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Guiding Communication Planning Philosophy

The AIDS.gov Team believes that new and traditional media channels must be used to engage in a dialogue and further the reach of our HIV prevention, treatment and care messages and U.S government HIV prevention policies, programs and resources. Partnerships with Federal and national HIV agencies form the cornerstone of our communication planning and implementation activities. We model the use of new media tools and repurpose content using multiple new and traditional media channels. Because we believe that all communications must be accessible to everyone all our communications tools and materials are compliant with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act. Furthermore, we believe in transparency and participate in the Open Government Initiative. We also regularly monitor and evaluate our efforts so that we can learn and adapt our approach.

The AIDS.gov Team uses Forrester Research's "POST" Method to guide our overall communications approach, and to plan specific initiatives for World AIDS Day (December 1) and National HIV Testing Day (June 27). This document explains how AIDS.gov uses POST to inform our communication efforts.

Before starting a new communications effort or response, we discuss the following questions:

- Who are we trying to reach?
- What information do our audiences need? If we don't know, how can we find out?
- What is our audiences' use of and comfort level with various communication tools?
- What do we want to accomplish with this particular audience?
- Is someone else already doing this?
- What partnerships do we need to engage to learn more about this audience and plan a response?
- How will marketing help support these objectives?
- What resources (i.e., funding, time, capacity, human resources, etc.) do we have to implement and maintain this strategy?
- What tools are most appropriate for this target audience(s), objectives, and strategy?

People: Who is AIDS.gov trying to reach?

AIDS.gov's Audiences

At AIDS.gov, our audiences include (but are not limited to):

- Federal HIV programs and domestic and international colleagues/employees;
- health departments, national organizations, community-based organizations (CBOs), and AIDS service organizations (ASOs);
- people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWH), people at-risk for HIV (in particular men who have sex with men, injection drug users, and communities of color), and caregivers of PLWH; and
- new media leaders and the media (focusing on health, government, and technology outlets).

Across these audiences, AIDS.gov is particularly focused on reaching minority leadership, and programs reaching minority communities.

Information/Unmet Needs of AIDS.gov's Audiences

Based on feedback from AIDS.gov audiences, we know they have the following information needs (as well as some unmet needs) related to HIV:

- HIV and AIDS “news” (for example, policy changes, new campaigns, etc.);
- up-to-date, timely, and accurate HIV information;
- strategies for reaching individuals at-risk for HIV through new media;
- access to HIV/AIDS experts, particularly with a human interest angle; and
- how to have a voice, take action, and personalize content.



Objectives: What is AIDS.gov trying to accomplish?

AIDS.gov's Mission

The overall mission of AIDS.gov is to: “Provide access to Federal HIV/AIDS information through a variety of new media channels, and support the use of new media tools by Federal and community partners to improve HIV programs serving minority and other communities most at-risk for, or living with, HIV.”

The website and new media tools provide quick and ready access to real-time national HIV policy and research updates, HIV content, and links to Federal partners’ HIV policies, programs, and resources. Forming partnerships is crucial to the development and implementation of communication planning for World AIDS Day, National HIV Testing Day, and new media training and technical assistance activities. (See page six and table 3 for details)

Table 1 illustrates short and long-term AIDS.gov outcomes from the AIDS.gov’s Logic Model.

Short-Term Outcomes	Long-Term Outcomes
<p>Among Federal and community partners, minority communities, and others living with affected by, or at risk for HIV/AIDS:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increase use and ease of access to Federal HIV/AIDS resources. 2. Increase knowledge about HIV/AIDS prevention, testing, treatment and support services. 3. Increase knowledge, access, and use of new media tools in the response to HIV/AIDS. 	<p>Among Federal and community partners, minority communities, and others living with affected by, or at risk for HIV/AIDS:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increase knowledge about HIV/AIDS epidemic. 2. Increase routine HIV/AIDS testing and increased knowledge of status. 3. Increase HIV/AIDS treatment and care seeking. 4. Implementation of new media tools to deliver HIV/AIDS information and services. 5. Enhance coordination of HIV/AIDS information among Federal partners.

Table 1: Short- and Long-term objectives from AIDS.gov logic model

Strategy: How do new/traditional media support AIDS.gov's objectives?

AIDS.gov's Strategy

In order to best meet our audiences' information needs and objectives we use the following strategies:

- **Share** our innovative work and select channels that can reach a critical mass of people in our target audiences and have strong content so people trust us and come back for more
- **Learn** from our Federal, national, state and local partners and identify opportunities to cross-promote each others' work
- **Connect** people and respond to their information needs for HIV and AIDS resources, programs, and policies, from across the Federal government and beyond
- **Engage** our audiences in a conversation, encourage participation, and make it easy for people to share information
- **Repurpose** content using a variety of new and traditional media channels to reach our audiences when they want HIV information, how they want it, and in whatever format they want it
- **Model** use of new media and other tools for community and Federal public health programs
- **Train** individuals and organizations about strategy development and tools so they can implement their own communication plans including new and traditional media

Tools: What are the most appropriate tools to use?

Our Focus

At AIDS.gov we use a variety of new and traditional media tools to communicate information internally and with our various audiences.

Our **primary focus** is on the tools and channels that have the highest return on investment and insight. These are the channels and tools:

- that have a critical mass of individuals from our target audience (e.g., AIDS.gov blog, Facebook Fan Page, and Twitter);
- respond to an expressed information need (e.g., conferences and training); and/or
- provide a significant opportunity to engage with these audiences.

We also maintain a **secondary focus** through tools and channels that are implemented in response to a specific event (e.g., a press release) and/or campaign (e.g., Facing AIDS Flickr group) or reach a more select target audience (e.g., Patients Like Me).

What We Promote

Through our communication strategy, we promote a wide variety of information to our audiences, including:

- Federal HIV/AIDS information, programs, policies, and resources including policy and research updates;
- national HIV/AIDS awareness day updates;
- relevant national HIV/AIDS conference details;
- tools and strategies for using new media in response to HIV/AIDS;
- other Federal public health initiatives of interest to our audiences (e.g. flu updates); and
- AIDS.gov tools, materials, and initiatives.

Table 2 below shows some of the primary and secondary tools that we use:

Tool/media channel	Why we use it.					How we use it
	Critical mass	Responds to information need(s)	Opportunity to engage	Used for campaign or event	Reaches a select audience	
Primary Media Focus/Presence						
Website: www.aids.gov	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide information and resources about HIV/AIDS basics, federal resources, new media • Highlight news and events • Link to new media sites • Link to our blog post
Blog: http://blog.aids.gov	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weekly blog posts about new media, research, PEPFAR, and policy • Monitor and respond to comments • Incorporate guest bloggers and community examples • Promote Awareness Days
Twitter: www.Twitter.com/AIDSgov	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide at least daily tweets about HIV/AIDS basics, federal resources, new media • Respond to direct tweets • Monitor hashtags and mentions • Promote Awareness Days
Facebook: www.Facebook.com/AIDSgov	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post links to AIDS.gov blog posts and other HIV/AIDS news • Monitor comments, likes • Promote Awareness Days
MySpace: www.myspace.com/AIDSgov	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post links to AIDS.gov blog posts and other HIV/AIDS news • Monitor comments, likes • Promote Awareness Days
Youtube: www.youtube.com/aidsgov	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post AIDS.gov video podcasts and video blog posts • Potentially use for NHTD video campaign
Podcasts: www.aids.gov/podcast/podcast-gallery		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repurpose AIDS.gov blog content as audio podcasts

Table 2: New media tools, by purpose and how they are used

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Tool/media channel	Why we use it.					How we use it
	Critical mass	Responds to information need(s)	Opportunity to engage	Used for campaign or event	Reaches a select audience	
Conferences/Trainings/Other in-person Meetings		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present at conferences • Provide training and technical assistance (TA) to AIDS Service Providers and Community and Federal Partners
Relationship with Federal and community partners		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide TA and support • Support Federal Web Council
Secondary Media Focus/Presence						
Flickr: www.flickr.com/photos/aidsgov	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create group for World AIDS Day Facing AIDS campaign • Webinars
Webinars		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use GoToWebinar for on-line/distance trainings and presentations
Wikipedia: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/AIDS.gov	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update Wikipedia entry with news and updates
Slideshare: www.slideshare.net/aidsgov		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Host slides from conferences and trainings • Share presentations with target audiences and to serve as a reference for attendees
Medpedia: www.medpedia.com/groups/352-AIDS		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain group with basic description of AIDS.gov for users of this new, medical wikipedia
PatientsLikeMe: www.patientslikeme.com		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain group with basic description of AIDS.gov for users of this medically-focused social network site.
Daily Strength: www.dailystrength.org/groups/aidsgov		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain group with basic description of AIDS.gov for users of this medically-focused social network site.
Press releases/statements		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highlight major campaigns • Promote Awareness Days
Interviews		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highlight partners' work • Highlight major campaigns • Promote Awareness Days
Public Service Announcements		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highlight major campaigns • Promote Awareness Days

Table 2: New media tools, by purpose and how they are used

Table 3 below illustrates how the AIDS.gov Project groups some of its resources and content:

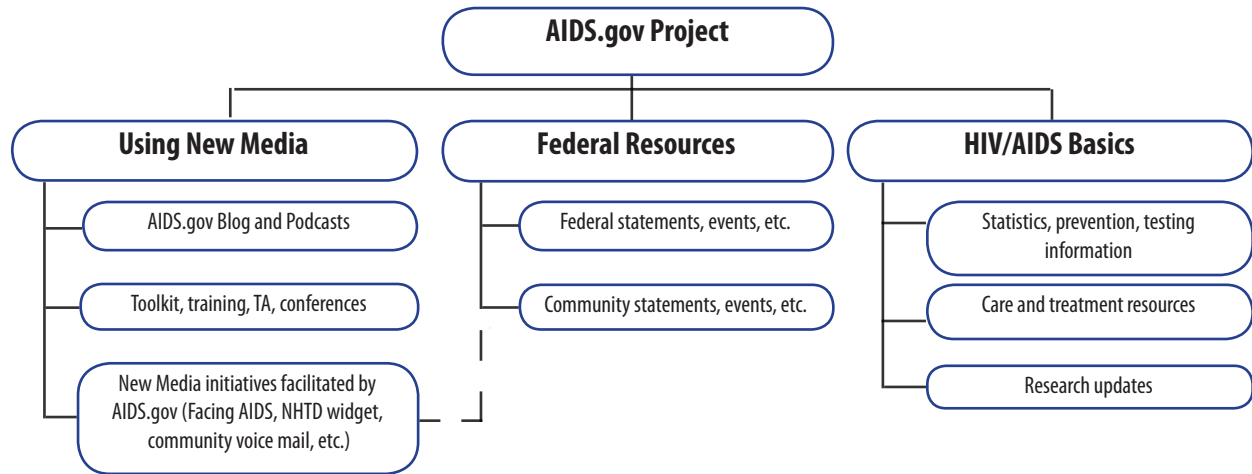


Table 3: AIDS.gov Project resources

How We Use These Tools to Listen

We use new and traditional tools and media channels to expand the reach of our HIV/AIDS information and resources, but at AIDS.gov we also use the same tools to listen, learn from, and engage with our target audiences. By doing so, we stay abreast of the conversation, enabling us to respond, as needed, with a tweet, comment, or timely blog post that addresses the concerns and information needs of our target audience(s).

Examples of how we use tools to listen to our audience(s) include:

- using Twitter, Twitter search, hashtags, and Tweetdeck to track Twitter topics of interest, retweets, mentions, and respond to direct tweets;
- monitor comments and likes on our Facebook page;
- Monitoring comments on the AIDS.gov blog;
- Monitor ratings and comments on our YouTube channel;
- Slideshare to see how many people download/use the slides after trainings; and
- Subscribe to relevant RSS feeds and listservs

Guidelines for Engaging and Connecting

At AIDS.gov, we apply a general policy across about who we will connect to and how we will engage with others' content and comments.

We expect that participants on all our platforms from our blog and social networking sites will treat each other with respect. We moderate comments and will not post comments that contain vulgar language, personal attacks of any kind, or offensive terms that target specific individuals or groups. We will not post comments that are clearly off-topic or that promote services or products. Comments that make unsupported accusations or provide misinformation will also not be posted. Please see the AIDS.gov blog's Comment Policy

for more details.

On social network sites such as Facebook and MySpace, we do not (or cannot, in the case of Facebook) actively reach out and "friend" individuals – only organizations who fit into the categories above. Across all our spaces we allow anyone to friend, fan or follow us, provided they do not post spam or otherwise violate our comment policy. We also post a disclaimer on our spaces that our friends/fans/followers do not necessarily represent the views of AIDS.gov.

On Twitter, we "follow" (connect to and receive tweets from) accounts that are relevant to our work, such as: other Federal agencies/programs, people doing

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HIV and AIDS work, social media leaders, public health or minority-focused community organizations, and some news sources.

Twitter “mentions” of AIDS.gov are a slightly different category of practice. These are not posted on

an AIDS.gov moderated space and are instead part of the user’s individual Twitter stream. We respond to legitimate inquiries relevant to AIDS.gov’s mission; we do not respond to Twitter mentions that violate the above comment policy.

Monitoring & Evaluation: What’s success? Is it working?

Ongoing monitoring and evaluation is an integral component of our overall communications strategy. The AIDS.gov Team primarily conducts process monitoring to determine the degree to which our planning targets established in our logic model have been met. Based on our overall goals and objectives, as well as specific outcomes for targeted campaigns, our monitoring and evaluation activities aim to answer the following questions:

- Are we reaching our intended audiences?
- Are they engaged? For example: Do people leave comments, send emails, etc?
- Are we engaged? Do we respond appropriately and in a timely manner? Are we commenting on other blogs/forums?

- Is the time/resources being invested in a particular activity providing us with the outcomes we expect and a significant/appropriate return on investment and/or insight?

We monitor and evaluate our activities on a daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, and annual basis. Event-specific monitoring activities also take place following trainings, technical assistance, and specific communication events such as World AIDS Day and National HIV Testing Day.

Our schedule of activities are included in Table 4 below:

Daily

- Monitor and respond to blog comments, Facebook and MySpace comments and messages, Twitter mentions, retweets, and direct tweets.

Weekly

- Social network site updates/emails track how many friends/followers we have on our social network sites (and compare these numbers to the previous week to monitor trends), tweets, and new and notable Twitter followers (see Figure 1 on page 8).
- Tracking System updates capture new and ongoing communications activities and a weekly report is distributed.

Monthly

- Blog updates track number and type of posts, comments, traffic, and subscribers, using Google Analytics for visitor traffic and trends and Feedburner to track subscribers (See Figure 2 on page 8).

- Monitor secondary focus/presence sites (such as Flickr, Youtube, Wikipedia), respond to comments and requests, and track changes (monthly or as needed).
- Review Google Analytics/Web Trends to assess web traffic and track numbers of visitors and methods of visiting our sites.

Quarterly

- Logic Model Progress-to-date tracks progress towards stated goals and objectives, including communications activities.

Biannually

- Blog assessments look at the current status of blog, progress toward stated objectives, and plan where we plan to go. We assess blog comments, Facebook “likes,” and visitor traffic to identify trends and measure engagement.

Annually

- Review and revise communication strategy.

Table 4: AIDS.gov monitoring and evaluation schedule

Staffing and Implementation

AIDS.gov, as a new media project, is in a unique position in that new media is an explicit part of our mission. That said, it is still only one part of our overall charge, and thus it is important to allocate staff and time judiciously.

We have designated one staff person to be the New Media Coordinator whose responsibilities include not only monitoring our new media presence, but also communicating updates to the team on a weekly basis. We've found that to maintain an active and responsive social network presence, including Twitter, we must dedicate at least 1/2 hour a day to monitor and engage in these spaces and conversations. However, to get the most out of new media, it is important to dedicate time to listen-

ing to and participating in the online dialogue, which benefits from as much time as is feasible, based on other priorities and responsibilities.

The New Media Coordinator works closely with the New Media Strategist, whose job is to oversee all new media activities and trainings, and the Communication Director who manages both new and traditional media activities. There are technical and programmatic team members that also contribute in different ways to our communication efforts, ranging from editing video, updating online content, and coordinating relationships with Federal and community partners, to name a few.

Future Directions

AIDS.gov will continue to increase awareness and expand its reach to audiences by continuing and expanding its work with platforms and resources that have proven successful, while also utilizing new tools, community resources, and partnerships.

Mobile technology is becoming a new standard in social networking and news dissemination. AIDS.gov is developing a mobile site, researching mHealth projects such as texting campaigns and locators, and looking into applications for use on smartphones.

Online and mobile gaming is another field AIDS.gov is researching. Social networking sites like Facebook have demonstrated the reach certain online social games are capable of having on our target audiences.

Letting community and Federal leaders lend their voice to AIDS.gov content and news is a goal we will

continue to expand. Developing content side-by-side with partners in HIV/AIDS prevention is essential. This includes collaboration for more interviews, more bios, more event awareness, and more knowledge sharing.

Partnering with media experts at agencies and community news outlets is another direction AIDS.gov is moving toward. Reporters and bloggers that have already built relationships with their audiences can expand our reach and content resources, as we assist them in expanding theirs.

Media is changing everyday, and AIDS.gov has proven, and will continue to prove, that embracing it is the best way to reach out and speak with the world about HIV/AIDS prevention.