

HOW TO MAKE

**SOCIAL MEDIA
CONTENT**



**AN INTERACTIVE
TOOLKIT**



Toolkit overview

Regardless of the goal, social media content should always feel engaging, timely, and attuned to the audience. Whether a brand is selling a product or a community-based organization is promoting education about substance use, content needs to grab attention—and quickly.

This toolkit will explore the three main phases of social media content development: ideation, creation, and publication.

PHASE 1

Ideation

PHASE 2

Creation

PHASE 3

Publication

ACTIVITY 1

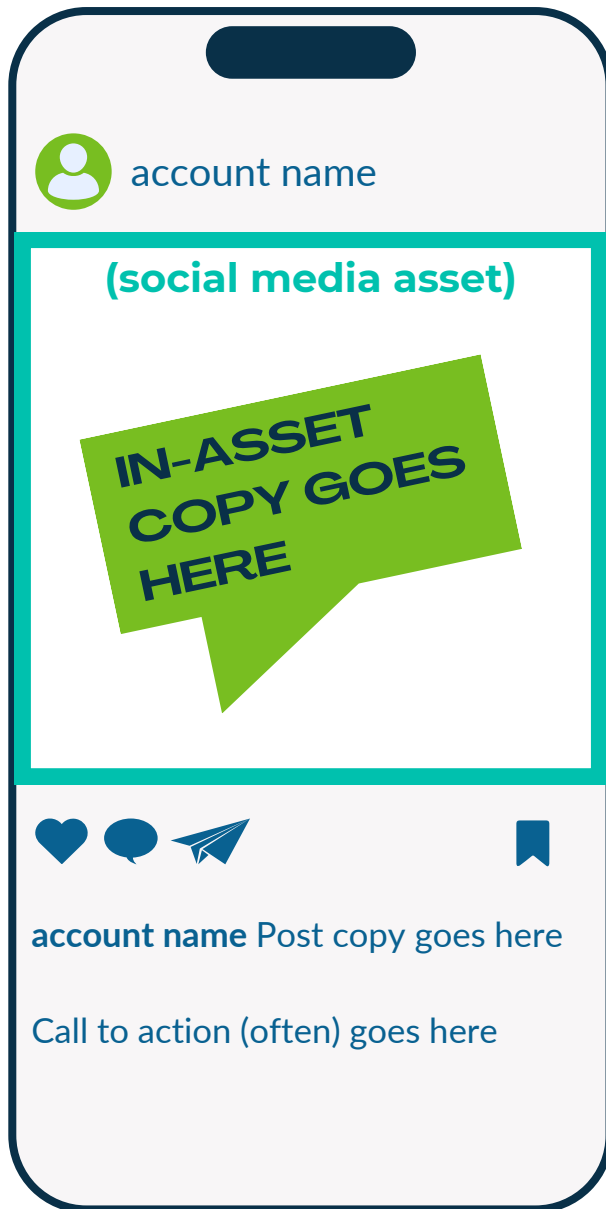
Practice writing in-asset copy

ACTIVITY 2

Ideating a content calendar and scheduling content

Glossary of key terms

Below are definitions of words and phrases related to social media content used throughout this toolkit.



SOCIAL MEDIA ASSET

Also called a creative asset, the visual element of a post

- Static asset: Text or images without movement
- Video or motion assets: Videos, GIFs, or other content that includes motion

IN-ASSET COPY

The copy that appears on an asset

POST COPY

Also called “caption copy,” the copy that goes alongside the asset

CALL TO ACTION (CTA)

Or “CTA,” the action you want someone to take after seeing a post, such as reading a linked article, signing up for a newsletter, or sharing the post with a friend. *Note: Not every post requires a CTA.*

Phase 1: Ideation

There are three important questions to ask before creating an asset to ensure that it aligns with your organizational goals and keeps your audience top of mind.

1 Where is the asset going to live?

Consider which social media platforms you will post an asset on based on how your audience interacts with that platform. For example, if you want to post a 30-second video about the risks of opioids, it might fit well on several platforms, such as Facebook and Instagram. But if your audience is most active on X (formerly Twitter), a multi-post written thread might encourage more conversation.

4 TYPES OF SOCIAL MEDIA

- **Social networks:** Foster relationships with others.
 - EXAMPLE: Facebook and X (formerly Twitter)
- **Media-sharing networks:** Share images, videos, and other types of media.
 - EXAMPLE: Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, YouTube, Pinterest
- **Discussion forums:** Share general advice, debate, and answer questions.
 - EXAMPLE: Reddit
- **Consumer reviews:** Share feedback for others to see and to help make decisions.
 - EXAMPLE: Tripadvisor, Yelp

For more detailed information about matching your platform to your audience, see “Toolkit 1: Reaching and resonating with communities on social media.”

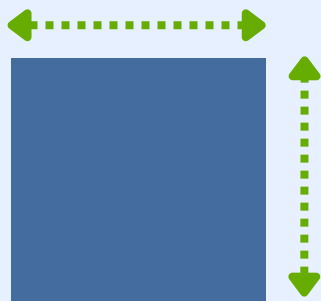
2

What type of asset is it, and what does it look like?

Every platform has different size requirements for images and videos. The aspect ratio refers to the relative size of the width versus the height. For example, a square asset has a 1:1 aspect ratio, while a vertical asset for TikTok has a 9:16 aspect ratio.

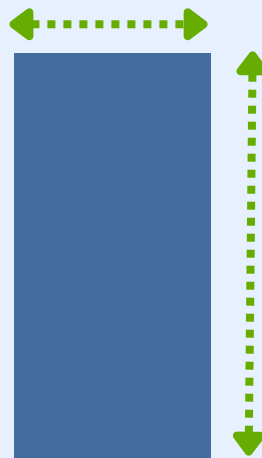
Having the right aspect ratio for the platform and the appropriate resolution makes sure that your asset displays well and doesn't look stretched, cropped, blurry, or out of proportion. Depending on where this asset will live, you may need to create different versions of the same asset to fit the best on different platforms.

ASPECT RATIO EXAMPLE



1:1 square aspect ratio; best for Instagram feed or Facebook posts.

9:16 vertical aspect ratio; best for Instagram stories, reels, or TikTok.



Tip!

Bookmark Sprout Social's guides for social media image and video specifications, as platforms may update requirements.

[Guide for images](#)

[Guide for videos](#)

Common types of social media content include:

1. IMAGES

These assets primarily use images, such as photos. Make sure to only use images you have permission for and to credit images appropriately.

[NJPN X example](#)

3. INFOGRAPHICS

These assets use charts, graphs, flowcharts, or other visual representations of statistics. These are useful when explaining data trends or complex processes.

[NIH chart example](#)

2. TEXT-BASED POSTS

These assets use text to convey the message.

Be mindful of not including too much text on an asset.

Carousels are a good option to include more information on separate assets within the same post.

[Johns Hopkins carousel example](#)

4. URLS AND LINKS TO OTHER CONTENT

These posts let you share articles, registration links, and other URLs. [Bit.ly](#) is a helpful tool to shorten links, especially on X. On Facebook, X, and LinkedIn, adding the URL to the text field will automatically generate the image of the article. While Instagram requires an asset for feed posts, you can share links to “stories.” Note that URLs are not clickable in Instagram captions, so you should direct people to a link in your bio. There, you can use a tool like [Shor.by](#) or [Later.com](#) to aggregate multiple links and directly link people to websites.

Common types of social media content include:

5. STORIES

Stories are images or short videos that disappear after 24 hours. Stories are most commonly used on Instagram, but Facebook also includes this feature. Stories can help you promote events, showcase new posts on your feed, survey audience members, and more. You can view stories by clicking on an account's profile photo.

6. GIFS & MEMES

GIFs and memes utilize pop culture moments, and organizations often use them to join an ongoing trend or conversation online with their own take or remix.

[incorruptible.us example](#)

7. SHORT-FORM VIDEOS

These assets are anywhere from 10 to 60 seconds. They reiterate one or two key points and capture attention without being too long.

[Connect.Guide.Empower. example](#)

8. LONG-FORM VIDEOS

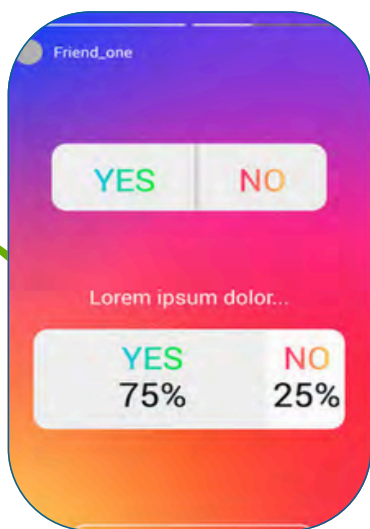
These assets are longer than 60 seconds and should be used sparingly since you might lose audience members' attention. If you're using a long-form video, put the most important information upfront so that someone who doesn't watch until the end can still pick up the main points

[WISE example](#)

Choosing engaging formats

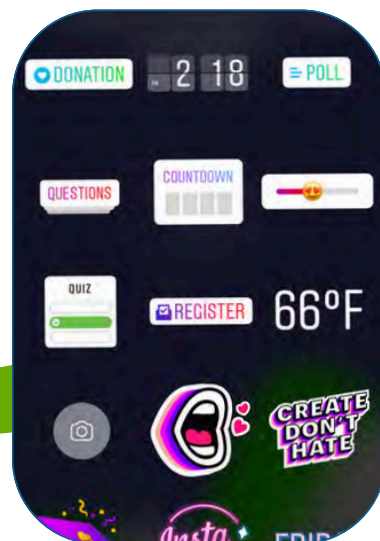
Social media content is meant to quickly grab attention. A generic-looking event flyer probably won't capture someone's eye, even if they would want to attend the event if they had stopped and read more information about it. Organizations should explore different formats, such as Instagram reels or story posts, rather than defaulting to static posts that blend into the background.

For example, Instagram stories include built-in features that can increase engagement, such as:



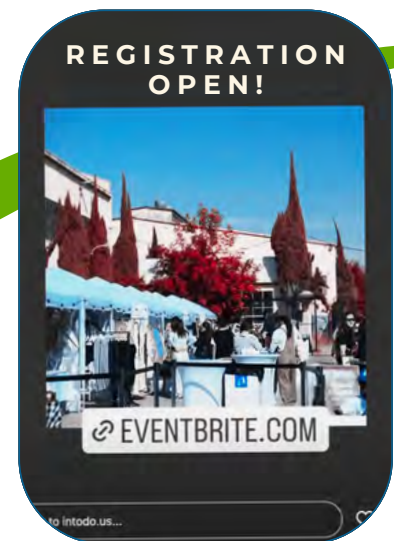
POLLS

Create polls to ask your audience's opinion about a topic



STICKERS

Select GIFs or small illustrations that create visual interest



URLS

Use URLs to direct people to an event registration page or FAQ section

Mixing up how you post can make a big difference, so take some time to explore what features are available. It's okay to start small and play around with what formats are most feasible given your organization's resources. [This guide from Buffer](#) walks you through using Instagram stories to create engaging content.

3

What are you trying to communicate?

The key to good health communications, especially on social media, is to be clear and concise. As people are scrolling, you want to make sure your content is easily digestible and that the main takeaway—aka the “gist”—is clearly spelled out.

How much copy can fit on an asset depends on the type. Videos have more real estate for longer scripts, but a single static asset will only have room for a sentence or two. Carousels, which are multi-page posts that people can swipe or click through, are a good choice if you have a lot to say but need to spread it out. While Instagram carousels can contain up to 20 pages, take caution when posting lengthy content: Social media users engage most with quick, digestible content.



Assets with too much copy can be overwhelming, hard to read, or “skippable.” Keep the in-asset and post copy short, even if that means splitting up the information and focusing on one key point at a time.

Remember that your audience is your guiding star for all social media content. While your assets can and should include variety, the overall voice should stay consistent on every post and platform.

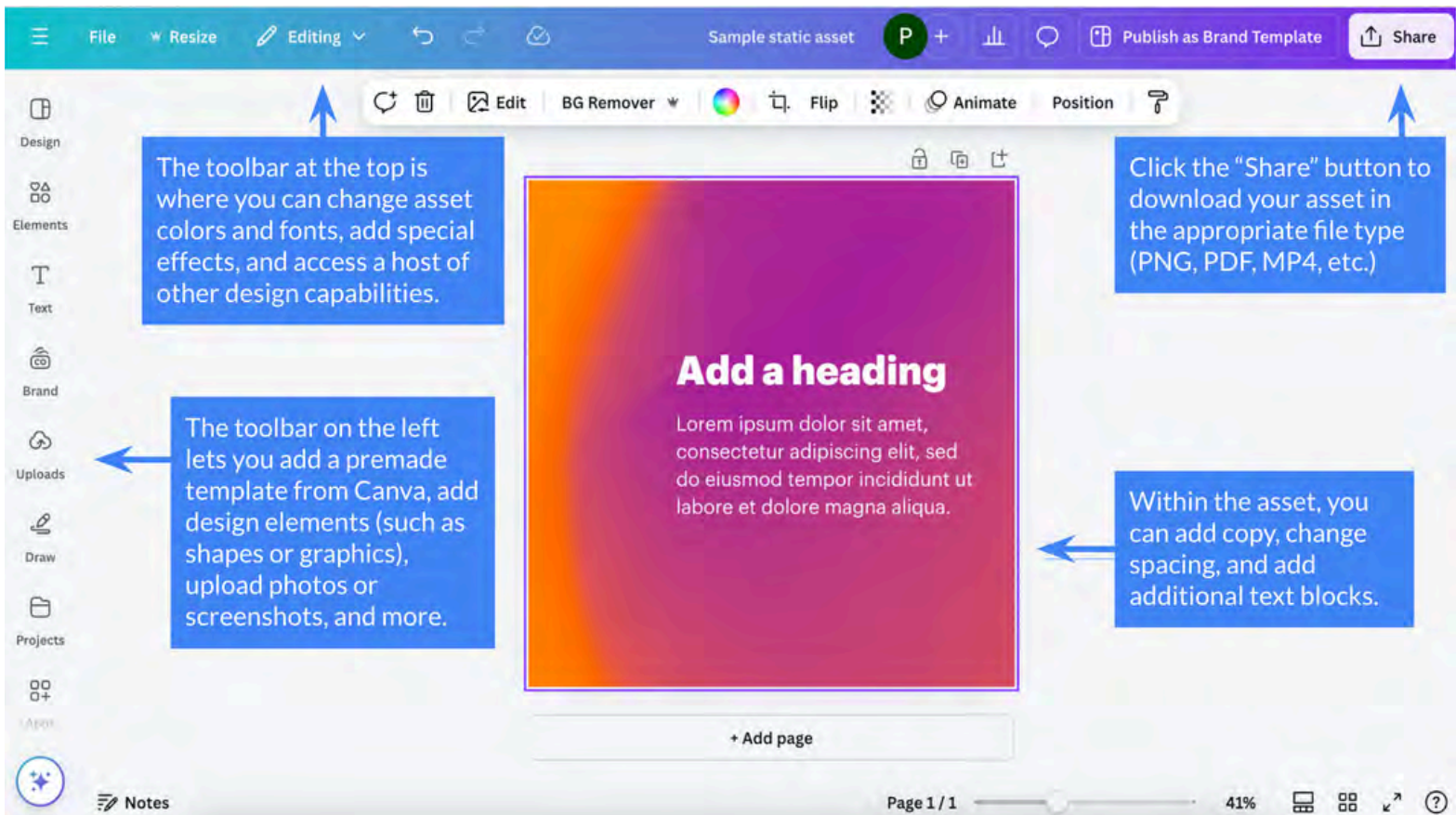
For more information about writing copy, see “Toolkit 2: Best practices for health communications.”

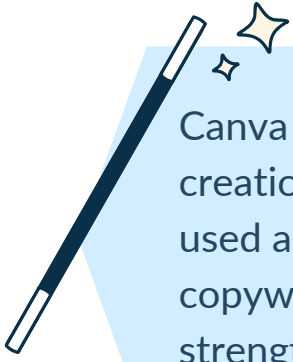
Phase 2: Creation

DESIGN TOOLS

There are many free and paid tools that can aid you in creating high-quality social media assets.

Canva is an online graphic design tool. Regional coalitions and other nonprofits are eligible for a [free Canva Pro](#) account that includes premium templates and other features, such as brand kits. Brand kits allow organizations to save logos, create color palettes, and upload fonts, which helps ensure a consistent look and feel across the assets you create. Canva makes this easy for you to do and store for use time and time again. For more information, visit Canva's page on [creating a brand kit](#).





Canva also has AI-powered tools, such as Magic Write, to aid in content creation and copywriting. While these tools can be helpful, they should be used as a resource, not as a replacement for the development of copywriting skills. Creativity is a muscle—the more you exercise and strengthen it, the more easily you'll be able to create content in the future.

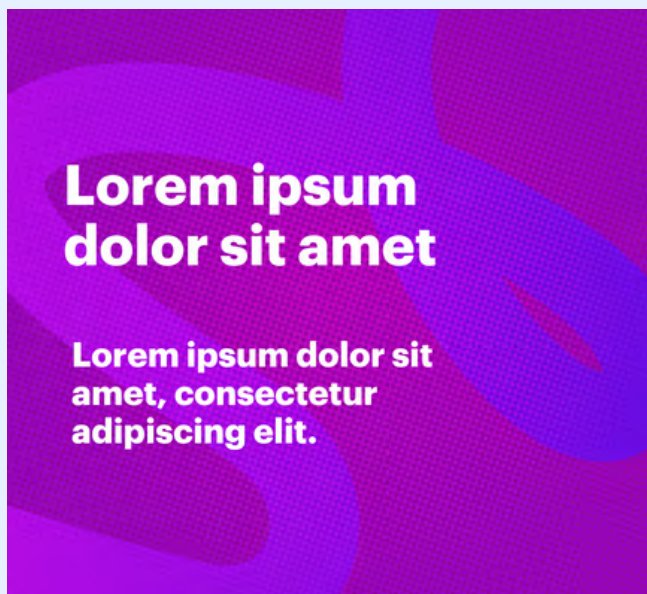
These step-by-step guides can help you make the most out of designing in Canva:

- [How to Use Canva: A Beginner's Guide](#)
- [A step-by-step guide to designing from scratch](#)
- [Create videos with Canva](#)

Additionally, the [tutorials page](#) has a comprehensive list of guides for every type of asset you can create in Canva.

Once you have a brand kit created, it's helpful to make a few templates that you can use for quick and easy posting. These templates can include placeholder copy so that you can quickly sub in your own copy. Designing a handful of template options helps keep your feed looking unified without seeming identical day to day.

Example template:



Example asset using template:



ACCESSIBILITY

Accessibility ensures that content is inclusive for everyone, including people with disabilities. Follow these tips to make your social media assets more accessible to all audience members:

Aa

Pay attention to typography. Fancy fonts can be hard to read, as can very small fonts.

Avoid all caps. All caps make it difficult to identify letters, and some screen readers may read them as acronyms, not full words. *Note: When writing hashtags or URLs, using camel casing to capitalize the first letter of each word helps screen readers.*

TEXT → text

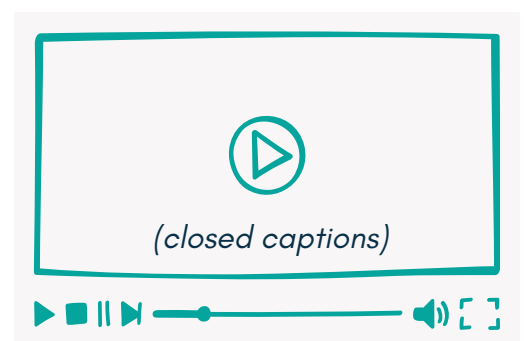
#quitvapingnow → #QuitVapingNow

Be mindful of font and background colors. All color combinations should be legible, high-contrast, and visible even for people with color blindness.

Accessibility checkers help make sure that the colors used on an asset have enough contrast and that fonts are large enough to be legible. [Canva](#) has a built-in accessibility checker.



Add closed captions or subtitles to videos. This makes your content accessible to people with hearing loss or anyone who prefers to watch without sound.



Phase 3: Publication

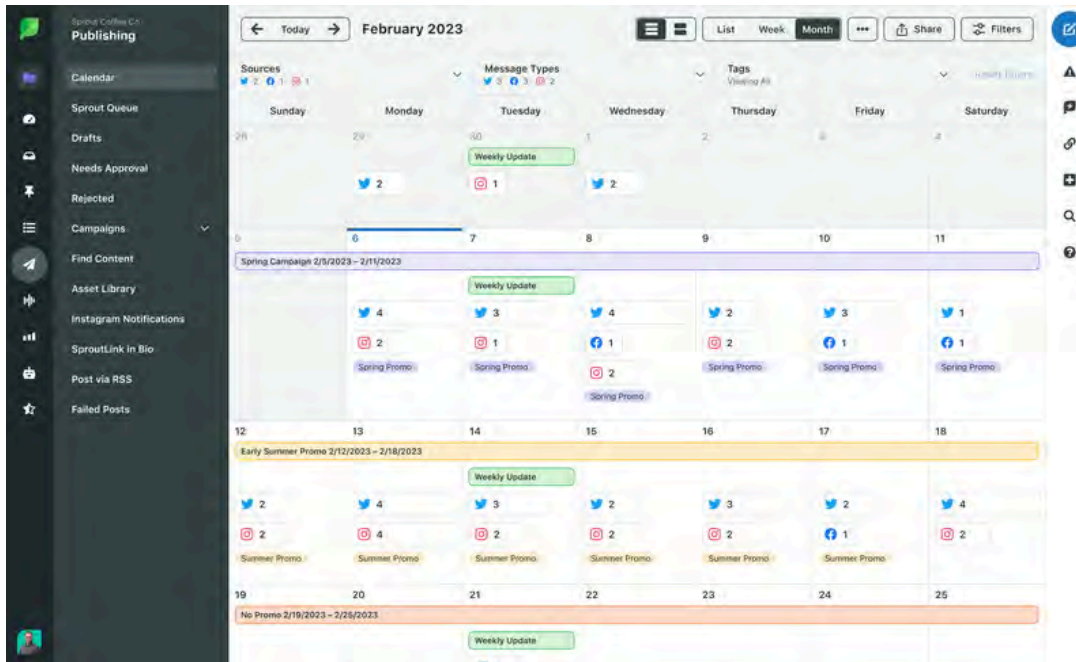
How frequently you post depends on your organization's goals, resources, and primary platforms. For example, if X is your focus, posting several times each day is recommended. If you want to grow your audience on Instagram, posting about five times a week might be your best bet. Quality and consistency matter, so if your organization is only able to create three well-thought-out posts per week, that might build more trust with your audience than pushing out lower-quality posts every day.

Hootsuite, a social media management tool, [recommends the following posting cadence](#) for different social media platforms based on industry best practices, guidance from platform executives, and the experiences of social media managers. This guide is for 2024: As algorithms are constantly shifting, refer to [Hootsuite](#) for updates.

Platform	How often to post
Instagram (including feed posts and reels)	3-5 times per week
Instagram stories	2 times per day
Facebook	1-2 times per day
X (formerly Twitter)	2-3 times per day
LinkedIn	1-2 times per day
TikTok	3-5 times per week

Scheduling content

Social media management platforms like [Sprout Social](#), [Hootsuite](#), and [Meta Business Manager](#) (for Facebook and Instagram) can help you stay organized. These tools allow you to schedule content in advance, see reports of your best-performing content, and engage with community members. It's helpful to set aside time to create a content calendar, which is a schedule of upcoming posts across each platform that your organization is active on.



Example of Sprout Social's media management and content calendar tool

Effortlessly schedule

You can schedule across several social media platforms at the same time.

Easily visualize

Being able to visualize your content helps identify when you have too much of a certain type of content and too little of another.

Pre-package

A calendar can include the asset, post copy, and hashtags to use when posting to boost engagement.

You can also include placeholders for holidays or key moments that your organization wants to recognize, such as National Recovery Month, the Great American Smokeout, or Thanksgiving. Within the calendar, you can make tweaks for different platforms to ensure the posting process is seamless. Whether you're using a scheduling system or manually posting, it's crucial to make sure that audience members are getting value from your content. Be attentive to their questions, respond in a timely manner, and always lead with the facts.



Boosting partner engagement

Social media is meant to be social and collaborative. Engaging with partners online is crucial to building a more active social media presence. Try to get into the habit of engaging with partners or organizations similar to yours regularly to build relationships. Many of the following options are not time-consuming and can be built into your weekly if not daily routine.

Tag partners in posts that might be relevant to the content they share on their page.



Reshare content from partners. If you're co-hosting an event and your partner posts about it, you can share that post to your Instagram stories in seconds. Simply click the paper airplane icon to get started.



Use collaboration posts to cross-promote on Instagram. One user creates the post and invites another to be listed as a collaborator. Once accepted, the post appears under both users' accounts, which is a great way to boost your performance without duplicating efforts, as both accounts will receive the same comments, likes, and shares.



Interact with partner content.

Liking and commenting on posts builds goodwill with other organizations. The more you give engagement, the more likely you are to receive it.



Reach out to your peers to create content that reflects both of your organizations. Many organizations will be grateful to team up and share resources.



Celebrate key moments to support partner work and amplify their message. For example, if a partner is recognizing World Mental Health Day, you can work with them on content that highlights the intersection between mental health and substance use.



Activity #1: Practice writing in-asset copy

Adapt the following health messages into in-asset copy. Remember: Focus on the main point and keep in-asset copy short.

You can see sample in-asset copy for each example at the end of this toolkit.

Example 01

Message: Blood alcohol content (BAC), also known as blood alcohol level, measures how much alcohol is in your blood. BAC depends on a lot of factors, including weight, type of alcohol consumed, alcohol tolerance, hydration, and amount of food in the stomach.

In-asset copy (Fill in below)

Example 02

Message: Opioids, including those that come from a doctor, are highly addictive. Even when taking them as prescribed, anyone is at risk of becoming dependent or even addicted to them. You can become dependent on opioids after just five days.



In-asset copy (Fill in below)

Example 03

Message: THC in marijuana disrupts the brain’s ability to form memories and learn new things by messing with processes in the hippocampus (a part of the brain responsible for forming memories and processing information).



In-asset copy (Fill in below)

Activity #2 (Part 1): Ideate a content calendar

Think about the content you have in the queue or the holidays or events you know you'll want to recognize. Then, fill out this calendar and outline what type of posts you either have ready or will need to create. This can be a quick shorthand way to jot down a future plan.

S	M	T	W	TR	F	S

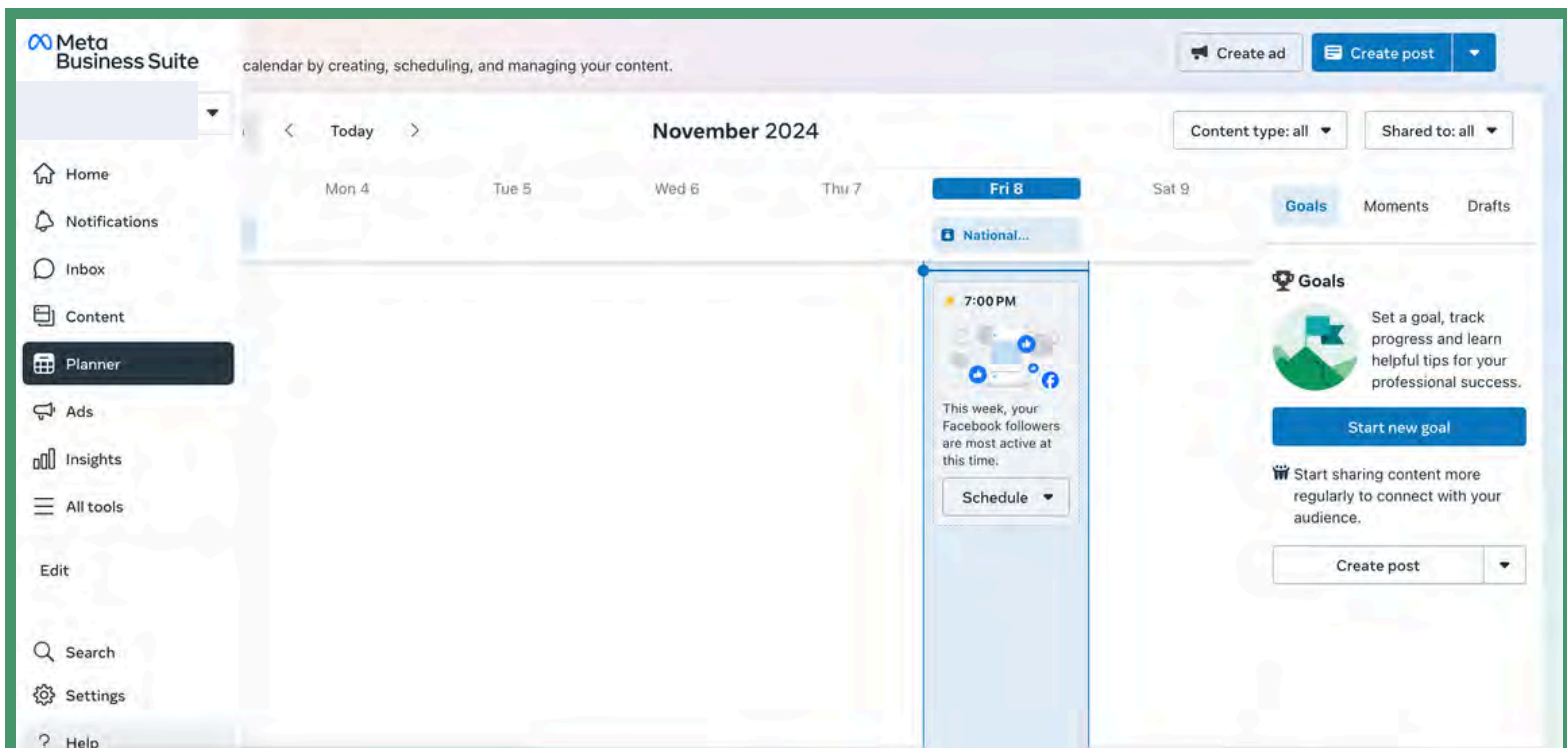
Activity #2 (Part 2): Scheduling the content

Now, take a moment to put your plan into action by utilizing a tool covered in this toolkit.

Step 1: Log in to [Facebook Business Manager](#).

Step 2: Find the “Planner” icon in the left-hand side bar to take you to the content planner.

Step 3: Think about the content you currently have or key moments you want to lean into. Take this time to start placing content on dates to give yourself a visual of how often you’re posting or want to post.



Activity #1: Answer key

Example 1 message: Blood alcohol content, also known as blood alcohol level, measures how much alcohol is in your blood. BAC depends on a lot of factors, including weight, type of alcohol consumed, alcohol tolerance, hydration, and amount of food in the stomach.

Sample in-asset copy: Every individual reacts differently to alcohol, even if they consume the same amount as others.

Example 2 message: Opioids, including those that come from a doctor, are highly addictive. Even when taking them as prescribed, anyone is at risk of becoming dependent or even addicted to them. You can become dependent on opioids after just five days.

Sample in-asset copy: Opioids are highly addictive, including opioids prescribed by a doctor.

Example 3 message: THC in marijuana disrupts the brain's ability to form memories and learn new things by messing with processes in the hippocampus (a part of the brain responsible for forming memories and processing information).

Sample in-asset copy: Consuming marijuana can affect how your brain makes memories and learns new info.