



Using Social Media to Improve Use of the Best Methods of Contraception

Background

The United States has made extraordinary progress in reducing rates of teen pregnancy and birth. Since the early 1990s, the teen pregnancy rate has declined 38 percent and the teen birth rate has declined by one-third. The most recent news on this front, however, has not been positive: the teen birth rate increased five percent between 2005 and 2007 and the teen pregnancy rate is up three percent, the first increase since 1990. In addition, it is apparent that the proportion of pregnancies that women report as being unintended/unplanned has been stuck at about 50 percent for over a decade, with some groups experiencing increasing percentages. This problem is particularly acute among unmarried young adults: seven in ten pregnancies to single women aged 18 to 29 are unplanned.

Grant Focus

It is well known that rates of both teen and unplanned pregnancy, especially among single, young adults, are lower in many parts of Western Europe. One likely explanation for this is that in these other countries, women not seeking pregnancy are relatively more inclined to use long-acting, reversible contraceptives (LARCs), which in the U.S. currently include implants (Implanon) and two types of IUDs. In addition, there are several other methods, including the “shot” (Depo-Provera), the ring (NuvaRing), and the patch (Ortho Evra) that are important because none require daily action, as does the pill, or action “in the moment,” as do condoms—although the unique role of condoms in helping to prevent the transmission of STIs makes them an essential added method in many instances.

There are many reasons why LARCs are not widely used in the United States, cost and access problems among them. But data presented in the Campaign publication, [The Fog Zone](#) show that many young adults (and teens as well) know little about LARCs and, to the extent that they do, are poorly informed and often needlessly fearful about them. An informal scan of Internet sites, blogs, and more suggest that bad news and wild rumors are more prevalent than good news and happy endings.

To help remedy this situation, The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy wishes to provide grants to entities who want to develop and/or test ways of raising the profile and good news about LARCs (broadly defined) through innovative uses of digital and social media. New media allows direct consumer-to-consumer communication and offers an obvious platform for communicating about these more effective contraceptive methods in powerful ways. We wonder, for example:

- Could Twitter be used to spread the word about these newer methods?
- How might the increasing use of mobile devices allow for better and more personal communication about birth control?
- Could FourSquare or some other geo-location social network be used to provide real time information about providers particularly skilled at offering LARCs?
- How can women who have had good experiences with the more effective methods get their stories out in powerful ways through social media?
- Might social networks (and the natural leaders who always emerge within them) provide opportunities for grassroots-like support that addresses fears and other barriers to contraception?
- How can game environments be used? Might alternative reality games (ARGs) be a way to disseminate key concepts through a participatory approach?
- Are there opportunities through social marketing and the newest forms of advertising, such as QR codes, to create excitement and interest in these methods?
- Can videos be created and promoted—on YouTube and elsewhere—in ways that might help?
- Could a young adult equivalent of the wildly-popular “Midwest Teen Sex Show” be established to provide sex education in a clear and entertaining way through a series of video vignettes?
- Might clinical settings find ways to share their patients’ good news and good experiences in authentic ways?

These represent only a few ideas but we hope they get the general point across. Our goal here is to significantly increase the use of LARCs (broadly defined) by creating a positive, authentic, and engaging “buzz” about LARCs through innovative uses of new social/digital media.

Overview of The National Campaign

The National Campaign’s goal is to improve the lives and future prospects of children and families and, in particular, to help ensure that children are born into stable, two-parent families who are committed to and ready for the demanding task of raising the next generation. Our specific strategy for reaching this goal is to prevent teen pregnancy and unplanned pregnancy, especially among single, young adults. We support a combination of responsible values and behavior by both men and women and responsible policies in both the public and private sectors. If we are successful in reducing both teen and unplanned pregnancy, child and family well-being will improve. There will be less poverty, more opportunities for young men and women to complete their education or achieve other life goals, fewer abortions, and a stronger nation.

Eligibility

Eligible entities include individuals with skills in the relevant areas, public and non-profit organizations, and agencies from states, localities, and tribes. National organizations and those that have regional reach are also eligible.

Successful applicants will demonstrate that:

- They have a strong grasp of digital media and hold creative ideas for how to apply digital media to the issues outlined here;
- They are willing and able to include adequate attention to measurement efforts and metrics so that the activity can be tracked and a reasonable assessment can be made of its probable value and results;
- Their proposed activity has the potential to attract additional public or private resources and funding, either for the proposed activity itself or in the future;
- Their proposed activity has potential over time to touch *large numbers* of sexually active young adults who are not seeking pregnancy and are potential LARC candidates; and
- Their proposed activity could contribute to nationwide progress in reducing unplanned pregnancy among single 18-29-year-olds especially.

Applications will also be evaluated on the degree to which proposed activities work in concert with existing Campaign initiatives. For more information, go to www.TheNationalCampaign.org.

Budget

The National Campaign will make awards in the range of \$25,000 and \$50,000 to each successful applicant. Exceptionally strong, innovative proposals might receive more.

Process

Interested parties should fill out and [submit the Letter of Intent \(LOI\) form on our website](#) by 11:59 pm EST on Friday, April 16, 2010. After reviewing the LOIs, we will invite approximately 4-6 applicants to submit full proposals, which will need to include additional information on the overall media approach, measurement efforts and metrics, and how progress will be defined and tracked; a detailed budget and timeline for the project will also be required. More specific guidelines for the content of these proposals will be included in the invitations to submit a full proposal. Complete, final proposals will be due to The National Campaign no later than Sunday, May 2, 2010. Please contact Laurel Bernstein with questions at 202-478-8505 or fund@thenc.org.