Harnessing the Conversation:

Raising Awareness of the Community Services Block Grant Program Using Social Media

NASCSP

WHAT IS SOCIAL MEDIA?

In a relatively brief amount of time, the internet has revolutionized the way that the world accesses information. An overwhelming majority of Americans go online regularly for work and leisure.
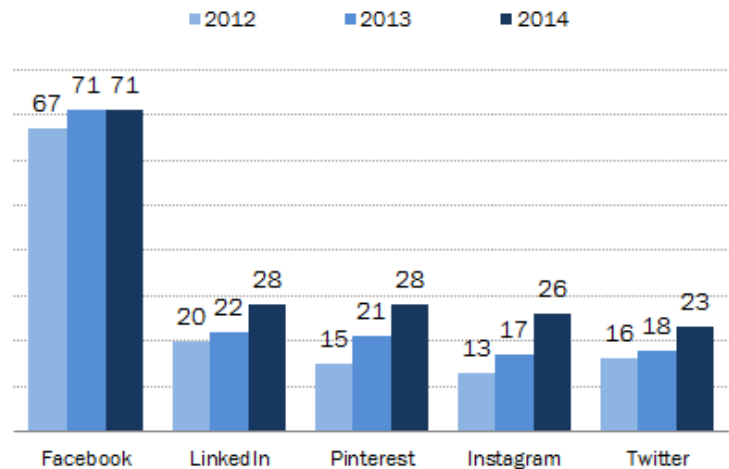
In recent years, social media has quickly become a large and still-growing sector of the internet landscape. Social networking websites, such as Facebook, Pinterest, Instagram, YouTube, Twitter, and LinkedIn are now among the most highly trafficked on the internet.

Just as remarkable, the past several years has seen a surge in online journalism. Blogs in particular have become a key way that Americans receive news and current events.

Together, social networking and blogs are often referred to as "social media" – which is broadly defined as online media outlets that allow for peer-to-peer interactions. These interactions can range from commenting on a friend's update on Facebook to posting a video or from joining a discussion about a news article to creating a blog.

Social media sites, 2012-2014

% of online adults who use the following social media websites, by year

Legend: ■ 2012 ■ 2013 ■ 2014

Site	2012	2013	2014
Facebook	67	71	71
LinkedIn	20	22	28
Pinterest	15	21	28
Instagram	13	17	26
Twitter	16	18	23

Pew Research Center's Internet Project Surveys, 2012-2014. 2014 data collected September 11-14 & September 18-21, 2014. N=1,597 internet users ages 18+.

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WHY USE SOCIAL MEDIA?

As it grows, more people are turning to various social media outlets for information about issues and causes they care about. These issues can range from signing petitions and making online donations to seeking out opportunities to volunteer. Nonprofit organizations have responded to this demand by steadily increasing their presence on social media with strategies ranging from launching an organizational blog to building a Facebook page or a Twitter profile.

For many nonprofit organizations, forays into online social media may seem to be a daunting undertaking. At first glance, social media can be fraught with danger. It often seems that in order to make social media work, nonprofit organizations must invest considerable resources for a questionable return – often with the further price of relinquishing control over their core messages.

The key to overcoming these hurdles is to leverage social media in a deliberate, strategic fashion. To that end, any organization must ask itself – and answer – a few central questions. Feel free to customize this worksheet further for your local agencies as appropriate.

SOCIAL MEDIA SELF-ASSESSMENT

1)   What are your key strengths and resources that will influence social media efforts?

a. What platforms are your staff members already familiar with?

b. How much time can be allocated to social media?

c. What assets (written materials, photographs, video, experienced spokespeople) does your agency have access to?

d. What are your key messages? How have you communicated them recently?

2)   Who are your key audiences for social media?

a. Who is a member of your key audience? How old are they? What's your geographic focus? Who are your local, state and national legislators? Partners?

3)   What are your agencies' core goals for social media?

a. What do you want people to know about your agency from social media?

b. What do you want your key audiences to do after learning about your agency?

4)   How comfortable is your agency with the "social" aspect of social media?

a. Does your agency have a policy on social networking use in the workplace? (If the use of social media is not allowed, "Harnessing Social Media Without Profiles.")

b. What will your agency's policy be toward negative comments?

c. What is your agency's privacy policy and does it cover social media?

d. How does your agency feel about your content being redistributed through social media channels?

RECOMMENDATIONS

FRAMING

As the common saying goes, whoever frames the issue, wins the issue. Framing your issue is all about positioning it broadly; talking about core concepts that resonate with people's deeply held emotions and world views. For example, rather than talking about the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) specifically, or even discussing the type of supportive services CSBG funds provide (like child care, health care, etc.), you may need to discuss the role of a Community Action Agency in addressing poverty in a community, or go even broader with a message about economic security and access. Broad, sweeping statements like "In order for communities and states to thrive, families need access to quality health care and child care" help link your issue to concepts that resonate with a wider audience on social media platforms.

Framing an issue around broad values allows you to control your message and get out ahead of any misinformation or damaging media campaigns. Frames can be asserted in the headlines you choose when writing press releases or news articles, and when posting content to Facebook and YouTube, as well as in keywords you use when tweeting.

NASCSP has developed a detailed Storytelling Manual to help the staff of CAAs and State CSBG agencies communicate through strong stories. It is available at www.nascsp.org in the CSBG section under "Guides and Manuals." It contains more information on, and many examples of, the essential skills and strategies described here, along with communications research sources that support this guidance.

Words that Rarely Work	Better Words
Poor/poverty	Economically disadvantaged; economically insecure
Working poor	Low-wage workers, underemployed
Unemployed; not working	Workers trying to find jobs, employment seekers
Job security	Employment security
Food insecurity, Energy insecurity	Hunger, nutrition, poor housing, inadequate resources, high utility bills
Welfare	Service, supports program, initiative, strategy, plan, innovation, action plan, call to action
High school dropouts	People without a high school degree or other degree
Unskilled jobs	Low-wage work
Clients	Participants [in CAA program], customers, families, people, residents in [neighborhood/county/community/state]

Research shows that the values that resonate best for issues we care about in CSBG include:

- *Access to opportunities*
- *Economic Security*
- *Responsiveness*
- *Healthy/Thriving Communities*

It is important to support these values with core concepts and data points that map back to CSBG projects and work. Just a few examples include:

- CSBG programs/Community Action Agencies/CAAs break down barriers to support low-income families and individuals when they need it the most [Example].(*Access)*

- CSBG programs/ Community Action Agencies work to solve fundamental issues such as health care, housing, transportation, and nutrition so that all Americans can become more financially secure. [Example]. (*Economic Security*)

- The CSBG network has banded together to provide support for low-income individuals, families, communities, during this [Crisis/Event]. The network is currently providing [SERVICES] to the following communities… (*Responsiveness*)

- By funding community-based initiatives, CSBG programs knit together individuals, families, and neighborhoods to help serve all members of the community. [Example]. (*Healthy/Thriving Communities*)

HARNESSING SOCIAL MEDIA WITHOUT PROFILES

Some state agencies have policies that forbid staff members from engaging with the public using social media. These policies can range from blanket bans to confidentiality clauses that prevent staff from discussing state programs. If this is the case for your agency, there are still some avenues that you can explore.

TRACKING JOURNALISTS AND SOCIAL MEDIA WRITERS

If your agency forbids you from sharing information about your work online, you can still keep abreast of what's going on in social media. Using a web browser, bookmark the Twitter accounts of journalists who have covered your issues, or the blogs of writers who have discussed your program. Many Twitter accounts and blogs contain contact information for these writers so you can still contact them through more traditional means.

COLLABORATE WITH PARTNERS

Even if you cannot access social media, many of your partners likely can. Feel free to share this guide with them and encourage them to build their social media presence and to discuss and support your work. Through these partnerships, your programs can still be discussed online and positive stories can still be disseminated. Reach out to partners like local agencies, associations, national organizations like NASCSP, and share information that you would like to see widely distributed through social media channels. Partnerships will enable you to share your information, and also ensure that the information is more widely distributed!

Once your agency has answered the questions above and has decided that social media is a good fit, the next step is to select social media platforms that best suit its strengths and goals. Social media platforms are usually available via computer and other mobile technology. While there are thousands of social media platforms online, this resource guide will cover:

1) FACEBOOK
Facebook is currently the leading social networking website worldwide with approximately 500 million users. Founded in 2004, Facebook describes itself as "a social utility that helps people communicate more efficiently with their friends, family, and coworkers."

2) TWITTER
Twitter is the leading microblogging website where users post brief, 140 character updates known as "tweets." Founded in 2006, Twitter describes itself as "a real-time information network powered by people all around the world that lets you share and discover what's happening now."

3) YOUTUBE
In 2010, YouTube announced that over two billion videos had been viewed on its site since its founding in 2005. Bought by Google in 2007, YouTube describes itself as "the world's most popular online video community, allowing millions of people to discover, watch, and share originally-created videos."

4) BLOGS
The so-called 'blogosphere' is nearly as varied as the Internet itself and ranges from professional media operations such as The Huffington Post and Gawker Media to personal online diaries read only by the writer and his or her closest friends.

5) PINTEREST
Pinterest is a visual bookmarking tool that helps you discover and save creative ideas and images.

6) LINKEDIN
LinkedIn is a professional social networking site that allows users to post resumes and interact with business contacts. Nonprofit organizations can create a page that features an organizational description and staff members, volunteers, and former staff can link their profiles to the organization's.

Facebook

Facebook is currently the leading social networking site on the Internet. It is also one of the fastest-growing web properties online. Harvard University students Mark Zuckerberg, Dustin Moskovitz, Chris Hughes, and Eduardo Saverin founded Facebook. It served as an online platform for students to meet each other, keep in touch, and share information. Since then it has ballooned into a multi-billion dollar business with a global reach. Facebook allows users to keep in touch with "friends" – which can include family members, coworkers, acquaintances, and classmates. Each user creates and maintains an individual profile and can post updates. Updates can be text, pictures, links, or video showing what the users has been doing, thinking, or watching. The user's friends can then comment on those updates. Successful updates often generate many comments and spur online discussions. Users can also become "fans" of businesses, brands, as well as – most importantly – causes and nonprofit organizations. By becoming a fan, users signal to their friends that they support your agency's cause. Nonprofit organizations can also send messages to their fans, invite them to events, and users are able to read an organization's updates.

WHAT IT'S GOOD FOR:

Facebook's intuitive interface and centralized design means that setting up a page for a nonprofit organization is both simple and straightforward. Its huge user base and constant media attention also means that there is a very shallow learning curve – chances are good that many staff at your agency already use Facebook extensively. There is also very little education that you will need to do for your audience. Facebook has many strengths. For nonprofit organizations, these strengths include the following:

Awareness Building
As Facebook continues to grow, a nonprofit page ensures that users will be able to find your organization. A page will allow your agency to connect with your supporters and even your program participants. It will also give your agency a further opportunity to spread the word about the benefits of CSBG.

Driving Conversation and Feedback
Given Facebook's comment features, its users are comfortable and willing to provide feedback on an organization's updates. Fostering conversations through open-ended questions and provocative updates is a key way to keep your Facebook fans engaged with your agency.

Driving Traffic
Current research suggests that Facebook users are becoming more comfortable leaving the confines of the site to read links, information, and articles. Nonprofit organizations can take advantage of this flexibility by creating updates that feature links back to their website.

Event Attendance
Facebook's event tools are reasonably robust. While it does not offer ticket sales functionality, for free events it can be a good way to track attendance. In order to be effective, an organization must have a large group of local supporters who have already become fans.

Fundraising
Facebook does allow 501(c)(3) organizations to create a "Facebook Cause" which will allow fans to solicit donations from their friends on behalf of organizations they support. Given its low response rates, this should be seen more as another avenue for awareness building rather than a key source of operating funds for your agency.

WHAT IT'S NOT GOOD FOR:

While Facebook can be a powerful tool for nonprofit organizations to engage supporters, it has significant drawbacks and challenges which nonprofit organizations must overcome in order to be successful.

Message Control

Engaging in a robust conversation online is a double-edged sword. It is critical to gauge your agency's comfort level with your message being reinterpreted by hundreds if not thousands of individuals across Facebook's platform. It is also important to have clear guidelines for dissenting opinions and a firm plan for dealing with off-topic and offensive comments. Examples of guidelines can be found through an internet search.

Online Advocacy

While some peer-to-peer fundraising is possible on Facebook, online advocacy remains a core deficiency in Facebook's architecture. Time and again, research suggests that Facebook's users are unwilling to leave the confines of the platform to sign petitions, make phone calls or other advocacy-related activities.

Consistency

Facebook's suite of tools are subject to change without advance notice. This can present a challenge for staff tasked with maintaining and updating a page. While Facebook's core functionality (user profiles, friends, updates) tend to stay constant, the way that users interact with organizations and pages often changes, as do their privacy policies. Facebook has a history of changing the privacy policy for its users without advance notice. Many of these changes have been received negatively by its users and the press. It is important to stay abreast of changes by monitoring Facebook's official blog: http://blog.facebook.com/.

USAGE NOTES

Tone:

Facebook users are used to interacting with their friends, who often share (or overshare) the details of their day-to-day lives. As an organization is it important to strike a balance on Facebook, maintaining a professional standard while creating a warm and conversational tone. Updates to fan pages should be brief, open-ended, and written in a way that spurs online discussion. Asking questions, referencing current events, and linking back to your agency's website will help your fans stay engaged.

Posts and Comments

It is important to monitor comments on your agency's updates and respond as appropriate. While it is never a good idea to engage in a heated back-and-forth with angry users on any online forum, you can consider providing links to reputable, external sources that refute wildly incorrect information.
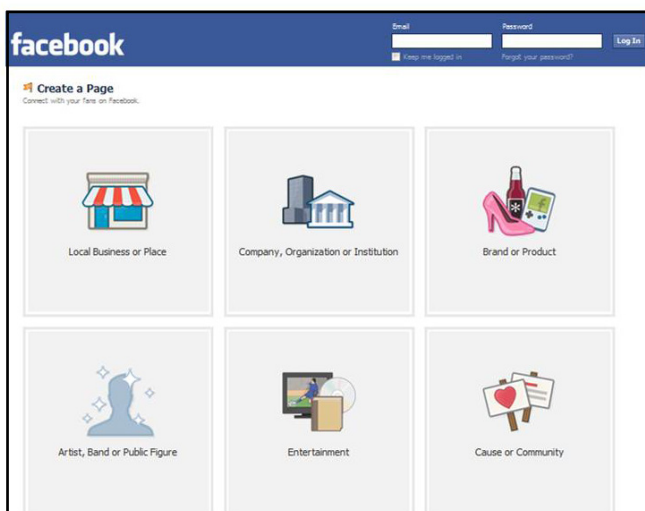
Staffing

In order to maintain a robust presence on Facebook, we recommend that an organization plan on devoting approximately 2-3 days to set up a page, define the strategy, and solicit a core group of fans. After that, the pages should require approximately 2-3 hours of staff time per week. This time can be broken out by posting and monitoring time, as the below example suggests:

- *1 hour – creating 1-2 updates per week and linking them to relevant content*
- *1-1.5 hours – monitoring comments and participating in conversations*

FACEBOOK 101

SETTING UP A FACEBOOK PAGE

1. Go to www.facebook.com (be sure that you are logged out from a pre-existing account)
2. From the homepage, click "Create a Page" link located on the bottom right-hand corner.
3. You will be able to select what type of page you'd like to create, select "Company, Organization or Institution."
4. A drop down menu will appear, select "Non-Profit Organization" or "Community Organization" if you are a Community Action Agency. Select "Government Organization" if you are a State office.
5. Below the drop down menu, enter your organization's name (if possible, do not use an acronym, write out the entire name) and select "I agree to Facebook Pages Terms."
6. Click "Get Started." [Note: make sure a staff person has been assigned to create this page and has been given authorization to use either a general email address or their work email address to set up the page.]

Pages are the main way that nonprofit organizations maintain a presence on Facebook. Pages need to be maintained by an administrator, who is a Facebook user. This user can be the either the main staff person tasked with updating the Facebook page, or a dummy profile created for the sole purpose of being the administrator of the Facebook page. (Creating a profile on Facebook is a very simple process requiring only an email address.) Make sure you allow mail from Facebook to get through your mailbox filters.

Once you have created a profile page, you will be emailed a confirmation link. Click the link and you will be redirected back to Facebook.

1. Upload an image or import a photo. In order to best fit into Facebook's design, we recommend that that you use a square or nearly-square execution of your logo, or center other shapes on a white background. Or you can skip this step.
2. You are able to import your contacts from a variety of email services if you choose, or you can skip this step.
3. Enter your organization's website and provide some your organization, or skip this step.

On the main page of your organization's page you will see your organization's name. On the sidebar to the left, there are a number of categories: Get Started, Wall, Info, Photos. Click the "Get Started" tab.

You will see a few options: add an image (if you haven't already), post status updates, promote this page on your website, and set up your mobile phone.

Let's start with your organization's "Info."

PROVIDE BASIC INFORMATION

1. On the sidebar, click "Info."
2. You will see a grey box that says "Please provide some basic information about your Page." Click "basic information."
3. Enter in as much available information you have as possible. You should be thorough and professional as this will be provide important information to your community, funders, clients, the media, and general public.
4. Once you have completed the form, click "Save Changes."

Anytime that you need to get back to your page, just click the Facebook logo in the top left-hand corner.

POST UPDATES

There is a text box where you can post information, You should aim for short and concise messages.

To post an update with a link:
Put your text into the text box, followed by the link. You will notice that soon afterwards an image and some text from the link will appear below the text box. A user will be able to click on this and will get redirected to that page. You can now delete the link you wrote in the text box, as it has now been saved as that image-plus-text.

To delete an update:
Scroll over the update. On the right-hand side a button that says "Remove" will pop up. Click it and the update will disappear.

HOW TO FIND FACEBOOK FANS

Unlike a Facebook profile, where you are able to "add a friend," you cannot "request someone to become a fan" of your page. If you try to add someone as a friend, they will see your dummy Facebook profile (the one you set up in order to create your Facebook page). You are also not able to search for users in order to make them fans.

There are ways, however, of attracting people who will be interested in your fan page. Here are some ways you can promote your Facebook page:

1. Put a Facebook widget or a link to your Facebook page on your organization's website.
2. Tell your Twitter followers or followers on your other social networking sites about your Facebook page.
3. Visit Facebook's "Promoting your Page" section, which has tips about ways you can attract fans to your Facebook page: http:/www.facebook.com/help/?page=1029.

Another great way to attract fans is to place your Facebook profile badge or URL on other outgoing communications. These can include email signatures, email newsletters, print newsletters, and other print materials.

FACEBOOK URL

Unlike Twitter where you get a custom URL, in Facebook you aren't able to get a Facebook.com/yourorganizationhere URL until you have more than 25 fans. Until then, your URL will be something like Facebook.com/pages/Your-Organization-Here/extra numbers.

For more tips on best practices for non-profits on Facebook, Google "Facebook Tips for Nonprofits."

TWITTER

While not the largest social networking platform, Twitter has attracted a great deal of attention and popularity due to celebrities using it as a promotional platform. It is also one of the fastest growing social media sites. Twitter grew out of a meeting of employees of the San Francisco-based podcasting organization, Odeo Inc. Since then, it has become a leader of so-called "microblogging" where users post very short updates frequently. Twitter allows users to post 140-character updates, known as "tweets." These tweets are text-only but often have links to external websites, including blogs, photos, video, and articles. Unlike Facebook, aside from the name and what the user adds to the profile, there is no functional difference between a Twitter profile for an individual and an organization. Users can connect with other Twitter users by "following" them. Unlike Facebook, this is not a reciprocal relationship – there is no technical requirement for a user to follow an individual who follows them, meaning you do not need to be connected prior to following. Twitter grants users, including organizations, significant leeway in designing a profile page that matches their brand. The short update length is a double-edged feature – it makes many updates easy but also means that each tweet lacks the nuance of longer-form media.

WHAT IT'S GOOD FOR:

Twitter's low-impact structure and short updates allow for considerable flexibility for nonprofit organizations. Some of Twitter's core strengths include:

Broadcasting Messages

Due to the way Twitter connects users, it is possible for organizations with many followers to push out a message to them without the back-and-forth conversation of many other social mediums. Twitter also allows users to "retweet" messages verbatim, which means that your tweet can travel far beyond the confines of the group that follows your profile, which compounds your impact and the spread of your information. Twitter's short update length makes frequent updates easier. When leading up to an event or occasion, this feature can be particularly effective, as you can dribble out multiple 'teaser' posts linking back to your website.

Engaging with Constituents & Like-Minded Organizations

Hashtags provide access to communities of interest who are discussing related topics and events. Your organization may not be connected with these other organizations or people, but through hashtags, you can tap into larger conversations and communities, keep abreast of current research and resources, and share your information with like-minded organizations.

Connecting with the Media

Many journalists use Twitter to source articles, research upcoming projects, and pursue leads. By following journalists that cover your agency's issues, it is possible to create more earned media opportunities that transcend Twitter as a social media platform. It may be helpful to follow larger newspapers and local news outlets as well.

Providing Real-Time Updates

Nonprofit organizations can use Twitter to keep their constituents in the loop on time-sensitive matters. For large events, rallies, or hearings, frequent Twitter updates can keep individuals engaged who could not otherwise attend in-person. Twitter can also be used to keep your agency up-to-date on breaking news, resources, and events that influence your programs, effectiveness, or impact.

WHAT IT'S NOT GOOD FOR:

While Twitter can be a powerful tool for nonprofit organizations to engage supporters, it has significant drawbacks and challenges which nonprofit organizations must overcome in order to be successful.

Nuance

Twitter's character limit means that long, or nuanced messages are not possible. In order to excel at Twitter, organizations must become extremely good at conveying complex concepts in a concise manner.

Occasional Users or Resource-Strapped Organizations

Twitter users expect regular updates – at minimum one post per week, but ideally closer to one to two posts a day. While the short posts make this easier, organizations who cannot commit the staff time and resources outlined below may have a hard time effectively using Twitter. In some cases, agencies prefer to use Twitter to monitor trends, keep abreast of breaking news, resources, reports, and legislation, and stay up-to-date on information as opposed to committing time and resources to regular updates.

USAGE NOTES

Tone:

Like Facebook, Twitter users use the platform to share personal details of their life. Thus, agencies should strive to match that by creating posts that have a personal tone. For many agencies, an even better option may be to designate a spokesperson who will use Twitter on their behalf.

Posts and Comments

Twitter allows users to reply or comment on each other's posts using the @ symbol. These replies then appear on your agency's Twitter homepage. Depending on the type of comment, it is often a good idea to reply to those comments and engage the users in a conversation. Like Facebook, it is important to have clear policies in place for engaging with negative comments and hostile users. It is important to monitor comments on your agency's updates and respond as appropriate. While it is never a good idea to engage in a heated back-and-forth with angry users on any online forum, you can consider providing links to reputable, external sources that refute wildly incorrect information.

Staffing

Like Facebook, in order to maintain a robust presence on Twitter, we recommend that an organization plan on devoting approximately 2-3 days to set up a profile, define the strategy, and solicit a core group of followers. After that, the pages should require approximately 1-2 hours of staff time per week. This time typically breaks out in the following ways:

- *1 hour – creating 3-5 tweets per week and linking them to relevant content*
- *1-1.5 hours – monitoring comments and participating in conversations*

TWITTER 101

SETTING UP TWITTER

1. Go to www.twitter.com (be sure that you are logged out from a pre-existing account)
2. From the homepage, you will see a form to join Twitter. You will then be prompted to enter information about your organization. In the field "Full Name," put in the name of your organization, not the name of the staff members responsible for maintaining the account. If the full name of your organization does not fit, use a commonly-understood abbreviation or acronym.

   In the field "Email," add a valid general contact email address (i.e. info@yourorganization.org) that is checked often. If your organization does not have a contact email address, feel free to use the business email of the staff member responsible for updating the account. Choose an easily remembered but secure password. Click "Sign up."
3. The next page will partially pre-populate with the information that you filled out on the previous page, but if need be you can still change this information.

   You will need to choose a username on this page. Type in a short form of the name of your organization or its acronym. You will use your username to log onto Twitter and it will also be your organization's URL on Twitter. It should be short so that when people retweet or mention you it does not use up too many characters.

   For example, NASCSP's Twitter username is NASCSP and its URL is http://www.twitter.com/nascsp.
4. Once you're finished, click "Create my account."

TWITTER HOME PAGE

Home

Now that you're on Twitter, whenever you log in, your homepage will look similar to the NASCSP screenshot. At the top of the page, there is a rotating question – usually "What's happening?" or "What are you doing?" – followed by a box where you can write text. This is where you enter your update or "tweet" (more on tweets later on).

Profile

Here is where you are able to tell your followers a little bit about yourself. This information is featured in a box on the right-hand side of a Twitter user's profile.

Use your organization's logo as the profile picture. In the event the picture is too large and much of the logo gets cut out, you will need to re-size it in order for it to fit.

We suggest you fill out all of the fields, if you have them. Twitter only allows a few characters in the "Name" field so use an acronym if your organization's name is too long.

Similarly the "Bio" field only gives you 160 characters to write a description of your organization, and this includes spaces and punctuation marks. Short and concise are the two things to keep in mind when using Twitter.

CREATING TWEETS

Brevity is the key to a good tweet. To increase your space, be sure to use acronyms, clear abbreviations, and short, snappy sentences.

The central aspect of Twitter is, of course, sending out tweets. The text box on the top of the homepage is where you input your tweets. The key to typing tweets is making them short and concise. You'll

notice the number 140; this refers to the maximum number of characters each tweet can have, including punctuation and spaces. As you type or paste text into this box, the character count will go down, showing you how many you have left.

When you enter a link, Twitter will automatically shorten it to better fit in your tweet. However, Twitter will only shorten it to a certain number of characters so you'll need to be careful with how many characters are in the rest of your tweet.

YOUR FEED

Below the text box, you will see a large white space that is labeled "Timeline." This is your feed. Your feed is where you can read tweets from the individuals and organizations with whom you connect. The feed is updated in, or near, real time, so you can track the latest developments across your Twitter connections.

Underneath your organization name, you'll be able to see how many tweets you've posted. Beside that you'll see three different numbers and underneath those numbers reads:

Following - the people or organizations you have connected with – the tweets from these organizations or people appear in your feed.

Follower - people or organizations who are following you. Your tweets appear in their feeds.

Listed – refers to how many lists your Twitter profile has been added to.

> **About Lists:** Twitter users can create "lists" which group other Twitter users for easy reference, by topic area, common interests, etc.

> **SAMPLE TWEET INTERACTION**
>
> @NASCSP has a new guide out on #socialmedia check it out *www.sampleURL*
>
> RT @CAA @NASCSP has a new guide out on #socialmedia check it out *www.sampleURL*
>
> DM @CAA thanks for the RT abt our social media guide! hope it helps to share #CommunityAction work!

OTHER IMPORTANT TERMS

@Username

When you click @Username, you will see on the right side a brief version of your profile and recent tweets. To tweet directly at or mention a user, use @Username in your tweet.

Direct Messages

Direct messages are private tweets between you and other Twitter users. You cannot send a message to someone you do not follow or who does not follow you. (This is shortened to DM)

Favorites

If you like another user's tweet, you can mark it by hovering over their tweet and clicking the little star that shows up on the bottom of their tweet. Other users can view tweets you have listed as a favorite.

Retweet

"Retweet" is an option that allows you to share **verbatim** another user's tweet with your followers. When you retweet something, that retweet shows up in all of your followers' feeds, regardless of whether they are following the person you retweeted from or not. (This is shorted to RT). Note that a Twitter user can also retweet your tweets and you can also see who has retweeted you, regardless of whether you follow them or not.

Modified Tweet

When you retweet something but want to add, modified, or shorten the content, you should use MT, not RT, to indicate that the tweet has been modified from its original form.

Hashtags

Hashtags, #, are used much like key words. People can search for or follow hashtags of interest to stay up-to-date. Examples include #poverty, #Talkpoverty, and #communityaction. Hashtags create virtual communities around common topics, events, or efforts. Anyone can see your tweets containing certain hashtags, regardless of if you follow them or not.

YOUTUBE

YouTube allows users to upload videos they create. It also allows users to comment on other user's videos, highlight videos as favorites, and embed videos in external websites. Media organizations, such as television channels, movie production houses, musicians, and theater companies often use YouTube as a way to distribute clips and promote upcoming programs, concerts or events. Through its nonprofit program, YouTube allows organizations to build customizable profiles – called channels. In addition to videos, organizations can add logos, branded colors, and positioning messages on their channel. While a stable platform, organizations must be sure that they own the rights to all parts of uploaded videos as YouTube administrators will delete videos it feels violates copyright without warning or explanation.

WHAT IT'S GOOD FOR:

Sharing Video

Unlike other social media, YouTube is a specialized platform for sharing video content. As such, it is an extremely powerful tool, allowing organizations to distribute their content, both over YouTube's site and on other websites using the embedded video features. Organizations that have significant video content have had great success using YouTube to distribute their content.

WHAT IT'S NOT GOOD FOR:

Online Community

While YouTube does provide commenting features similar to Facebook's comments, YouTube's community tends to be less robust than other social media platforms. In particular, since any YouTube user can comment on any video, staff members must be extremely vigilant to ensure that all comments are constructive and not offensive.

USAGE NOTES

Video Content:

The tone of videos on YouTube vary widely. However, the strongest nonprofit videos on YouTube are those that are genuine reflections of an organization's mission. Professional video recording software and access to a professional studio is not required to post content on YouTube. In fact, high production values and scripted actors are often seen as advertisements, rather than as a clear expression of an organization's mission. We recommend striving for video content that shows your program's work in action, that highlights the people helped, and/or highlights the interviews of key volunteers and staff discussing their connection to the CSBG programs and/or their experience with Community Action Agency's programs, services, or customers.

Staffing

Of all the main social media platforms, YouTube requires some of the highest level of staff time. Applying for a YouTube channel will take 1-2 days of staff time. However, in addition to dedicated time, YouTube requires an approval process for nonprofit organizations which can take up to 1-2 months after the application form is submitted.

After your application is approved, it will take an additional 6-8 hours of staff time to customize the YouTube page. The time necessary to create a video for YouTube can vary extensively. At minimum, plan on a staff member taking at least 3-4 days to design and draft the video's concept, shoot the video, and do any necessary post-production, editing, and compliance work. After posting, the videos require little upkeep, but a staff member should expect to spend approximately a ½ hour a week reviewing comments.

BLOGS

The term "blog" was coined in 1997 as an abbreviation of the phrase "web log." Blogs are a type of website where entries, or posts, are displayed in reverse chronological order. Blogs grew organically out of bulletin boards, email lists, and other early forms of online community.

USAGE NOTES

Message Control

Blogging allows organizations the most control over message, design, and tone. Popular open-source or free blogging software such as WordPress and Blogger give organizations access to sophisticated technology at negligible cost. Blog templates can be extensively customized and built to replicate the look and feel of an organization's website. Blogs can also be used to educate niche audiences, such as journalists, about a nonprofit organization's issues. Some organizations also use blogs in conjunction with transitional media outreach to dispute false or negative claims.

Staffing

Blogging requires a high level of staff time and investment. It requires extensive written copy, compelling visuals, and often multimedia items. Once a blog is created, it also must be promoted in order to gain readership. Given these issues, creating an organization blog is often not a cost-effective social media solution for small-to-mid-sized nonprofit organizations, unless they already have many of these resources in place.

ALTERNATIVE BLOGGING STRATEGIES

For many nonprofit organizations, a well-placed mention in a widely-read blog is worth significantly more than a month's worth of posts on a little-read organization blog. Bloggers should be engaged in much the same way an organization engages traditional journalists. While traditional media materials such as press releases and advisories are often less effective, the following strategies are often effective.

Maintaining Lists

Create a list of bloggers, including those that cover social justice issues, community development, workforce development, and economic security. By commenting on their blog, sending them emails on good stories and presenting your organization as a resource, you can start to cultivate an ongoing relationship.

Leverage Relationships

When an issue arises that you would like coverage on, send the bloggers that you have built a relationship with a quick note rather than a full-blown press release. The note can link back to your organization's website, to a media article, or to another online resource you'd like the blogger to write about. Bloggers are much like journalists in that they pick and choose the leads they follow. If you don't get any hits on the first message you send out, think about how you can strengthen the next one – add more compelling content, link to images, video, etc. Remember that whatever you send bloggers is considered "on record." Unlike journalists, bloggers will sometimes post pitches, releases, or emails they find egregious or offensive. Be sure not to send anything to a blogger that you are not comfortable becoming public knowledge.

Collaborative Storytelling

Guest blogging is a powerful tool to showcase a key program or initiative without the extensive commitment to a full blog. Additionally, many organizations build a story arc on building economic security that transcends any individual organization. For example, NASCSP maintains the State of Poverty Blog, which serves as a repository of success stories, including for Community Services Block Grant related issues and weatherization issues. See www.thestateofpoverty.org for more guidelines around guest blogs. Creating one central hub for all related stories ensures that the CSBG program has more stature nationwide. NASCSP welcomes stories that highlight:

- *Program successes and highlights*
- *Interviews with program officers, case managers, executive directors, weatherization technicians, or local community leaders and CSBG beneficiaries*
- *Interesting CSBG-related news, events, or media CSBG-related photos or video*

PINTEREST

Pinterest is a visual bookmarking tool that helps you discover and save creative ideas.

WHAT IT'S GOOD FOR:

Visual Storage

There are thousands of interesting and useful images, infographics, and guides that can be useful to an agency, ranging from succinct and catchy ways of showcasing poverty statistics, to quick references, to inspirational quotes and more. Pinterest enables users to create virtual bulletin boards, arranged by topics, that can be kept private, as an internal storage board, or public, enabling agencies to share infographics, images, and more with a wide range of people. Tags enable other users to search and find posted images, and users can follow your agency for updates as well.

WHAT IT'S NOT GOOD FOR:

Written Information Sharing

Pinterest is a purely visual site; the only writing that can be shared in any words included in the image or graphic. This limitation can be circumvented for example by posting an image with a link to the full report, blog post, or webpage, which will also draw more traffic to your sites. Pinterest can also be linked to Facebook and Twitter accounts, making it easier to share images and link to URLs.

USAGE NOTES

Staffing

In order to maintain a robust presence on Pinterest, we recommend that an organization plan on devoting approximately 1-2 hours of staff time per week. This time typically will be devoted to creating or finding 3-5 pins per week and linking them to relevant content. Additionally, as an agency releases new content with images, those images can be pinned, and linked to the new information.

LINKEDIN

LinkedIn is a professional social networking site that allows users to post resumes and interact with business contacts. Nonprofit organizations can create a page that features an organizational description and staff members, volunteers, and former staff can link their profiles to the organization's.

WHAT IT'S GOOD FOR:

Professional Connections and Content Sharing

Sometimes called the "Facebook for professionals," LinkedIn allows people to virtually connect and network with their colleagues, professional connections, and thought leaders through virtual member groups. An organizational page allows agencies to connect with local, state, federal, and national partners, receive business-related content update notifications, and share major publications. LinkedIn can also be used to post and search for job opportunities. (As a side note, agencies with employment programs should be aware of this potential use for LinkedIn, particularly for participants in employment programs.)

WHAT IT'S NOT GOOD FOR:

Information Sharing

LinkedIn is primarily a business development site, and is not necessarily the place to share content that has been discussed previously as shareable and relevant to Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Blogs, or Pinterest, or on your agency webpage.

USAGE NOTES

Staffing

In order to maintain a robust presence on LinkedIn, an organization should plan on devoting approximately 1-2 hours of staff time every other week. This time typically will be devoted to managing connection requests, participating in group discussions or posting any new major publications or reports, Additionally, as necessary, new job postings, address changes, and staffing changes should be updated.

NASCSP MISSION

Building capacity in States to respond to poverty issues

The National Association for State Community Services Programs (NASCSP) is the premier national association charged with advocating and enhancing the leadership role of States in preventing and reducing poverty. NASCSP's vision encompasses the empowerment of low-income families to reach self-sufficiency in its broadest context, through helping States attain full utilization of their resources and implement an extensive array of services to these families, including weatherization, energy assistance, child care, nutrition, employment, State energy programs, job training, and housing in urban, suburban and rural communities.