

Strategic Prioritization Matrix: Helping Your Team Decide What Matters Most



A prioritization matrix is a visual decision-making tool that compares possible actions, programs, or requests against agreed-upon criteria. The matrix helps groups move from “everything is urgent” to “this is what we do first—and why.”

Step 1: Identify the potential actions you need to prioritize.

Examples include:

- Mutual aid requests
- Project start up
- Organizational partnerships
- Grant opportunities
- Media campaign
- Advocacy actions
- Volunteer projects
- Budget investments

➤ **Tip:** If you have existing strategic objectives, include them, but keep the list manageable. It may be helpful to have a small team to work together on each step of the process, but be mindful to keep a quick pace and momentum.

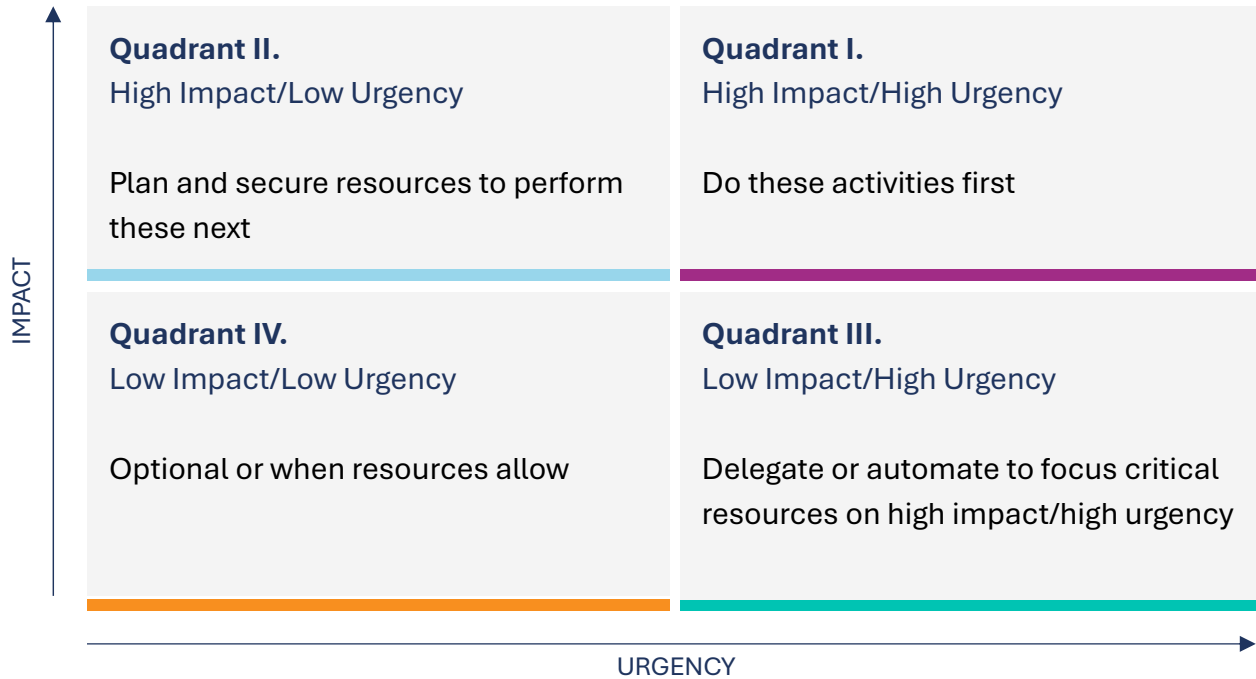
Step 2: Define your criteria. Criteria definitions will vary for each organization, but some common examples are provided below:

1. **Impact** - Contributes to long-term goals, values, or mission; has negative consequences if not done
 - a. **For Nonprofits:** Mission alignment, Community impact
 - b. **For Mutual Aid Groups:** Community-identified priority, Equity impact, Capacity to respond
2. **Urgent** - Requires immediate attention - Often tied to deadlines or external pressure
 - a. **For Nonprofits:** Resources availability, Capacity, Sustainability, Funding readiness
 - b. **For Mutual Aid Groups:** Urgency of need, Risk of harm if unmet, Significant loss if unaddressed

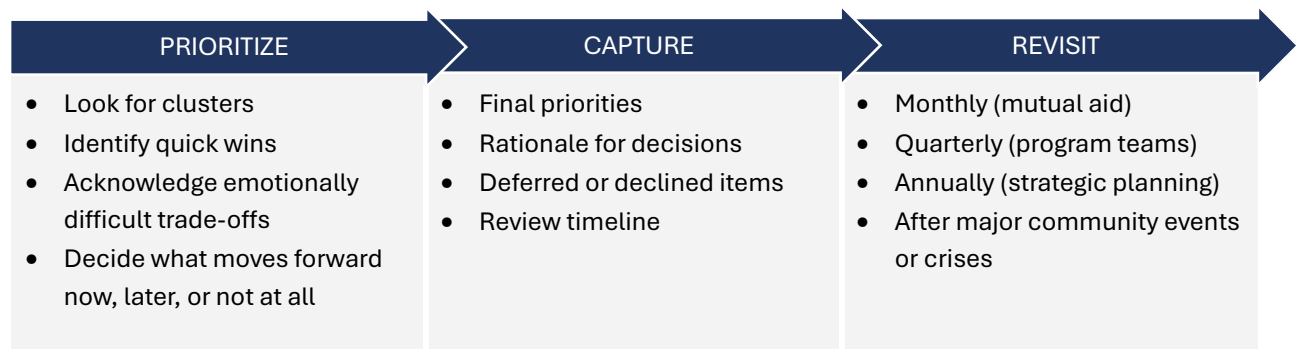
Step 3: Rate your selected criteria and plot them on the matrix.

It is important to get a good representation of participants in the decision-making process but also not to slow down the process. As a group:

1. Review each item
2. Discuss where it falls on both criteria
3. Place it on the matrix



Step 4: Step back and review all four quadrants:



Step 5: Decide what actions to move forward with and make a plan.

Common Mistakes to Avoid:

- Confusing *urgent* with *impact*
- Overloading Quadrant I
- Ignoring Quadrant II (until it becomes urgent)
- Treating Quadrant III requests as mandatory

Additional Practices:

- Use this tool weekly for planning
- Pair with a calendar and task list
- Review at the end of the day or week
- Protect time for Quadrant 2 work

Other resources

If your group or organization is unsure where to begin exploring a new effort, our Step-by-Step Guide for Nonprofit Rapid Response may be helpful.