

NCAB Ad Hoc Subcommittee on Communications Conference Call
August 22, 2005
2:30 pm – 3:30 pm

Meeting Notes

Subcommittee Conference Call Participants

Dr. Michael Babich
Ms. Mary Anne Bright
Ms. Nelvis Castro
Dr. Moon Chen
Dr. Allen Dearry
Ms. Kathryn Giusti
Dr. Diana Lopez
Ms. Marlys Popma
Ms. Lydia Ryan-- Chair
Dr. Anita Schill

- I. The overall purpose of the meeting was to provide an overview of the new structure of the NCI Office of Communications (OC) and to discuss NCAB Ad Hoc Subcommittee on Communications roles and responsibilities.
- II. Ms. Castro opened up the meeting by giving an overview of OC. She announced that NCI is in the process of recruiting for a permanent OC Director who will report directly to the NCI Director. It is expected that the permanent OC Director will be hired in late summer or early fall.
- III. Next, Ms. Castro explained the major activities/projects of the Office of Communications:
 - NCI Cancer Bulletin
 - Cancer Information Service Program – Partnership and Telephone
 - Media Relations and Public Affairs
 - NCI Exhibit Program
 - Design, development and printing of most of our publications
 - NCI website – cancer.gov – Look & Feel, Content and Technical
 - PDQ – Physician Data Query – management of 6 editorial boards
 - Staff of about 150 – 90 federal employees/ 60 contractors
 - OC Director attends Executive Committee meetings

IV. Ms. Castro then explained the rationale and process for new OC structure

- Ms. Bright and Ms. Castro were asked to manage OC in Dec. 2003 and after 1 year on the job more responsibilities were given
- The NCI Cancer Bulletin and the redesign of Web were two major projects launched in 2004.
- Engaged outside experts to assess operations, identify gaps and eliminate redundancies
- Involved staff in the process of looking at the functional elements of the organization
- Scheduled interviews with staff and outside experts/surveyed staff
- Presented assessment process/findings of survey to staff at an All-Hands meeting in November 2004
- Worked closely with management staff to analyze findings and recommend changes
- Agreed that some structural changes were needed and decided to focus on 6 areas:
 - Streamline administrative activities and integrate program resources and efforts.
 - Strengthen communication planning and evaluation
 - Develop and implement an OC-wide content management system
 - Centralize oversight for the planning and development of OC's publications and those of the NCI Director
 - Enhance public affairs activities
 - Focus on emerging/new technologies

V. A new structure/organization chart and functional descriptions were created:

- OC Director reports to the NCI Director
- Deputy Director for Programmatic Activities and Deputy Director for Operations positions were created
- Communications Planning and Evaluation Branch was created to oversee the planning and evaluation functions and the marketing and promotion activities
- The NCI Cancer Bulletin was maintained in the Office of the Director, OC

VI. Four new offices were created and/or renamed:

Office of Content Management

- PDQ – content and editorial boards
- Cancer Information Summaries
- Dictionary of Cancer Terms
- Clinical Trials Registries
- Directories of persons and organizations involved in cancer care
- Publications - content development, clearance, design and production

Office of the Cancer Information Service

- Partnership, Telephone and Live Help
- Public Inquiries Office
- National Network of Smoking Cessation Quit lines

Office of Technology Strategy & Applications

- Architecture, look and feel of cancer.gov
- Web design services for the NCI
- New technologies/applications

Office of Media Relations and Public Affairs

Media Relations

- Press release, fact sheets, Q&As
- Press events
- Minority media outreach
- Media training, media interviews
- Science Writer's seminars
- Newsletter web site

Public Affairs

- NCI exhibit program
- Speeches and presentations
- Speaker's assistance
- Special events and meetings
- Health communications internship program

VII. Ms. Castro finished her overview of OC indicating what the office will focus on new technologies, and training and staff development in the near future. She also indicated that the office will be working on an NCI Communications Plan and is looking forward to the NCAB Ad Hoc Subcommittee on Communications involvement and advice.

- VIII. Dr. Chen asked what would be the criteria that could be used for this vision? Ms. Giusti asked if the goal was to communicate the mission or what NCI has done well? The OC would like to position NCI as an organization leading cutting- edge cancer research, building stronger recognition for NCI and its resources (internally and externally), communicating cancer research advances, activities, and providing valuable information to the public.
- IX. Subcommittee members suggested the prioritization of NCI goals and the identification of key audiences to be reached as one move forward with the communications plan.
- X. Ms. Bright introduced a proposal for the creation of a working group to obtain external input on issues related to cancer communications and the dissemination of cancer information to patients, their families, the public, health professionals, researchers, advocacy and professional organizations.
- XI. Ms. Bright indicated that the working group will gather information on communications and draft information to the Subcommittee and the Subcommittee will make suggestions to the NCAB. The membership of the working group will be diverse--- varying from a background of health communications, someone else may have a tobacco planning background, an advocacy background, a technology background, and strategic planning background. It was also agreed that there is a need to prioritize audiences, goals, and objectives.
- XII. Conference call participants raised the NCI flat budget implications as one of the biggest concerns in the community. Stakeholders are very concerned about the negative impact of NCI's budget in cancer research.
- XIII. Ms. Giusti suggested the need to identify key audiences that will be affected by new budget realities and develop messages that will address some of these concerns.
- XIV. Conference call participants discussed the need to specifically clarify the relationship between the external working group deliverables and the focused agenda/intent and the community input towards the OC strategic communications plan.
- XV. Action Items
- Discuss the creation of the working group proposal at the next subcommittee meeting
 - A draft framework of a communications plan will be discussed at the next meeting

- Lydia/ Nelvis will give a brief subcommittee conference call update to NCAB in September and inform the subcommittee of the upcoming conference call TBA in late Sept/ early October.
- Agenda for future conference call: Mary Ann will delineate agenda in more detail and will review and discuss the External Working Group concept proposal and next steps.
- Subcommittee meeting in September update: **There is no available time to meet during lunch and it may not be possible to meet face to face until December so another conference call may be scheduled in the near future.**