

COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

INTERNAL WORKING PLAN

JANUARY 2013



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GUIDING PHILOSOPHY

At AIDS.gov we use emerging and traditional communication channels to engage in a dialogue and further the reach of HIV prevention, testing, treatment and care, policies, programs, and resources. This is critical as eight in ten internet users have looked online for health information online and 26% say they read or watched someone else's experience about health or medical issues in the last 12 months (Pew Internet and American Life Project). This data supports our outlook that new media and emerging technologies are critical to help us connect, create, listen, learn and engage as we move towards an AIDS-free generation.

AIDS.gov is funded through the HHS Secretary's Minority AIDS Initiative Fund as a mobilization effort to reduce health disparities among racial and ethnic minorities. Our partnerships with federal, national, state, and local HIV/AIDS agencies form the cornerstone of our communication planning and implementation activities.

This document explains how we use Forrester Research's "POST" (People, Objectives, Strategy, Technology) 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).

Before starting a new communications activity, we discuss the following questions:

- Who are we trying to reach?
- What information does our audience want and need? If we do not know, how can we find out?
- What is our audience's 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?
- What resources (e.g., funding, time, capacity, human resources, etc.) do we have to implement and maintain this strategy?
- What tools are most appropriate for this target audience, objectives, and strategy?
- What would success look like? How can it be measured?

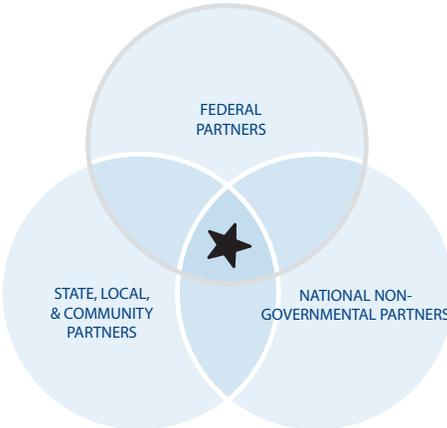
THE POST METHOD

Who is AIDS.gov trying to reach?

We have the ability to reach anyone who has internet access through a computer or mobile device, as well as face-to-face through conferences and trainings.

Our services are targeted to the Minority AIDS Initiative target populations (MTPs), including African Americans, Latinos, Asian and Pacific Islanders,

Native Americans, and the agencies/organizations that provide healthcare services to them. We also work to provide and/or promote information to at-risk subpopulations within those groups—such as black and Latino men who have sex with men (MSM), black women, youth, transgenders, and rural residents.



- People living with HIV (PLWH)
- MTPs and at-risk populations (black and Latino MSM, black women, youth, transgenders, and rural residents)
- Caregivers and family members of PLWH

What is AIDS.gov trying to accomplish?

Our mission and three primary objectives guide our communication approach, and help us to meet the needs of our target audiences.

MISSION

AIDS.gov works to extend the reach of HIV prevention, care and treatment programs to people most at-risk for, or living with, HIV, by using new media and emerging technology to provide access to federal HIV information, policies (e.g., the National HIV/AIDS Strategy), programs, and resources.

OBJECTIVES

1. Expand visibility of relevant federal HIV policies, programs, and resources to MAI target populations and the American public.
2. Increase use of new media tools and emerging technologies by federal government and community partners to extend the reach of HIV programs to communities at greatest risk.
3. Increase knowledge about HIV and access to HIV services for people most at-risk for, or living with, HIV.



What are the most appropriate tools to use?

AIDS.gov uses multiple communications vehicles and approaches to reach target audiences and accomplish our objectives.

Through our communication strategy, we disseminate and promote a variety of information, including:

- Federal HIV/AIDS information, programs, policies, and resources including policy (e.g., the National HIV/AIDS Strategy and the *PEPFAR Blueprint for Creating an AIDS-free Generation*) and research updates;
- National HIV/AIDS awareness day updates;
- Relevant national HIV/AIDS, viral hepatitis, and technology conference details;
- Tools for using new media in response to HIV/AIDS;
- Other federal public health initiatives of interest to our audiences (e.g., the Affordable Care Act, Digital Government Strategy); and
- AIDS.gov tools, materials, and campaigns.

The table on page 3 features a more in-depth look at which tools we use and how we use them.

How do new and traditional media support AIDS.gov's objectives?

To best meet our audiences' information needs, we use the following strategies:

- Disseminate, repurpose, and promote HIV/AIDS information via new media platforms "anytime, anywhere, and on any device" (Digital Government Strategy) and encourage individuals to personalize and share information, thus extending the reach of HIV/AIDS messages to broader audiences and giving those messages peer-to-peer credibility.
- Serve as a catalyst to foster new, innovative collaborations by helping federal agencies, national and community-based organizations, and other key stakeholders to coordinate their HIV/AIDS communications efforts.
- Model use of new media and other tools for community and federal public health programs, including implementing new and emerging technologies such as responsive web design and smartphone apps.
- Provide technical assistance and training to agencies/organizations on using new media tools to improve their capacity to deliver content on HIV prevention, testing, and treatment to MTPs.
- Document promising/best practices to share with our federal/external partners to support the goals of the National HIV/AIDS Strategy and the move toward an AIDS-free generation.
- Encourage the HIV community to build new media into their communications planning and promote new media to partners and target audiences.



COMMUNICATION TOOLS WE USE

Our primary focus is on tools and channels with the highest return on our investment and greatest insights into the needs of the HIV community. Our criteria for selecting these tools and channels are the following:

- has a large number critical mass of individuals from our target audience;
- responds to an expressed information need; and/or
- provides a significant opportunity to engage with our audiences.

We use some tools and channels on a secondary basis in order to communicate about selected, specific events, resources or campaigns.

COMMUNICATION CHANNEL	HOW WE USE IT					
	Provide information about HIV basics and federal resources	Highlight news and events	Share HIV/AIDS Awareness Day information	Provide training and technical assistance	Listen, monitor, and engage	Promote our partners
PRIMARY FOCUS/PRESENCE						
RESPONSIVE WEBSITE <i>www.AIDS.gov</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
BLOG <i>http://blog.AIDS.gov</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
GOVDELIVERY <i>www.govdelivery.com</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
TWITTER <i>www.twitter.com/AIDSgov</i>	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
FACEBOOK <i>www.facebook.com/AIDSgov</i>	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
YOUTUBE <i>www.youtube.com/AIDSgov</i>		✓	✓		✓	✓
PINTEREST <i>www.pinterest.com/AIDSgov</i>	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
PODCASTS <i>www.AIDS.gov/podcast/podcast-gallery</i>	✓	✓	✓			✓
HIV/AIDS PREVENTION & SERVICE PROVIDER LOCATOR <i>http://locator.AIDS.gov</i>	✓					✓
CONFERENCES, TRAININGS, IN-PERSON MEETINGS	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
MEETINGS WITH FEDERAL & COMMUNITY PARTNERS	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
SECONDARY FOCUS/PRESENCE						
PRESS RELEASES/STATEMENTS	✓	✓	✓			✓
WEBINARS & CONFERENCE CALLS	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
FACING AIDS PHOTO SHARING INITIATIVE <i>http://facing.AIDS.gov</i>			✓			✓
PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS	✓	✓	✓			✓
FOURSQUARE <i>www.foursquare.com/AIDSgov</i>			✓		✓	✓
SLIDESHARE <i>www.slideshare.net/AIDSgov</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
FLICKR <i>www.flickr.com/photos/AIDSgov</i>		✓	✓		✓	✓
STORIFY <i>www.storify.com/AIDSgov</i>		✓	✓		✓	✓

GUIDELINES FOR ENGAGING

While we use new and traditional communication channels to expand the reach of our HIV/AIDS information and resources, we also use them to listen, learn from, and engage with our 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 audiences. Listening allows us to have a better understanding of our audiences and what they are saying, and informs us of relevant and timely content for our communications.

Here are some examples of how we use tools to listen to our various audiences:

- **Twitter:** Use search, hashtags, and Hootsuite to track Twitter topics of interest, retweets, mentions, direct messages, and partners
- **Facebook:** Monitor comments, likes, and shares
- **AIDS.gov Blog:** Monitor comments
- **YouTube:** Monitor views, ratings, and comments
- **USA.gov Links:** Monitor clicks from shortened links via go.usa.gov
- **Google Alerts, RSS feeds, and listservs:** Subscribe and monitor online reach and conversation

STAFFING AND IMPLEMENTATION

AIDS.gov leverages resources across the government to meet our mission. The National HIV/AIDS Strategy (released by the White House in July 2010) provides ongoing guidance to the communication content and activities of AIDS.gov and our federal partners. The Digital Government Strategy (DGS), released in May 2012, outlines how the government plans to change the way federal programs, including AIDS.gov, are to deal with information, customers, platforms, information and privacy. AIDS.gov has been moving to open content that is secure enough to be shared through accessible platforms and translated into usable products for our audience. To that end, we re-launched both AIDS.gov and the AIDS.gov blog using responsive design, making our content accessible on any device. We will continue to maintain these platforms in a manner consistent with the DGS.

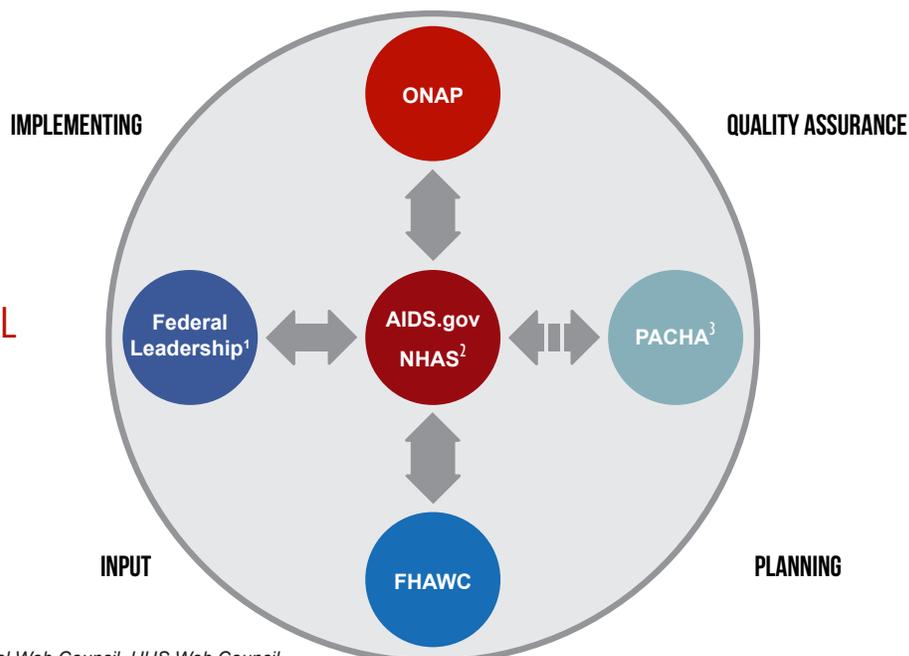
We primarily receive planning guidance from the White House Office of National HIV/AIDS Policy (ONAP), Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health, Office of HIV/AIDS and Infectious Disease Policy, the HHS Web Council, and the cross-agency Federal HIV/AIDS Web Council (FHAWC). The FHAWC includes web, new media, and communications leads and subject matter experts from over 20 federal programs, agencies, and offices representing HIV programs across

the U.S. government. Together we develop blog posts, tweets, videos, cross-program products, and promote HIV/AIDS awareness days. This allows AIDS.gov to maintain an active and responsive new media presence, and is a source for cross promotion of traditional communications.

Another AIDS.gov program component is formal and informal training and technical assistance. We attend selected HIV, health-related new media, and various health conferences to provide group training and technical assistance. Increasingly we are using new media labs and conference calls to give more intensive technical assistance. We also collect stories and images from the HIV community documenting their approach to using new media in their programs, including them as examples on our website and other products.

A core component of our implementation activities is to ensure that all information is accessible. All our communications tools and materials are compliant with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act. Furthermore, we believe in transparency and participate in the White House's Open Government Initiative. We also regularly monitor and evaluate our efforts so that we can learn from and, as needed, adapt our approach.

**FIGURE 1:
AIDS.GOV FEDERAL
PARTNERSHIPS**



¹ White House, HHS/OS, HHS/ASH, Federal Web Council, HHS Web Council

² "Vehicle for Transparency"

³ The Presidential Advisory Council on HIV/AIDS

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

HOW DO WE MEASURE SUCCESS?

Ongoing monitoring and evaluation (M&E) is an integral component of our overall project strategy. The AIDS.gov team conducts process monitoring to determine the degree to which we meet project goals and objectives. Our M&E activities aim to answer the following:

- Are we reaching our intended MTPs?
- Are they engaged? Do people comment on our blog posts, send e-mails, share our Facebook posts, re-tweet our tweets, share our videos, post Facing AIDS photos, etc.?
- Are the time and resources we are investing in a particular activity providing us with the outcomes we expect and a significant/ appropriate return on investment and/or insight?

To answer those questions, we monitor and evaluate our activities regularly. After TA/training events and specific communication events (e.g., World AIDS Day, and National HIV Testing Day), we conduct event-specific monitoring activities (see table we used in MAI proposal).

In addition, AIDS.gov has developed ongoing feedback mechanisms that guide its program planning and resource allocation, including: consultations with our partners in the field who work with MTPs; advice from leading experts in public health messaging and using new media/ emerging technologies in racial/ethnic minority communities; and the monthly FHAWC conference calls and meetings to guide and assess our activities. Below are a list of our monitoring and evaluation activities.

SCHEDULE OF OUR COMMUNICATION MONITORING & EVALUATION ACTIVITIES

	<p>DAILY Monitor and respond to blog and Facebook comments, Twitter mentions, retweets, and direct messages.</p>		<p>QUARTERLY Logic Model Progress-to-Date Report tracks progress towards stated goals and objectives, including communications activities.</p>
	<p>WEEKLY Social network site updates track how many 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. We use an online internal tracking system to document new and ongoing communications activities, and distribute a weekly internal report to capture these updates.</p>		<p>BIANNUALLY Communications channel assessment looks at the current status and relationship of the blog and social network sites, progress toward objectives, and plans future directions. We assess comments, visitor traffic, and other analytics to identify trends, measure engagement, and see how the various channels are working together.</p>
	<p>MONTHLY Blog, social network sites, and video updates track number and types of posts, comments, and traffic (using Google Analytics, Feedburner, and built-in insights to track visitor traffic). Monitor secondary focus presence/sites (such as Flickr and Foursquare), respond to comments and requests, and track updates.</p>		<p>ANNUALLY Review and revise Communication Strategy. Revisit AIDS.gov target audiences, mission, objectives, and activities.</p>

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Each year we expand upon our current activities and incorporate new technology into our program. We listen for current trends and select activities that are in line with our mission and objectives. In 2012, we selected responsive web design, application programming interface (API), iPhone applications, and Storify. The table below describes our newest activities.

TOOL	RATIONALE
Launch of AIDS.gov and blog.aids.gov in responsive web design	Knowing that 30% of our users are accessing AIDS.gov through mobile devices, we wanted to make our content easily accessible while reducing production costs.
Application Programming Interface for the Locator	To allow developers and AIDS service organizations further tailor the Locator to their needs, the team launched the API to encourage innovation, customization, and data sharing.
Facing AIDS and Locator iPhone applications	Consumers' use and engagement with mobile applications has grown remarkably - they spend 2.4x more time using mobile applications than surfing the web. The AIDS.gov team felt it was important to address this growing use pattern with mobile applications.
Storify for World AIDS Day	To expand the reach of federal activities and resources beyond World AIDS Day, we curated and captured federal social media efforts and collaborative efforts.
Livestream of AIDS 2012 Satellite Session	To offer access beyond conference attendees to our AIDS 2012 Satellite Session "HIV and New Media," we streamed the session over the web to 500 unique viewers.