in tax receipts to donors (incorrectly entered or lost data).

Operational data:

- Loss of volunteer lists following a poorly planned software change;
- Ticketing or registration system failure during event launch;
- Project files scattered across personal USB drives and unsecured computers.

Reputation and data:

- Email sent to the wrong list (e.g., sensitive information sent to all subscribers);
- Accidental publication of an internal document containing sensitive data on the website;
- Public negative comments due to a data leak.

Data security:

- Passwords shared by email or in an unprotected file;
- Laptop containing sensitive data stolen from a café;
- Presence of ransomware due to lack of software updates.

Personal data:

- Paper files containing sensitive information (health, family situation) left in an unlocked filing cabinet;
- Sharing personal data with a partner without clear consent;
- Unnecessary retention of old personal data that should have been deleted.

8.2. Simplified matrix template (text description)

To document your matrix in your policies or register, you can use the following textual description.

- **Probability**
  - **Low: the risk is unlikely to occur in the next 3 years;**
  - **Medium:** the risk could occur occasionally (every 1 to 3 years);
  - **High:** the risk has already occurred or is likely to occur every year.
- **Impact**
  - **Low: limited impact on people, activities, and finances;**
  - **Medium:** Significant but manageable disruption;
  - **High:** major impact on mission, reputation, or personal safety.
- **Overall risk level** (combination)
  - High probability + high impact = very high risk (maximum priority);
  - High probability + medium impact = high risk;
  - Low probability + high impact = monitored risk;
  - Low probability + low impact = low risk.

During the workshop, use the matrix drawn on the canvas and place the sticky notes in its four quadrants as described in Step 3.

8.3. Simplified risk register template (table)

You'll find an example of a spreadsheet structure below. You can adapt it to suit your needs (add or remove columns). The important thing is that it remains **clear**, **simple**, and **usable** by your team.

ID	Risk description	Category	Probability	Impact	Risk level	Responsible	Measures in place	Actions to be implemented	Deadline	Status
R1	Loss of accounting files due to lack of backup	Financial	High	High	Very high	Management/ Treasurer	Occasional manual backups	Set up weekly automatic backups in the cloud; document the procedure	09/30/ 2025	To do

9. CONCLUSION

This template and guide are designed to be **adaptable**:

- You can run the entire workshop in a single session, or divide it into two separate blocks (risk identification first, mitigation second).
- You can start small (a few risks, a few actions) and **gradually expand.**
- The important thing is not to have a perfect registry, but to have **a minimum of structure** so that your data-related decisions are more informed, consistent, and secure.

If you follow this step-by-step guide using the "Workshop - Risk Matrix" template, you now have all the tools you need to lead this exercise independently within your organization.

Need assistance? If you would like **Open North** to assist your organization with the initial implementation of this workshop as part of a more in-depth risk assessment, we would be happy to discuss how we can support your team.

About Open North

Building trust in data, for the common good

Open North is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to advancing the common good. Working alongside governments and civic-minded organizations of all sizes, we provide data expertise to enhance decision making, drive innovation, improve public and civic services, and address society's most pressing challenges.

Our work focuses on building the capacity of organizations to make better decisions about managing their data so that it is useful, actionable, secure, and trustworthy throughout its entire lifecycle. At Open North, we combine deep expertise in data with a multidisciplinary approach. Our team includes urban planners, software engineers, community organizers, data scientists, cybersecurity and IT audit specialists, sociologists, geographers, and technology lawyers, bringing diverse perspectives to every project.

Open North is part of Montréal in Common, a project led by the City of Montréal as part of the Smart Cities Challenge, carried out with the financial support of the Government of Canada.

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About the Smart Cities Challenge and Montréal in Common

Montréal in Common is an innovation community led by the City of Montréal whose partners are experimenting with solutions regarding access to food, mobility, and municipal bylaws, with a view to rethink the city. Montréal in Common projects are made possible thanks to the prize awarded to the City of Montréal by the Government of Canada as part of the Smart Cities Challenge.

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Risk Identification and Mitigation Tool