

2007-N-03

CIO Name: National Center for Health Marketing, Division of Electronic Health Marketing (NCHM)

Project Title: Using Online Social Networking Sites to Promote and Host a Virtual Health Event

Project Description: Online social networking - through websites such as Myspace, Facebook, Friendster, Second Life, There, Playdo, etc. - has become an increasingly more common mechanism for communicating with peers, establishing new relationships, building networks of friends and colleagues and creating virtual communities. As of September 2006, 5% of all US visits to websites went to one of the top 20 social networking websites, nearly double the share of visits compared to a year ago. These websites are particularly popular among teens and young adults with more than 70% of 16-24 year olds having visited such social networking sites. Through ever-increasing networks of users, these websites facilitate relationship building and a tremendous amount of information exchange, including personal history information, photos, videos and product reviews/recommendations. The potential for communicating health information through these networks is yet unknown.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) National Center for Health Marketing's Division of E-Health Marketing (DEHM) was recently created to identify, evaluate the feasibility of and implement new and emerging communication technologies that can enhance the presentation and dissemination of CDC's products and services as well as increase health impact. CDC has been begun to explore using new media applications that have a high degree of interactivity, participation, social networking, and entertainment to disseminate public health information. Online social networking sites possess all of these desired characteristics and may be an effective channel for communicating public health information.

The purpose of this project is to design, implement and evaluate a "Spring Break" virtual health event targeted to 18-24 year olds using online social networking sites to market and host the event. Young adults, 18-24 year old, represent one of the largest users of social networking sites and college "Spring break" provides an opportunity to communicate about multiple health concerns common to this population. Topics may include and are not limited to limited to binge drinking, sexual health, stress management, and injury prevention.

Awardee Activities:

- Identify at least one appropriate online/virtual venue for hosting health messages and event.
- Design and implement a virtual health event, using "Spring Break" as a theme, targeted to 18-24 year olds to disseminate health messages relevant to that population.
- In consultation with CDC program areas and using CDC content, develop health messages and communication materials related to health topics, which may include but are not limited to binge drinking, sexual health, stress management, and injury prevention.
- Promote the virtual health event through one or more social networking site. For example, a portion of the award can be used to purchase online messages or advertising space.
- Promote the virtual health event through traditional media (radio, television, print) and other online advertising and promotion venues.
- Evaluate the event and make recommendations for implementing future events. Evaluation plan should consider:
 - Effectiveness of marketing the event through the social networking site(s)
 - How well the virtual health event reached the target audience
 - Effectiveness in raising awareness about health areas of interest
 - Effectiveness of the venue and format of the virtual health event
- Make recommendations for using online social networking sites to impact health behavior.

CDC Activities:

- Assist in finalizing the implementation and evaluation plans for the virtual health event.
- Provide technical expertise in health topic areas of interest.
- Assist in developing messages and other communication materials.
- Assist in marketing and promoting the virtual health event.
- Identify metrics to be used in evaluating the virtual health event. (number of attendees of the virtual health event, click-throughs to CDC content, return of evaluation forms/materials, etc.)
- Provide user experience, accessibility, and web expertise.

- Provide IT technical guidance.
- Monitor implementation through conference calls.

Special Requirements:

- The awardee shall provide online/print examples of previous efforts using online social networks to disseminate health messages, including evaluation metrics related to those events. The materials should be included as an appendix to the proposal.
- Organizations will provide credentials of the proposed staff for the virtual health event. Credentials should be included as an appendix to the proposal.

Funding Preferences

- Organizations who focus on using social networks that provide metrics related to the diversity of their users (race, gender, etc.)
- Organizations with a demonstrated successful background or experience with health messaging in online social networks will be given preference

Additional Review Criteria: None

Other Information: None

Project Period Length: 1 year

Approximate Total Project Period Funding: \$100,000 (This amount is an estimate, and is subject to availability of funds and **includes direct and indirect costs, excluding the additional academic partner administrative costs**). The CIO should set the anticipated funding cap, including direct and indirect cost per year.

Approximate Average Award: \$100,000 (This amount is for the first 12-month budget period, and **includes both direct and indirect costs, excluding the additional academic partner administrative costs**).

Approximate Number of Awards: 1

Specify whether this PEP is for Research or Non-Research projects: Non-Research