



# Using Social Media to Enhance Your Web Presence and Understanding Your Consumer Education Brand: Questions and Answers from the “Ask Me Anything” Webinars

This document answers common questions about how to promote your consumer education website by using social media to enhance your web presence and creating a brand to set your consumer education website apart from others and foster consumer recognition.

## Additional Questions?

If you have questions about whether your planned website enhancements meet CCDF requirements, please consult with your [Office of Child Care regional office](#) for guidance.

If you would like additional technical assistance on developing and enhancing your consumer education website, contact the Child Care State Capacity Building Center ([CapacityBuildingCenter@icf.com](mailto:CapacityBuildingCenter@icf.com)).

This document was prepared in response to questions raised by participants in the following webinars:

- ◆ November 14, 2019, webinar – [“Using Social Media to Enhance Your Web Presence”](#)
- ◆ November 21, 2019, webinar – [“Ask Me Anything: Using Social Media to Enhance Your Web Presence”](#)
- ◆ December 12, 2019, webinar – [“Understanding Your Consumer Education Brand”](#)
- ◆ December 19, 2019, webinar – [“Ask Me Anything: Understanding Your Consumer Education Brand”](#)

Experts from the ICF Next team helped the [Child Care State Capacity Building Center](#) (SCBC) prepare this document.

**Note:** SCBC has also developed guides to specifically address social media and branding topics related to consumer education websites. For more detailed guidance and tips, be sure to review [Social Media Strategies to Support Child Care Consumer Education Websites](#) and [Branding Your Consumer Education Website: A Guide for States and Territories](#).

## Social Media

**When defining the goals of your social media work, how do you know if an objective is reasonable? Where is a good place to start to move toward a larger goal like increasing awareness of child care resources?**

Goals are broad, general descriptions of what your social media strategy should achieve over time. Goal setting is an integral step in creating a successful social media strategy and should serve as a guidepost throughout the social media planning and management process. Below are some example goals that can support your consumer education website and guide your social media activities:

- ◆ Build awareness and credibility
- ◆ Strengthen engagement with key stakeholders
- ◆ Move traffic to your consumer education website
- ◆ Build partnerships

Although you may find it helpful to review someone else’s objectives when modeling your basic social media strategy, you should personalize your goals and objectives so that they reflect your organization’s needs and mission. With that said, here are some good places to start:

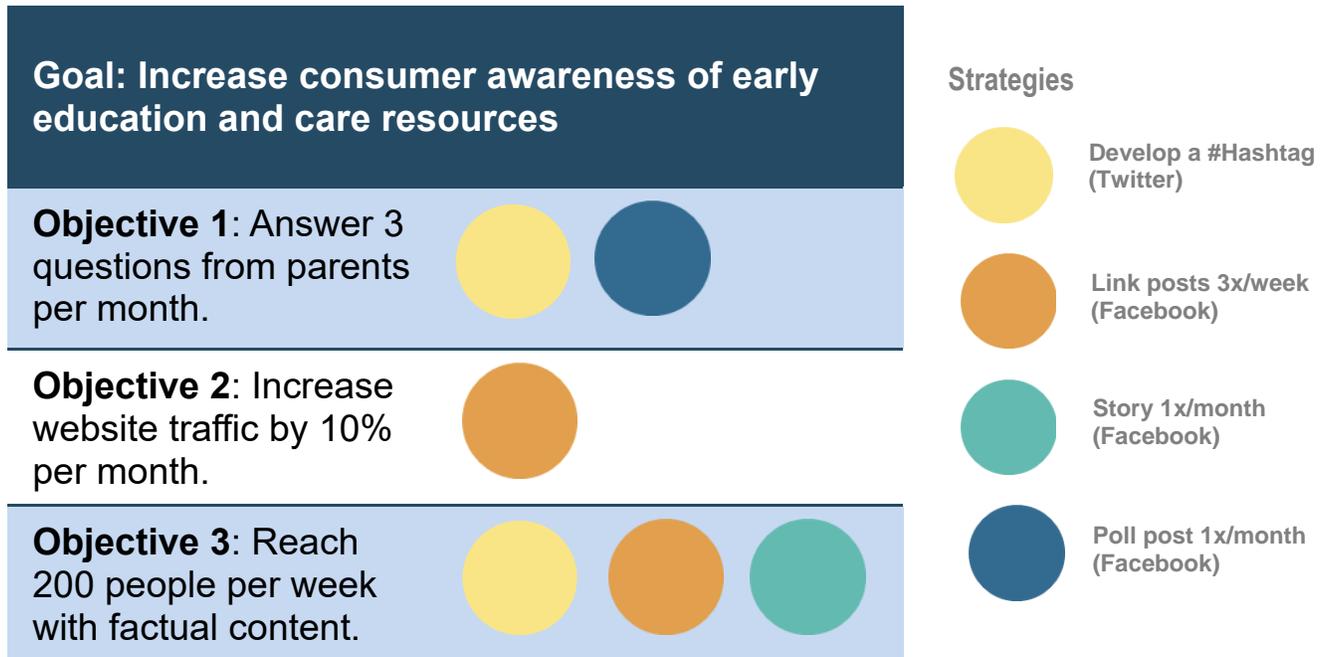
- ◆ Without an audience, your efforts will not achieve anything. How can you grow your audience and extend your reach?
- ◆ Learning from your own triumphs and mistakes is an effective (and underused) social media tactic. When a post does not work, discuss why it may have fallen short. Set goals that help you grow and challenge yourself, using successful posts as a benchmark.
- ◆ After identifying broad goals and selecting your preferred platform, you should create more specific short-term objectives to maintain momentum toward full goal achievement and measurement of success. For instance, to support the larger goal of building partnerships, a measurable objective may be to share a minimum of two posts from partners this month.

### **How do you choose strategies and objectives that support your social media goals?**

Once you have identified broad goals and selected your preferred platform, you should create more specific, short-term objectives to maintain momentum toward full goal achievement and to measure success. Link these objectives to measurable outcomes by using a “SMART” (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and timely) approach.

Each social media objective should help deploy one or more strategies to your target audience. Its measures should help you assess success or failure in attaining one or more goals. Please see the example in figure 1:

Figure 1. Example Consumer Education Social Media Goals and Objectives



Source: ICF Next, & Child Care State Capacity Building Center. (2019). Example Consumer Education Social Media Goals and Objectives. Washington, DC: Office of Child Care.

**What are some tips for keeping social media content concise and effective?**

A successful social media presence depends on dynamic, effective posts that foster engagement and are easy to understand. Success in social media can be tricky because users do not focus on a single product or web page; rather, they browse an abundance of information and skim posts to determine where to focus their attention. Your posts should be concise, interesting, easy to skim, and uncomplicated. The following are helpful tips to apply when working to craft an effective post:

- ◆ Avoid using acronyms. Acronyms make content more difficult to understand. If users are unfamiliar with the acronyms you use, they will not linger to figure it out. They will simply move to the next item in their feed.
- ◆ Avoid using the same stock photos repeatedly. Consider making your own visuals through a content creation tool like Canva or get creative with your photo searches to create interest and variety.
- ◆ Avoid writing long posts. Shorter is better. Even on platforms that allow longer posts, you should aim to create short, concise posts that readers can quickly and easily read while they skim.

**What are some good resources to use as you begin creating comment and posting policies and monitoring guidelines?**

To make sure your social media posts are professional, effective, and timely, develop a formal process that sets staff expectations, outlines needed policies, and defines your social media management process. Once you start posting content, you will need to monitor user posts and comments for appropriateness and assess whether they require a response.

SCBC’s [Social Media Strategies to Support Child Care Consumer Education Websites](#) provides tips and detailed guidance for developing a successful monitoring policy, including the following:

- ◆ Define timeframes and monitoring frequency. For a new social media presence or a smaller social media audience, monitoring does not need to be a full-time job. To avoid missing key engagement opportunities with stakeholders, however, you should set and enforce a monitoring schedule.
- ◆ Use a moderator process to ensure that all user posts and comments are reviewed and approved before a larger audience can see them. This process should clarify who is responsible for moderation and when and how responses to comments should be reviewed and approved.
- ◆ Provide moderator response standards. Determine when responding to user comments is appropriate and helpful and identify who is responsible for drafting responses. Responses should be professional, have a strengths-based tone, and reinforce your agency's goals and mission.

### **Do you have any recommendations for how to set up useful social media data reports?**

Formatting a data report is a matter of preference; however, a few key elements can make a report truly actionable:

- ◆ Use consistent time periods to support useful data comparisons. For example, 100 likes mean little on their own. However, 100 likes this month, compared to only 20 last month, can be quite meaningful.
- ◆ Be sure to indicate when you started to use new objectives in the report. It can be helpful to look back and see when you started a new strategy, such as integrating polls into your social media posts, to better understand why you may have seen an increase in engagement (for example, more likes, comments, and shares).
- ◆ Use a simple ratio to assess progress and help ensure “apples to apples” comparisons of some of your social media data. For example, if you would like to see how much of your Facebook audience is engaging with each post, you could divide the number of post likes by the total number of followers and track that ratio over time.

The bottom line is that you do not have to create complicated data reports to make them useful and informative. Social media moves fast! Pulling data in real time to adjust and strengthen your social media tactics is more important than having a detailed, wordy report, especially when your time is at a premium.

## Branding

### **If a state or territory is considering establishing a brand for their consumer education website or revising their existing branding, what should its first step be?**

A brand gives a product a unique and recognizable personality by integrating visual features such as logos, colors, tone, and fonts into a custom design. You can better connect with your target audience by effectively branding your consumer education website. Because your brand is outward facing, you should tailor it to the needs and expectations of your audience. Your brand should align with your organizational values, goals, and efforts. As such, a key first step in creating an effective brand is answering the questions below. Then, use your answers to tailor your branding strategy.

- ◆ As an organization, what would you like to achieve by using a new brand?
- ◆ Who is your audience? What kind of brand will resonate with them?
- ◆ What are your goals? How can branding support these goals?
- ◆ What is your communication strategy? How can branding support this?



The answers to these questions should inform your visuals, messaging strategy, and the creative components of your brand. All elements of your branding and communication strategy should circle back to your goals and support what you are trying to achieve as an organization.

**Do you have any recommendations for good resources that can support the development of effective marketing materials?**

- ◆ Many online resources can help you create layouts for marketing materials, such as brochures, infographics, and social media imagery. Some of these templates are available online. Some free options include Canva, Microsoft Office, Piktochart, and StockLayouts. Please note that some content may be available for an additional cost.
- ◆ Canva, in particular, offers a free content creation tool, which provides predesigned, pre-sized social media posts. Canva is fairly easy to use and remains up to date with posting guidelines across various social media platforms.

**What are some ways agencies can analyze the effectiveness of their consumer education brand?**

To objectively assess the effectiveness of your brand, you may find it helpful to validate your brand choices (design, brand components, messaging) by using focus groups and other market research methods.

- ◆ To remain objective in analyzing your brand, consider contracting with someone who has expertise in this area. A consultant or contractor with such expertise can help you elicit the right kind of feedback and use best practices in brand strategy to assess how well your brand is connecting with your audience.
- ◆ Be sure to validate assumptions about your audience and its needs. Assess how well your brand is resonating with members of your audience. Use your findings to adjust your branding strategy accordingly.

**What are the biggest “dos” and “don’ts” when it comes to visual imagery, such as photos, icons, illustrations, and so on?**

**Dos**

- ◆ Ensure consistency. Make sure you use visuals with a consistent look that matches the feel of your brand. For example, icons should have a consistent style to clearly signal that they come from the same design family. Images should also have a consistent perspective and tone. For instance, if you choose to use photos that are candid shots, then use that style consistently throughout your site.
- ◆ Create an image library. When you create and maintain an image library, you can proactively identify and approve images for ready use across all your communication tools. When members of your staff have access to an image library, you will support more efficient use of their resources and ensure visual consistency across platforms. Staff will not have to spend time searching and getting approval for images each time they need to create content, such as a social media post.
- ◆ Leverage available resources. Take advantage of the many image resources that are available online, including free options.

**Don’ts**

- ◆ Do not overuse icons. Be selective and make sure that they are simple and universally understood. A web page with too many different icons can be difficult to scan and may hinder understanding.
- ◆ Be mindful of copyright agreements. Copyright law is complex. Check with someone from your legal department or contact the vendor of the image to ensure that you are following proper copyright protocol and



obtaining appropriate permissions. Just because an image is available in the public domain does not mean that you can use it without permission or a citation.

## SCBC Resources

- ◆ [“Consumer Education Webinar Series”](#) (2019): this web page shares resources from each national webinar and “Ask Me Anything” session.
- ◆ [Social Media Strategies to Support Child Care Consumer Education Websites](#) (2019): this guide aims to help you create a successful social media presence; it shares best practices and resources for planning, maintaining, and assessing an effective social media strategy that will engage your target audience and support the use and growth of your consumer education website.
- ◆ [Branding Your Consumer Education Website: A Guide for States and Territories](#) (2019): this guide offers best practices, tools, and examples to help states and territories develop a brand personality that extends beyond their consumer education website into other communication platforms, such as print and social media.
- ◆ [Guide for Increasing Search Engine Optimization](#) (2019): this guide presents tools and resources you can use to make sure search engines can easily locate content that is relevant to users’ needs.

*The State Capacity Building Center (SCBC) works with state and territory leaders and their partners to create innovative early childhood systems and programs that improve results for children and families. The SCBC is funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Child Care.*

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