



## Using Social Media to Engage Participants

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Social media offers the opportunity to expand the reach of your programs, engage participants, and inspire action. You can use this guide to help you develop a social media strategy that supports your program’s pregnancy prevention efforts. It provides tips on implementation and guidance on navigating the roles, responsibilities, and resources involved. Social media allows individuals and groups to work together to find solutions, helping programs mobilize communities and achieve their goals.

### WHAT IS SOCIAL MEDIA?

Social media refers to any media that allows for conversation and sharing rather than “broadcast” communication. An example of traditional media is watching the news; it is one-way communication. Social media—like Facebook or Twitter—shares information and allows for two-way communication. Rather than just talking to your audience, social media helps you talk *with* your audience.

### AT-A-GLANCE: YOUTH AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Youth are increasingly mobile and social online. 95% of all youth age 12-17 use the Internet, and 3 in 4 access the Web through mobile devices like cellphones and tablets (Pew Research Center, 2012; Madden, Lenhart, Duggan, et al., 2013). Mobile Web access allows youth to be connected, and use social media, whenever and wherever they want.

1. **Youth want on-demand, on-the-go information.** One in 4 youth are “cell-mostly” Internet users, meaning their cellphone is the primary way they access the Internet. This is especially true for girls, particularly older teen girls (Madden, Lenhart, Duggan, et al., 2013).
2. **Youth use social media to connect to social networks.** The typical young person on Facebook has 300 friends. Twitter use is increasing, especially among African American youth (Madden, Lenhart, Cortesi, et al., 2013).

#### The Changing Digital Divide

The latest data from the Pew Research Center’s Internet & American Life Project show an increase in Internet use among all ethnic groups. A demand for constant Web connection and information has shifted to a mobile landscape, and reshaped the digital divide among youth. Although white youth are more likely to own computers more than their peers, African American and Hispanic youth are more likely to own smartphones than white youth, increasing their engagement with the Web and social media. With 81% of youth using some type of social media, youth are helping reshape the digital divide.

3. **Youth are drawn to multimedia.** Nine in 10 youth use social media to post photos of themselves, and about 1 in 4 post videos (Madden, Lenhart, Cortesi, et al., 2013). As a result, social media use among youth is shifting to social media sites and apps that incorporate photo and videos, like Pinterest, Instagram, and YouTube.

## PLAN FOR SOCIAL MEDIA SUCCESS: THE “POST” FRAMEWORK

Social media can be a useful tool for getting the message out about your program, but keep in mind that technology should come second to the people you serve. Forrester’s People, Objectives, Strategy, Technology (POST) method puts people before technology (Bernoff, 2007). Use the POST framework process to help you develop and implement a social media plan.

<p><b>P</b>eople</p>	<p>Ask yourself: Who should you be engaging? Listen to your audience and what they talk about online. Determine how the people you want to reach are using social media and consider how you can join the conversation.</p> <p><b>Take Action!</b> Spend time on social media to see and hear what people are talking about. Consider using specific keywords to search tools like Topsy.com, which lets you view posts across Twitter, Vine, and YouTube. You may also consider using tools like Statigram which helps you search Instagram. Examples of key words you may consider include “teen pregnancy” or “teen birth control.” Hashtags can also serve as search terms. Try looking up #teenhealth, #teenmom, or #YOLO.</p>
<p><b>O</b>bjectives</p>	<p>Ask yourself: What are you trying to accomplish? Write down your goal for using technology, then create objectives that support your goal to ensure that your online efforts are contributing to the overall effort.</p> <p><b>Take Action!</b> Meet with your team or partners. Share the goal with your program ahead of time, and ask each to brainstorm ways that social media can help meet your goal. As a group, discuss and create objectives that are specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART). A sample goal and objective are provided to help you get started.</p> <p><i>Sample goal:</i> Live in a community where teens help teens prevent teen pregnancy.</p> <p><i>Sample objective (fill in the blanks):</i> <u>Recruit [insert #] teens to serve as teen ambassadors by [insert timeframe, e.g., the end of the school year], to help inform and implement the program.</u></p>
<p><b>S</b>trategy</p>	<p>Ask yourself: What will you do to meet your objectives, and how can that impact your work? Keep in mind that strategies differ from tactics. Strategies are <i>what</i> you will do to meet your goals. Tactics are the <i>how</i> you will implement your strategies.</p> <p>Consider these sample strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build knowledge by providing a forum for youth to ask questions and get answers.</li> <li>• Equip youth with information and tools to help generate peer-to-peer engagement.</li> <li>• Link youth to free and confidential screenings and sexual health care counselors.</li> <li>• Connect partners and community members through events.</li> </ul>

	<p><b>Take Action!</b></p> <p>Make social media work. Identify one or two strategies that support achieving your goal. Generate a list of social media tactics that can support how you will implement each strategy. Prioritize your list and commit to moving it forward in the next 3-6 months.</p>
<b>T</b> echnology	<p>Ask yourself: What technology works best for my community?</p> <p>The following table of social media tools can help you brainstorm strategies and tactics you want to implement. Although most tools listed are free or come with minimal costs, the resources to maintain them are a factor. Think about which tools can help you be most effective.</p>
	<p><b>Take Action!</b></p> <p>Choose one of the tools in the following table. Ask 4 or 5 youth (or your appropriate audience) if they have used the tool, how they use it, and what they think about it. Commit to using the tool yourself for a week. Write down what you learn and share it with your team.</p>

Channel	Heaviest User Group	Description	Level of Effort
Facebook pages	Grantees, Youth, Partners	Facebook pages are for organizations to share stories and connect with people. Pages offer analytics and allow for posting stories, hosting events, adding apps, and more. People who like your page, and their friends, can get updates in Facebook’s news feed. Although Facebook is a free service, it is becoming harder to ensure fans actually see content without using Facebook advertising to help boost the visibility of your posts.	Medium-High
Facebook groups	Grantees, Youth	Facebook groups are spaces created to share status updates, photos, and messages with a smaller set of people. Members are approved or added by other members. Unlike Pages, notifications are sent to Group members by default after each new post or discussion. Group creators can choose privacy settings: secret, closed, or open to determine group access.	Low-Medium
YouTube	Youth, Partners	YouTube is a video sharing Website that allows people to discover, watch, and share videos. Users can upload videos, comment on videos, and subscribe to channels within YouTube. YouTube is a free service and also offers analytics.	High
Instagram	Youth	Instagram is a free photo and video sharing app that allows users to transform the look and feel of a photo and then post to it. Instagram posts can support hashtags and are shareable through Facebook, Twitter, and Tumblr. Instagram analytics and metrics can be reported using tools like Statigram.	Low-Medium
Twitter	Youth, Partners	Twitter is a service that people use to write short updates, called "tweets," of 140 characters or less. These messages are posted to your profile, sent to your followers, and are searchable. Tweets can support hashtags, photos, and links. Twitter is a free service and offers analytics.	Low
Vine	Youth	Vine is a free, mobile service, owned by Twitter, that allows users to capture and share short looping videos. Like tweets, the brevity of videos on Vine (6 seconds or less) inspires creativity and also utilizes hashtags.	Low

Google+	Grantees	Google+ is a free, social networking tool owned by Google that incorporates photos, community sharing, and video. It allows users to create circles within groups, for sharing. Google+ also offers analytics.	Medium
Tumblr	Youth	Tumblr is a microblogging service that focuses on short multimedia posts in blog format. Tumblr can support hashtags and can host posts from Instagram, Twitter, Pinterest, and a number of social media tools and apps. Tumblr is a free service and offers analytics.	Low-Medium
Pinterest	Partners, Youth	Pinterest is a free, social networking site that uses visual collaging, or “pinning” to collect and organize images and ideas. Pinterest also allows groups to create group boards under one topic. Pinterest supports hashtags and allows users to follow and comment on posts. It offers analytics for business accounts.	Low
Flickr	Youth	Flickr is a free photo and video hosting site that allows users to create albums, share images, and comment on images and videos. Flickr offers limited analytics.	Low-Medium
Blog	Grantees, Partners	A blog is a Website that usually combines text, images, and sometimes video or audio, to share information about a variety of topics. Blogs can be informal in nature and many encourage dialogue by allowing for comments and feedback. Blog posts can be shared through a number of social networking tools.	High
Storify	Grantees, Partners	Storify is a free, social network service that allows users to pull media from across the Web and social networking sites like Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram to create and publish stories and then share with audiences.	Medium-High
Foursquare	Youth	Foursquare is a geolocation tool that allows users to “check in” and rate locations, interact with fellow users, and even earn awards for checking in often. Foursquare is a free service and offers analytics for business.	Low
Podcasts	Partners	Podcasts are audio files that users can listen to or watch online. Users can record podcasts and then upload and share via a variety of sites, including blogs, Facebook, and Twitter.	Medium-High
SlideShare	Partners	SlideShare is a service that allows users to upload and post slides to share with a larger audience, either publicly or privately. SlideShare is a free service and offers analytics.	Medium-High

## PLAN YOUR CONTENT

Content strategy focuses on the planning, creation, delivery, and management of content. It provides structure to your message and should be informed by what your community is talking about and what commands their attention and mobilizes them to action (Department of Health and Human Services, 2014).

**Content Defined**  
Content includes not only the words on the page but also images and multimedia. Examples of content include infographics, photos, videos, presentations, quotes, and audio clips.

- Use an [editorial calendar](#) to plan and strategize your content. Planning can be done weekly, monthly, or quarterly. Planning can include dates of future posts, the social media platform, post formats and creative elements, holidays or special events, and health observance days.
- Review your current materials and brainstorm ways to “chunk” your content into bite-size snippets that can be shared on social media.

- Consider creating a library of posts categorized by topic for quick reference. Include the various creative assets such as photos and videos you have available in this library.

Leave some room for flexibility. This will help you respond to hot topics and current events that may relate to your mission.

## NAVIGATE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

One key to executing your strategy is to assign as a community manager, a staff person with social media expertise (or interests), who understands the capacity of the organization and is able to prioritize and build upon staff strengths. Your community manager may be an existing staff member and does not have to be a new hire. The community manager will oversee an editorial calendar, manage content distribution, and handle the implementation of a [social media policy](#).

Keep in mind that the time and resources involved in using social media increase as you add more components to your social media efforts.

## MEASURE YOUR PROGRESS

Put in place a monitoring and evaluation plan to help measure your progress. Before you implement your social media strategy, capture your baseline and create a metrics dashboard. A metrics dashboard, which can be set up in Excel or as a table in a Word document, provides an at-a-glance summary of key indicators such as views, followers, subscribers, comments, and shares. Generally, listed along one axis are the metrics you want to monitor and along the other axis are the time parameters for collecting those metrics (e.g., weekly, monthly, quarterly). Key indicators will vary depending on the technology you choose.

The following core questions reach across all technology and are important to ask:

- Are you reaching your target audience?
- Are they engaged? To what extent are you broadcasting information versus creating a dialogue that people share, comment on, or “like”?
- Are the time and resources you are investing in a particular activity providing the outcomes you expect?
- What “actionable insights” have you gained to date that can help improve and optimize your efforts?

Consider using both qualitative and quantitative data to help you assess and benchmark your progress. Qualitative data may include what people are posting, commenting on, or sharing. Quantitative data may include how many followers, retweets, or shares are measured. Depending on resources, you may consider updating your metrics report on a daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, semiannual, or annual basis.

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