Tip Sheet: Evaluating Social Media Efforts

This tip sheet provides an overview of evaluating social media efforts. Awardees can use social media to provide the public with information, deliver services, build trust, and reach those who would otherwise not receive community health information.

Why evaluate social media (e.g., importance, value)?

It is critical to evaluate and measure social media efforts to understand what’s working, why, and how to shift the approach to more effectively take advantage of these tools and staff resources. Measurement can set a baseline and then provide the tools to make decisions about how to improve social media efforts. For example, you could discover that your audience uses a particular platform because of the sharing settings.

How to evaluate social media

There are several steps to evaluating your social media efforts:

1. Understand your audience.
   Determine who you want to reach. Use market research data (if available), conduct online searches, or other methods to research your audience: What devices do they use? How often do they use social media? In which social media communities are they most active? How does your audience like to share information (email, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.)?

2. Determine your goals.
   Plan the intended outcomes for using social media. What are the expectations or desired results from using social media?

3. Plan your social media efforts.
   Plan the strategies and tactics for your social media efforts. It can be specific to a narrowly focused objective (e.g., blood pressure screening event) or a broader goal (e.g., making healthier food options available).

   Identify the best platform(s) for your social media efforts based on audience and goals.

4. Begin measuring baseline metrics.
   It is critical to have a baseline against which to measure the campaign metrics. Begin measuring as far in advance of the campaign as possible. Write down the change you expect to see, and how social media metrics correlate with your overall goal.

5. Review metrics
   At several designated points in time or at the end of the effort, review metrics with key team members. Discuss whether the metrics met your expectations, and incorporate any qualitative feedback you have received.
6. Improve social media efforts

Use the insights gained from your metrics to improve your current or future social media efforts, revise or set new targets for engagement, and note partners who helped increase your exposure or reach. For example, why did social media efforts reach fewer people? Was it more successful than anticipated? How can social media help get future information and messages to your audience?

Table 1. Resources and Examples for Evaluation Social Media Efforts

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<tr>
<th>Resource or Example</th>
<th>Web site</th>
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<tr>
<td>HealthCommWorks</td>
<td><a href="https://cdc.ornl.gov/healthcommworks">https://cdc.ornl.gov/healthcommworks</a></td>
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Selected articles on Social Media Evaluation


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