Online Module 2: Promoting Your Consumer Education Website

This resource was developed by the Child Care State Capacity Building Center with funding and oversight from the Office of Child Care.

Before We Begin

This is a text version of Module 2 of the Consumer Education Online Module Series: *Promoting Your Consumer Education Website*. View the interactive version of *Module 2: Promoting Your Consumer Education Website*.

Welcome

Welcome to Module 2: Promoting Your Consumer Education Website.

The intended audience for this module is state and territory CCDF Lead Agency staff and contractors responsible for building and maintaining child care consumer education websites.

Resources are available to support each module. A resource list can be found on the same page where you accessed this document.

This course includes hyperlinks to other helpful resources. When you select a hyperlink, a new window will open.

Series Purpose

The Consumer Education Website's Online Module series aims to help CCDF Lead Agency staff develop more effective, accessible, engaging, and family-friendly child care consumer education websites. This series provides best practices and tips that states and territories can use to support continuous website improvement to make sure families can learn about, understand, and access the full range of child care options and resources available to them.

The series will also highlight how states and territories can build awareness for their websites and use data to inform continuous improvements and enhancements.

The series includes three modules:

- *Module 1: Building a Family-Friendly Website*

- *Module 2: Promoting Your Consumer Education Website*

- *Module 3: Using Data to Support Continuous Website Improvement*

For more information on the CCDF consumer education website requirements, please refer to the *CCDF Consumer Education Website Requirements Infographic.*

Module Purpose

Once you build your child care consumer education website, your target audience needs to know about it so that they may use the key information and resources it provides. Using website promotion strategies is essential to increasing your website's visibility and reaching your target audience. Applying the strategies described in this module can help your audience *find* your website, *remember* your website, and *connect* with your website.

The Child Care State Capacity Building Center (SCBC) has developed several products that offer best practices relating to website promotion. This module integrates these best practices in one place.

This module aims to help you build your understanding of key website promotion strategies and terminology. This understanding will help you communicate effectively with your website development, content management, and communications staff and vendors to ensure they can provide the support you need to increase the visibility of your consumer education website.

How do you promote your website?

Organizations can use many strategies to increase their website's visibility.

This module highlights three categories of best practice strategies that can be particularly effective in promoting a child care consumer education website.

These strategies can help your audience find, remember, and connect with your website.

♦ **Find**

   Increase search engine optimization to ensure your audience can find your website easily online.

♦ **Remember**

   Create and apply a consumer education brand to set your website apart from others and build consumer recognition.

♦ **Connect**

   Use social media to enhance your web presence and foster engagement.

Develop a Digital Strategy Plan

To maintain a successful website, it is helpful to develop a digital strategy plan to coordinate the different facets of your digital efforts and guide your continuous improvement efforts for your consumer education website.

This plan should include the website promotion strategies presented in this module— to help users find, remember, and connect with— your consumer education website. These strategies aim to achieve the following key goals:

♦ Build awareness and credibility for your consumer education website

♦ Move traffic to your consumer education website

♦ Strengthen engagement with key stakeholders

♦ Build partnerships to sustain coordinated efforts

A digital strategy plan should articulate the goals for your consumer education website and describe the priority activities needed to support the website enhancements that will achieve those goals.

How Easily Can Your Audience Find Your Site?

Once you have developed your consumer education website, you want your audience to be able to find it easily.

Let's explore how people typically find online content.

People use the following methods to reach a website:

♦ Search engines such as Google and Bing

♦ Social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter

♦ Other websites (when a user selects a posted link to your website)

♦ Direct traffic (such as typing a URL directly into a browser)

♦ Word-of-mouth

Most site visits occur through search engine referrals.

♦ A user types keywords into a search engine.

♦ The search engine provides ranked results based on how well website content matches those keywords.

♦ The user then follows the top-ranking links directly to the website.

Can users find your website easily?

Users should be able to find your consumer education website easily when they enter common child care-related keywords and phrases—as well as the name of your jurisdiction—into an online search engine: For example:

♦ What is quality child care?

♦ How do I find child care?

♦ What is child care licensing?

Search Engine Optimization (SEO): What is it?

Search engines work by scanning websites using an automated program that looks at specific aspects of your website, including actual page content and "behind the scenes" coding that tells browsers and search engines what information your website provides. Search engines then use algorithms to process how that information matches user search criteria and decide where it should rank on a search engine results page.

Search engine optimization applies what is known about how these algorithms work to increase the likelihood that search engines will match your website to users' online search criteria and rank your website content higher than others on search engine result pages.

SEO: How Can It Help Your Website?

Search engines have become a part of our daily life. They serve millions of users each day who are looking to find information and resources quickly. Ensuring that your audience can find your website when using a search engine is essential to the success of your website.

Search engine optimization — or SEO — helps increase the visibility of your website and ensures people can find it more readily when they use a search engine. This is why SEO is an important digital marketing tool.

Here are some reasons why SEO is so important.

♦ *Most users only visit a website that displays in the top few results on the first search engine results page.*

♦ *SEO is almost always the most effective way to increase web traffic without a paid media campaign.*

♦ *Search engines help people find specific online content and drive them to those websites. If search engines cannot find your website, you miss out on incredible opportunities to increase your website's visibility and web traffic.*

♦ *Beyond ranking higher in search engine results pages, many SEO improvements also contribute to a better user experience because they make key information easier to find and read.*

Categories of Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

There are two categories of SEO: technical and content.

♦ Using both technical and content SEO will help your audience find your website more easily via online searches.

♦ The information presented in this section is designed to help you develop a basic understanding of Search Engine Optimization.

When you understand how your website can support both categories of SEO, you can communicate more effectively with your website development and content management teams to ensure that your website has what it needs to improve its SEO, and, thus, increase its visibility.

Technical SEO

Technical SEO refers to the "behind the scenes" information about your website—known as **metadata**— that can be used to describe its content and structure effectively to web browsers and search engines. Your website development and content management teams can update your website's metadata to improve your technical SEO.

Why is metadata important to technical SEO?

♦ Search engines use metadata to understand what information is on each web page. Search engines evaluate how well metadata matches search criteria and how relevant that page content is compared to other pages.

♦ The results of this evaluation determine how your website will or will not be displayed on search engine results pages.

Technical SEO involves optimizing your website's metadata so that search engines can more easily identify your website's structure and content.

Let's find out which "behind the scenes" aspects of your website are considered metadata.

What is metadata?

Metadata is information about your website content and structure that search engines can read.

Metadata is the "behind the scenes" information that describes your web page content, conveyed through your website's hypertext markup language (HTML) code.

♦ **Page title:** Sometimes called a meta title, this will display as your page title on a search engine results page to quickly convey your web page content. This title also displays on your browser tab, so you know what page you are on. The page title we refer to here is the one tagged in your web page's HTML code, not the page title visible on the actual web page.

♦ **Meta description:** This is text within your website's HTML code that provides a brief description of a web page's content. It is sometimes called a page summary. Search engines often include a meta description on the results page to help users gauge what to expect to find on a given web page.

♦ **Heading tags:** Headings are an important factor in SEO, usability, and readability. Each heading on your web page should have an HTML heading tag that search engines can read to identify content.

♦ **Alternative text**: Also known as alt text, this is a simple word or phrase that can be inserted as an attribute in your website's HTML code that describes the nature or contents of an image on your web page.

Content SEO

Now, let's learn about content SEO. Content SEO refers to how you write and share website content and how search engines use that information to inform search engine results. Search engines use content SEO to assess whether your website's content is more relevant than other sites.

These processes help point web users directly to your website and can increase your search engine rankings.

♦ Link building, which happens when other websites include hyperlinks to your site.

♦ Social media and content marketing efforts which share links to your site.

♦ Clearly written web page text that is organized effectively and integrates keywords.

♦ URL formats that are easy to read and convey what content can be found on the page.

Improving Your Website's Technical SEO: Best Practices

There are relatively simple best practices that website content managers may apply when creating or updating page titles, heading tags, and meta descriptions that can improve your website's technical SEO.

Share these best practices with those responsible for your website's content management to determine how they may be applied to your website.

To improve technical SEO, apply best practices when developing the following metadata components:

Page Titles

Write page titles that are clear and descriptive.

- Use concise, plain language.

- Keep titles under 55 characters and under 5 words.

- Place keywords toward the beginning of the title.

- Don't simplify the title so much that it creates confusion with other content on your site.

  Example

  Old title: Department of Health and Social Services–Child Care Services: How to choose quality child care?

  Revised title: Choosing Quality Child Care–Child Care Services

  What changed? The page title was shortened so that it will not get cut off in a search engine result page display. Keywords were included at the beginning of the title.

Heading Tags

Use clearly written, descriptive headings to organize page content and ensure each heading has an appropriate HTML heading tag "behind the scenes."

Headings improve user experience by allowing users to scan and find page content more easily.

Heading tags (shown below as H1, H2, H3) allow search engines to more easily "scan" to identify what content is on each web page.

- Use H1 at the top of the page to display the title or the main subject of the page.

- Then use sequential heading levels, such as H2 to convey main topics, then, if necessary, use H3 to convey subtopics.

- Aim to use no more than three heading levels.

  Example

  Old H1: Department of Health and Social Service- Child Care Services- Licensing Office

  Revised H1: Child Care Licensing Overview

  What changed? The old heading tag displayed the full website's name instead of describing the first header on the page.

Meta Descriptions

If a page lacks a description, it will negatively affect your SEO.

Write clear, concise meta descriptions that summarize the page's content effectively.

Meta descriptions are not page content. They should simply describe the page's content, not deliver it.

  Example

  Old meta description: The Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) reauthorization includes requirements for health and safety training. This resource provides information on health and safety

professional training for out-of-school time providers, as required by state, plus access to research-based online training modules. Trainings are free; it costs $5 for a professional development certification of completion. This site offers modules on other topics too, such as positive guidance and preparing to teach STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math).

Revised meta description: Information on health and safety training for out-of-school child care providers.

What changed? The new description provides a brief but concise summary of the page's content.

Improving Your Website's Content SEO: Best Practices

When your website content and URL formatting is easy to read, search engines can easily scan it.

Here are some best practices that website content managers can apply when developing content and URL formatting to strengthen your website's content SEO.

Readable URL Formats

♦ Use brief, readable URL formats.

♦ Use whole words.

♦ Separate words with hyphens.

♦ Avoid strings of numbers, symbols, or parameters.

   Example

   Old: http://example.com/product%20%26%services/index.jsp?category=lnl&id=035

   Revised: https://www.example.com/find-child-care

User-Friendly Text and Formatting

Search engines can point users to your website when:

♦ Page content is written in plain language and integrates keywords and phrases that your audience may use to search for information.

♦ Web page content is organized logically and effectively by using headers to facilitate scanning and understanding.

♦ See *Module 1: Building a Family-Friendly Website* for more best practices related to formatting and writing user-friendly content.

Content Management Process

To support sustained SEO, provide content creators with clear guidelines and workflow processes so that everyone follows a standard protocol for publishing content.

Content management processes should describe requirements for SEO-friendly metadata elements, as well as other content development requirements, such as plain language guidelines, approval, and quality assurance processes.

Improving SEO: Developer Best Practices

There are additional steps that developers can take to improve your consumer education website's SEO. Let's learn about some of these developer best practices. Be sure to discuss these best practices with your web development team.

Mobile Optimization

Mobile optimization should be a feature of a user-friendly website, as more users access the web on mobile devices. It is also a key aspect of search engine result ranking.

Mobile Optimization Tips:

♦ Take [Google's free test](#) to assess whether your website is mobile-friendly.

♦ Ensure posted video content is mobile-friendly. For example, do not use a video that causes an error message such as, "This video is not available for mobile."

♦ Avoid pop-up or overlay text that may block the page content or the user's ability to complete actions on the page.

Load Time

Page load time is the time it takes to download and display the content of a web page in a browser window.

Faster is better. Search engines give preference to pages with faster load times.

Load Time Tips:

♦ Optimize code by reducing redirects. Search engines penalize you for redirects, as they create extra steps to get to your destination.

♦ Ensure image files are not too large; even if the image is set to display at a certain size or ratio, the browser must take time to load the full file.

♦ Design and develop pages as mobile-first, considering Accelerated Mobile Page versions where applicable.

Create a Sitemap

♦ A sitemap is a list of all the pages on a website. It helps search engines quickly crawl (go through) and index (make sense of the organization) the website.

♦ Without a sitemap, search engines cannot index your website, and your content will not get ranked in search engines results pages.

♦ Confirm that your agency has submitted a sitemap for your website to Google Search Console and Bing Webmaster Tools.

Reassess SEO After Changes are Made

♦ Once you have made changes to support SEO, track traffic that comes from search engines to updated pages, so you can see if there has been an uptick compared to previous performance.

♦ Results may take one to three months to take effect.

Improving Your Website's SEO: Conduct an SEO Audit

An SEO audit is also a tool that you can use to assess and improve your website's SEO. An SEO audit will help you identify what aspects of your website need to be improved to ensure your target audience can find it.

♦ Without assessing your site's current SEO, you will not know how your users find, or do not find, your content.

♦ The SEO audit process allows you to identify what aspects of SEO for your consumer education website need to be improved to ensure your target users can find your site.

♦ SCBC's *Guide for Increasing Search Engine Optimization* provides more detailed guidance and steps for conducting an SEO audit.

Quick tip:

One way to quickly assess your SEO is to pretend you are part of an audience group, such as parents, and conduct an online search for a page on your website using phrases that they would likely use when searching for information.

♦ Does your page show up? If so, how is it ranked on the results page?

♦ How many results pages do you have to click through before reaching your page?

After the Audit

♦ **Fix Errors:** Remove broken links and errors identified during the audit process.

♦ **Resolve missing metadata:** Write and upload new metadata where the audit found they are missing or where they do not meet best practices guidelines.

Branding Your Consumer Education Website

Creating a brand is another way to build awareness for your consumer education website and connect with your audience. Just as your image and personality express who you are to others, branding conveys the essence of your organization, product, and services to consumers. In this age of electronic information overload, branding can set your consumer education website apart from other websites.

An effective brand can convey your agency's purpose and values in a way that resonates with your target audience. This provides an opportunity to shape your audience's perception of your website and build consumer recognition. When consumers connect with your brand, they will remember your website and come back to it.

A brand can give your website a unique and recognizable personality through a custom design which includes logos, colors, fonts, and tone. These elements should come together to convey your agency's purpose and core values in a way that resonates with your target audience.

Logo: An effective logo is a memorable graphic or symbol that identifies a company, product, or service. A logo can also include a name and tagline. To be effective, your logo should:

♦ Resonate with your audience.

♦ Convey a positive image.

♦ Be simple, memorable, timeless, and versatile.

Colors: Colors should work together to create a unique emotional connection between your audience and your brand.

♦ Colors can evoke different emotional responses. Consider color psychology to help determine what you want your brand colors to represent.

♦ Do not use too many colors. Too many colors will diminish the power of your brand.

♦ Use online resources to help select a color palette that can support your brand's personality.

Fonts: Fonts visually convey mood and tone.

♦ Choose fonts that are easy to read.

▪ Fonts categorized as "serif" or "sans serif" tend to be the most readable. They are also best suited for brand font design, either individually or paired together.

♦ Each font has its own personality and unique appearance. The fonts you choose can set the tone and mood you want to communicate to your audience.

▪ "Serif" fonts are considered ornate, classic, formal, or elegant. "Sans serif" fonts are often described as clean, modern, and casual.

▪ Use one or two complementary fonts to provide a consistent look.

▪ Many online resources are available to help you select effective font combinations to support the look and feel of your brand.

Tone: Keep your audience in mind when determining your brand's tone.

♦ Choose visuals, colors, and fonts that complement the tone you would like to convey through your brand.

♦ Make sure word choice reflects your brand's personality and connects with your target audience.

Developing an Effective Brand

An effective brand will distinguish your consumer education website from other websites and help families recognize it as the primary resource for early education and child care information. Here are some key considerations to help you get started in the brand development process.

How a Brand Works

An effective brand will distinguish your consumer education website from other websites and help families recognize it as your state's primary resource for early education and child care information.

♦ A brand that instills confidence and trust in your target audience is an important part of a successful consumer education website.

♦ Thoughtfully chosen layouts, images, tone, and text help your audience better engage with your website.

♦ Design consistency helps improve usability and accessibility for all segments of your target audience.

How to Get Started

A key first step in creating an effective brand is answering the questions below. Then, use your answers to tailor your branding strategy.

♦ 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?

Create a Branding Guide

Once you have developed your brand, consider using a branding guide. A branding guide will help you ensure that brand components, such as fonts, colors, and tone are used consistently across all types of communication. Consistent application of your brand builds and reinforces a strong branding personality.

To maintain consistency, consider developing a branding guide that defines all components of your brand. Ensure that staff who create and disseminate content consistently apply these components.

♦ Personality: Explain your brand's personality and how to apply it across various media.

♦ Style: Define the colors, fonts, and styles that content editors should use.

♦ Guidance: Provide guidance and examples of correctly branded materials.

♦ Resources: Include any approved templates, imagery, and other brand resources.

Supporting Your Brand

When you invest the time and resources into developing a brand, it is important that you use it in a way that will make the most impact with your audience. Here are some best practices to help you showcase your brand in an effective, yet efficient manner.

Here are some best practices that you can use to help you apply your brand effectively.

Use a Pattern Library

A pattern library is a type of style guide that includes examples of each design element used in your website's user interface, such as menus, buttons, and headings.

Pattern libraries help you:

♦ maintain consistent user-interface and design elements; and

♦ reduce the time it takes to add common web design elements when changes need to be made. So, when the website needs a new information button, you can quickly pull from the design from the library of patterns, rather than designing it from scratch.

Use Effective Layout Strategies

To amplify your brand, apply the following formatting techniques.

For more detailed information about website formatting best practices that strengthen user experience, see *Module 1: Building a Family-Friendly Website*.

♦ Display your logo consistently.

▪ Your logo should clearly brand your pages but not compete with the main content.

♦ Apply visual hierarchies.

▪ Visual hierarchy is the arrangement of design elements in order of importance so users can understand information easily.

▪ It helps a reader focus on the main content first, then move to supporting elements.

▪ Be sure to leverage visual hierarchies to highlight your brand.

♦ Use white space effectively.

▪ White space is the space between text, graphics, and images.

▪ Effective use of white space makes a web page more inviting and can highlight your brand.

Ensure Visual Consistency

Make sure you use visuals with a consistent look that matches the feel of your brand.

♦ 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, use that style consistently throughout your site.

Use 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 platforms.

♦ you can ensure visual consistency across platforms that complements your brand.

♦ staff will not have to spend time searching and getting approval for images each time they need to create content, such as a new social media post.

Do not Overuse Icons

♦ Be selective and make sure that icons 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.

For more detailed branding guidance, see SCBC's *Branding Your Consumer Education Website: A Guide for States and Territories.*

Branding: Assessing Its Effectiveness

It may be helpful to assess the effectiveness of your brand — both during the brand development process and after implementation — to make sure it resonates with your target audience and enhances your website promotion and engagement efforts.

Here are some tips that you can use when assessing your brand's effectiveness.

Validate your Brand Choices

♦ Use focus groups and other market research methods to assess the effectiveness of your brand,

♦ An objective assessment may be helpful to validate your brand choices, such as design, brand components, and messaging.

Leverage an Objective Expert

♦ 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.

Assess Your Assumptions

♦ 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.

Using Social Media to Promote Your Website

Social media is another tool that you can use to increase the visibility of your consumer education website. You can leverage social media to drive traffic to your consumer education website, build awareness for your site, and add a new, more dynamic dimension to your family and stakeholder engagement efforts.

This section provides an overview of 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.

Social media is another tool that you can use to increase the visibility of your consumer education website.

♦   Social media should be part of your larger digital strategy and communications plan.

♦   Think about your overarching communication and consumer education website goals when developing social media activities to make sure they support your larger engagement efforts.

♦   To create and maintain an effective social media presence, consider the following steps:

   1.   Define your social media strategy.

   2.   Develop a management process to ensure quality and accountability.

   3.   Build content and create posts to support your social media strategy

SCBC's *Social Media Strategies to Support Child Care Consumer Education Websites* guide provides detailed guidance on how states and territories can build and maintain a social media strategy that can support and promote their consumer education website.

Define Your Social Media Strategy

Before you start using social media as a website promotion tool, you should first define your social media strategy.

Here are a few tips to help you develop an effective strategy that will build your social media presence:

♦   **Identify your target audience**

   ▪   For your child care consumer education website, your primary audience includes parents and families.

   ▪   This audience may have specific segments, such as families with young children, families with school-age children, and families with children who have special needs. In addition to families, you may also want your social media presence to reach other stakeholders, such as providers, child care professionals, and advocates.

   ▪   Understanding how your target audience finds what's important to them will help you craft content that resonates with them. Likewise, this understanding will help you select the best platforms for reaching your specific audience.

♦   **Set goals**

   ▪   Goal setting is a key step in creating a successful social media strategy. Goals should guide your social media planning and management process.

   ▪   Your social media goals should align and support your broader digital strategy goals for website promotion.

- Build awareness and credibility

- Strengthen engagement with key stakeholders

- Move traffic to your consumer education website

- Build partnerships

♦ **Select the right platforms**

▪ People access information via social media in different ways, at different times of the day, and for different reasons. In seeking to meet the needs of different demographics, social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and others engage audiences in varying ways and support different capabilities.

▪ Consider the following when selecting the right platforms.

- How does your target audience use social media?

- What is the platform used for? Will it support your work?

- What are the platform's key features? Will they help you reach your target users?

♦ **Determine specific objectives to measure success**

▪ Once broad goals are identified and you have selected your preferred platform, you should create more specific, short-term objectives to measure success and maintain momentum toward full goal achievement.

▪ Link these objectives to measurable outcomes by using a specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and timely (SMART) approach. Taking the time to set SMART objectives tied to specific efforts upfront will make tracking and assessing your activities much easier and less time consuming.

Develop a Social Media Management Process

To ensure that your social media posts are professional, effective, and timely, you should develop a formal process that clarifies staff roles and responsibilities, defines expectations, and describes key processes. Using a well-defined social media management process will help to ensure quality and accountability.

Here are some key components of an effective social media management process.

Establish Roles and Responsibilities

♦ Define roles and responsibilities for staff who write social media content to support an organized, consistent social media approach and carry out a more efficient work plan.

♦ Set targets on how much time staff should devote to their specific tasks.

♦ Indicate who will develop content, who will review posts for quality assurance, who will approve posts, and who will maintain posts and respond to comments.

Define Content Approval and Quality Assurance Processes

♦ Content approval and quality assurance are critical steps in any publication process. These processes act as your safety net to prevent errors and maintain post integrity.

♦ Be sure to include reviewing your moderator's responses to user comments in your quality assurance and content approval processes.

♦ Define when you need to obtain permission to post certain content, such as imagery or success stories featuring people and how to ensure confidentiality is maintained, where applicable.

Ensure Branding Consistency

♦ One of the key goals of your social media strategy is to strengthen awareness of your consumer education website.

♦ You can support this goal by ensuring that the brand elements of your consumer education website are reflected in the content of your posts.

Monitoring and Moderation Guidelines

Once you start posting content, you should monitor user posts and comments for appropriateness and assess whether they require a response. To ensure that your posts remain professional, your social media management process should provide monitoring and moderation guidelines.

Effective monitoring and moderation guidelines should:

♦ **Define Timeframes and Monitoring Frequency**

For a new social media presence or a smaller social media audience, monitoring should not be time consuming.

To avoid missing key engagement opportunities with stakeholders, set and enforce a monitoring schedule.

Choose an appropriate monitoring frequency (once, twice, or three times a day, depending on activity levels) and assign them to specific staff.

♦ **Use a Moderator Process**

Use a moderator process to ensure that all user posts or comments are reviewed and approved before a larger audience can see them.

This process should:

▪ clarify who is responsible for moderation.

▪ indicate when and how responses to comments should be reviewed and approved.

♦ **Provide Moderator Response Standards**

Clarify when responses to user comments are appropriate and helpful.

Determine who is responsible for drafting responses.

Ensure responses are professional and strength-based in tone and reinforce your agency's goals and mission.

Creating Social Media Content and Posts

Good content is the cornerstone of any successful social media strategy. A successful social media presence depends on dynamic, effective posts that appeal to your target audience and foster engagement.

Here are a few tips to help you develop and sustain effective social media posts:

Build a Social Media Content Library

♦ Content is the core of social media posts.

♦ Think about content creation as a preparation activity as well as a maintenance activity. This approach can set your efforts up for success.

♦ A content library of high-quality, well-written, goal-aligned content to draw from is key to supporting a successful and sustainable social media plan.

Create a Variety of Content and Post Types

♦ Content variety supports a dynamic, fresh, social media presence.

♦ Consider the rule of thirds to ensure content variety:

▪ One third should promote core messaging;

▪ One third should focus on community building and branding; and

▪ One third should be used for timely posts and shares from other relevant sources.

• Create posts for the first two categories—core messaging and community building—in advance and store them in a content library. Proactive content creation supports more efficient use of staff resources and ensure consistency across posts.

Your social media content library should reflect a healthy mix of the following post elements to support ongoing, effective posting:

♦ **Post type**: Incorporate a variety of post types, such as posts with links, image or video posts with and without links, and "real-time" content like Facebook or Instagram stories.

♦ **Media type**: Including a mix of videos, gifs, images, and text-only posts can add interest for the end-user.

♦ **Tone**: Including a mix of lighthearted content, inspirational content, and informative content can help maintain interest and keep posts fresh.

♦ **Intended use**: Some content can be framed for repeated use, with repost frequency depending on platform selection, while other pieces can feature time-specific references for single use.

Create Posts to Support Your Social Media Strategy

A successful social media presence depends on dynamic, effective, and timely posts that are easy to understand and will foster engagement. Success in social media can be tricky because the audience does not focus on a single product or web page; rather, users browse large chunks of information and skim posts to determine where to focus their attention. If your social media content is too dense, long-winded, or complicated, you are unlikely to

attract a reader. Crafting effective posts is an art in which you vary content and post types and incorporate well-written text.

To build a successful social media presence, consider the following when developing social media content.

♦ **Use Family-Friendly Language Techniques to Attract Your Target Audience**

▪ Use language that is conversational (in plain language), people-first, and action-oriented.

♦ **Be Mindful of Engagement**

▪ Be sure to promptly review comments for posts in which you have elicited user feedback.

▪ Quickly share results when you use a poll via social media.

▪ Review user comments thoughtfully, identify user quotes or questions, and elevate them by including them in follow-up posts. This will showcase your responsiveness and validate the importance of audience participation.

♦ **Create Content That Supports Goals and Performance Metrics**

▪ Choose content that could answer key questions or help clarify which post elements resonate best with your audience.

▪ For example, are stock photos or illustrated icons more engaging? Does your audience click on link posts—or image posts with links included in the text?

Use a Calendar to Organize and Schedule Posts

Managing your social media activities does not have to be time-consuming. Being proactive will help you complete your social media tasks more effectively. For instance, using a social media calendar can help you organize your efforts and campaigns across multiple platforms, plan posts for important events and holidays, and ensure a mix of content types and posting times that will keep your posts engaging and fresh.

An editorial calendar is a schedule that maps out the types of content that will be posted and specifies when posting should occur. It should align with your consumer education priorities and goals and reflect key seasonal events that are tied to consumer education and other content elements that are important to your target audience.

These tips for building an editorial calendar can help you bridge the gap between strategy and tactical application.

♦ **Tip 1: Create a Posting Schedule**

To ensure your social media work is rooted in social media trends and the needs of your target audience, create a posting schedule to guide your work.

A posting schedule can provide structure to help you follow strategically identified, consistent rules about how frequently to post. For example, on which days of the week and at which times of day should you post?

♦ **Tip 2: Schedule Varied Content to Keep Posts Dynamic**

Planning your editorial calendar can feel overwhelming, especially when your social media strategy covers a large content library with a diverse mix of content.

A layered approach to calendar development can ensure that posts are adequately spaced to avoid repetition and maximize content value for your target audience.

♦ **Tip 3: Support Accessibility**

Social media posts should be accessible to everyone, regardless of ability. When developing consumer education websites and related social media content, states and territories should create content that is accessible to all families.

Be sure to use tools such as alt text and captions to ensure accessible content.

Please see SCBC's *Designing Websites That Are Accessible for All Families, Social Media Strategies to Support Consumer Education Websites,* and *Module 1: Building a Family-Friendly Website* for additional guidance on how to ensure your digital content is accessible to all families.

Conclusion

♦ You have reached the conclusion of Module 2.

♦ The information presented in this module was designed to help you build your understanding of key website promotion strategies so that you can increase the visibility of your consumer education website.

♦ For more information on any of the topics presented in this module, please visit the Resources document on the same page where you accessed the text-based version of this modules. If you would like technical assistance on developing and enhancing your consumer education website, contact the State Capacity Building Center (CapacityBuildingCenter@ecetta.info).

♦ *This resource was developed with funds from Contract #HHSP233201500071I for the U.S Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Child Care, by the Child Care State Capacity Building Center. This resource may be duplicated for noncommercial uses without permission.*

Resources

♦ The Child Care State Capacity Building Center (SCBC) has published a series of guides, tools, and webinars to help CCDF Lead Agencies create and maintain effective and family-friendly child care consumer education websites. A resource list can be found on the same page where you accessed the text version of this module.