

GUIDING PHILOSOPHY	1	What's inside...	MONITORING AND EVALUATION	4
THE POST METHOD	2		SCHEDULE OF AIDS.GOV MONITORING & EVALUATION ACTIVITIES	5
COMMUNICATION TOOLS AIDS.GOV USES	3		STAFFING AND IMPLEMENTATION	5
GUIDELINES FOR ENGAGING	4		FUTURE DIRECTIONS	5

GUIDING COMMUNICATION PLANNING 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. Our partnerships with Federal, national, state, and local HIV agencies form the cornerstone of our communication planning and implementation activities. We repurpose content to reach people through different communication channels.

This document explains how we use Forrester Research's "POST" (People, Objectives, Strategy, Technology) Method¹ 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 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?

In order to ensure that all information is accessible, 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.

¹ Li, C. & Bernoff, J. (2008). *Groundswell: Winning in a World Transformed by Social Technologies*. Boston: Forrester Research, Inc.

THE POST METHOD

Who is AIDS.gov trying to reach?

At AIDS.gov, our core audiences include Federal partners, national non-governmental partners, and state, local and community partners. Our partners enable us to reach our target audiences.



- People living with HIV (PLWH)
- High-risk populations (men who have sex with men, communities of color, injecting drug users)
- Caregivers and family members of PLWH

What is AIDS.gov trying to accomplish?

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

MISSION

AIDS.gov works to increase HIV testing and care among people most at-risk for, or living with, HIV, by using emerging communication strategies to provide access to Federal HIV information, policies (e.g., the National HIV/AIDS Strategy), programs, and resources.

OBJECTIVES

1. Expand visibility of timely and relevant Federal HIV policies, programs, and resources to the American public.
2. Increase use of new media tools by 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?

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

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 (e.g., the White House National HIV/AIDS Strategy) and research updates;
- National HIV/AIDS Awareness Day updates;
- Relevant national HIV/AIDS conference details;
- Tools for using new media in response to HIV/AIDS;
- Other Federal public health initiatives of interest to our audiences (e.g., health care reform); and
- AIDS.gov tools, materials, and initiatives.

Table 1 features a more in-depth look at which tools we use and how we use them (see page 3).

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

In order to best meet our AIDS.gov audiences' information needs, 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 resources, programs, and policies.
- **Engage** our audiences in a conversation, encourage participation, and make it easy for people to share information.
- **Repurpose** content using new and traditional media channels to reach our audiences when they want HIV information, and in what 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 using the most appropriate tools.

TABLE I: COMMUNICATION TOOLS AIDS.GOV USES

Our primary focus is on the tools and channels that have the highest return on investment and insight. For us these are the channels and tools:

- that have a critical mass of individuals from our target audience;
- respond to an expressed information need; and/or
- provide a significant opportunity to engage with our audiences.

We also maintain a secondary focus through tools and channels that we use in response to a specific event and/or initiative (such as *Facing AIDS* for World AIDS Day).

COMMUNICATION CHANNEL	HOW WE USE IT					
	Provide information about HIV basics and Federal resources	Highlight HIV news and events	Share HIV/AIDS Awareness Day information	Provide training and technical assistance (TA)	Listen, monitor, and engage	Promote our partners
PRIMARY FOCUS/PRESENCE						
WEBSITE AND MOBILE SITE <i>www.AIDS.gov, http://m.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>		✓	✓		✓	✓
PODCASTS (AUDIO & VIDEO) <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						
FLICKR <i>www.flickr.com/photos/AIDSgov</i>			✓		✓	✓
WEBINARS & CONFERENCE CALLS	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
MYSPACE <i>www.myspace.com/AIDSgov</i>			✓		✓	✓
WIKIPEDIA <i>www.wikipedia.org/wiki/AIDS.gov</i>			✓			✓
SLIDESHARE <i>www.slideshare.net/AIDSgov</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
MEDPEDIA <i>www.medpedia.com/groups/352-AIDS</i>			✓		✓	
PRESS RELEASES/STATEMENTS		✓	✓			✓
PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS		✓	✓			✓



HOW WE USE THESE TOOLS TO LISTEN

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 sense of who our online audiences are and what they are saying, as well as inform us of relevant and timely information.

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

- Use Twitter search, hashtags, and Tweetdeck to track Twitter topics of interest, retweets, mentions, partners, and respond to direct tweets;
- Monitor comments and likes on our Facebook page;
- Monitor comments on our AIDS.gov blog;
- Monitor ratings and comments on our YouTube channel;
- Monitor Slideshare to see how many people download 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 about who we will connect to and how we will engage with their content and comments. We expect that participants on all of our platforms from our blog and social network 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. We will respond to select blog comments when appropriate. Our blog comment policy, found at <http://blog.aids.gov/CommentPolicy.html>, has more details.

On Twitter, we “follow” (connect to and receive tweets from) accounts that are relevant to our work, such as: other

Federal agencies and programs, people working in HIV, social media leaders, public health or minority-focused community organizations, and some news sources. We respond to Twitter mentions if they are relevant to AIDS.gov’s mission and do not violate our comment policy. On all other social network sites, we do not (or cannot, in the case of Facebook) actively reach out and “friend” individuals. On sites such as Facebook and YouTube, per government policy, we only follow other Federal accounts.

Across online spaces we allow anyone to friend or follow us, provided he/she does not post spam or otherwise violate our comment policy. We also post a disclaimer on our spaces saying that our friends/followers’ views do not necessarily represent the views of AIDS.gov.



MONITORING AND EVALUATION: HOW DO WE MEASURE SUCCESS?

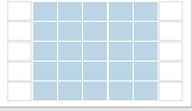
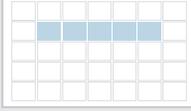
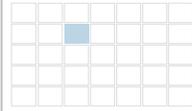
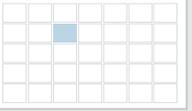
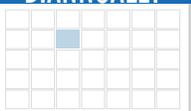
Ongoing monitoring and evaluation is an integral component of our overall communications strategy, and helps us to know if our efforts are reaching intended communities who are the hardest hit by the HIV epidemic. The AIDS.gov Team primarily conducts process monitoring to determine the degree to which our planning targets (established in a team logic model) have been met. Based on our overall goals and objectives, as well as specific outcomes for targeted initiatives, 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, retweet, send emails, etc?
- Are we engaged? Do we respond appropriately and in a timely manner?
- Are the time and resources being invested in a particular activity providing us with the outcomes we expect and a significant/appropriate return on investment and/or insight?

TABLE 2: SCHEDULE OF AIDS.GOV COMMUNICATION MONITORING & EVALUATION ACTIVITIES

We monitor and evaluate our activities on a daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, biannual, and annual basis.

Event-specific monitoring activities also take place following trainings, technical assistance sessions, and specific communication events such as World AIDS Day and National HIV Testing Day.

<p>DAILY</p>  <p>Monitor and respond to blog and Facebook comments, Twitter mentions, retweets, and direct tweets.</p>	<p>WEEKLY</p>  <p>Social network site updates 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.</p> <p>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>MONTHLY</p>  <p>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).</p> <p>Monitor secondary focus presence/sites (such as Flickr, Youtube, Wikipedia), respond to comments and requests, and track updates (monthly or as needed).</p>
<p>QUARTERLY</p>  <p>Logic Model Progress-to-Date Report tracks progress towards stated goals and objectives, including communications activities.</p>	<p>BIANNUALLY</p>  <p>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>ANNUALLY</p>  <p>Review and revise Communication Strategy.</p> <p>Revisit AIDS.gov target audiences, mission, objectives, and activities.</p>

STAFFING & IMPLEMENTATION

At AIDS.gov, we receive planning guidance from a cross-agency planning group called the Federal HIV/AIDS Web Council (FHAWC). The Council includes Web, subject matter experts, and communications leads from over twenty programs, agencies and offices, representing HIV programs across the U.S. Government.

On our AIDS.gov team, we are fortunate to have resources for a 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 have found that to maintain an active and responsive social media presence, we must dedicate at least two hours a day to monitor and engage in these spaces and conversations. However, to get the most out of our new media efforts, we try to spend additional time listening and participating in the online dialogue, allocating as much time as other priorities and responsibilities allow.

The New Media Coordinator works closely with team members such as the New Media Strategist and the Communication Director. There are additional technical and programmatic team members who also contribute to our communication efforts, ranging from editing video, updating online content, conducting webinars and trainings, coordinating relationships with Federal and community partners, and compiling evaluation data. We understand that staffing resources vary across projects and may influence what is feasible in developing and implementing a communications plan.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

We will continue to expand our reach to diverse audiences by leveraging tools that have proven successful, while also using new tools, community resources, and partnerships. In addition, we are modifying and streamlining our monitoring and evaluation efforts by focusing on a biannual assessment looking across all of our communication channels. Previously, our assessments have focused on each tool individually (e.g., blog, video, social network sites). This new approach will highlight the relationships among these spaces.

In regard to specific tools, mobile technology and geolocation are tools we will explore more in the year ahead. We have developed a mobile site, <http://m.aids.gov>, with access to the AIDS.gov HIV/AIDS Prevention and Service Provider Locator. We will continue to explore Federal interagency products similar to the Locator, where we work to consolidate Federally-dispersed information into a shareable user-friendly tool.

Providing platforms for community and Federal leaders to 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 is essential. Communication channels are changing every day, and AIDS.gov has proven, and will continue to prove, that embracing diverse tools is a vital strategy for reaching out and speaking with the world about HIV/AIDS prevention, testing, care, treatment, research, and policy.