United States Air Force

COMMUNICATION PLANNING GUIDE

Supplement to the
USAF Communication Plan

2023
(published 6 Jan 23)

Purpose of this guide

"Change is hard, but losing is unacceptable, and we cannot afford to be too late."

Frank Kendall
Secretary of the Air Force

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Primary PA Resources

Waypoints: Collection of approved messages and resources. Features include: high-level talking points on Department and service Strategy; searchable data-bases of issue-specific talking points and senior leader quotes; and resource folders with recent and archived communication plans, assessments, audience research, strategic guidance, and sample products and templates.

Vector: Living list of public engagement activities, with filters and tools to track and assess communication efforts over time. Also includes tools to conduct manual content analysis of media coverage aligned with communication plans and a media query database.

This guide provides detailed information on planning and assessment tasks directed in the 2023 USAF Communication Plan. Units should read this guide and explore the other resources it references before seeking additional clarifications or assistance from their MAJCOM/PAs or SAF/PAX.

The actions directed in this guide are new to the Air Force PA enterprise, but they are long overdue. Many of our competitors in the information space have a highly centralized approach to global communications, directing networks of content providers to support common intent. These capabilities were created or evolved quickly during the past 20 years, for the purpose of leveraging the strengths of the digital media environment and exploiting the vulnerabilities it imposes on others.

By contrast, Air Force PA forces were designed for the Industrial Age, when information was communicated by locally distributed print products and terrestrial broadcasts, and when local media informed populations who identified most heavily with local concerns. Few of those conditions apply today. PA technical skills have changed with the times to embrace digital media, but our forces and operational concepts mostly remain as they were: spreading expertise across a large number of locations and units where they mostly execute operations informed by varying decentralized interpretations of Department, service, or higher headquarters intent.

There are benefits to this localized approach. The 2022 Where Airmen and Guardians Get Information (WAGGI) survey indicated that Air Force internal audiences want to get their information from unit sources, with more detail than they receive now about how programs and policies will be implemented at their base. Communicating well internally and externally at the unit level can prevent local issues from becoming national or international problems. As a matter of principal, we don't want highly centralized communication to devolve into the kind of inaccurate propaganda we see our adversaries employing.

That said, *the Public Affairs enterprise must improve its ability to communicate with unity of effort*. The 2023 USAF Communication Plan—along with this guide—attempts to do this in three major ways, informed by communication research and information warfare and career field strategy documents:

- Directing units to *conduct public-facing communication under mission-type orders* where commanders and communication professionals prioritize communication activities that best support lines of effort set at the service and MAJCOM levels
- Establishing shared awareness of communication activities and effects through a *common operating picture and common metrics*
- Assessing the *readiness of PA personnel, processes, and platforms to achieve desired effects with audiences* in support of integrated deterrence, campaigning, and efforts to build enduring advantages.

As the service's first major effort to require common planning and assessment standards, the 2023 plan may be less useful in actually meeting intent than in improving our efforts in 2024 and beyond. Regardless, we must take the first step of directing commanders and PAs to move in a common direction. In his 2022 posture statement before Congress, Secretary Frank Kendall quoted Gen. Douglas MacArthur: the "history of failure in war can almost be summed up in two words: too late." If we want the public consensus we need to compete, deter, and if necessary prevail in conflict, we must take steps now that employ the Air Force's 24/7/365 public information capability in a more deliberate and accountable way.

Dr. Tadd Sholtis
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PRIORITIZATION PLANS

As part of the 2023 USAF Communication Plan, all Public Affairs offices supporting Air Force units must submit a prioritization plan to their MAJCOM/PA offices *no later than 28 February 2023*. The prioritization plan must indicate the relative importance PA offices and owning commanders place on topics or activities linked to established unit, MAJCOM, and Air Force communication priorities or lines of effort. Active PA employment/prioritization plans as required under AFI 35-101 are acceptable, provided they describe how PA offices rank the *communication priorities or topics established by plans or guidance issued above the wing level.* Plans that prioritize effort by customers (e.g., wing before group before squadron) or by product types (e.g., web site before community engagements before base marquee) are not acceptable.

The matrix below is one simple method that PA offices can use to categorize their public-facing information activities before drafting a more detailed employment/prioritization plan. Specific priorities and categories will vary by commander's intent, unit missions, base locations, active PA programs, and other factors.

NOTIONAL PA PRIORITY MATRIX

How important is the issue to my supported commander(s)?		
More	**Less**	
1 1. **Crisis Response** 2. **Mission Readiness** Civic outreach for recruiting Requirements for workforce or all deployable units Large community impacts of planned operations Demonstrating readiness to fight tonight 3. **Taking Care of People** Progress on top CC quality of life/service initiative(s) Implementation of major AF or MAJCOM programs 4. **Allies and Partners** Host nation guidance many personnel must follow 5. **Modernization** Progress on fielding new capabilities at the base Details on plans to replace unit weapon systems	**3** 1. **Mission Readiness** Promoting general understanding of key operational concepts (AFFORGEN, ACE, etc.) 2. **Taking Care of People** Amplifying higher HQ news on major programs 3. **Allies and Partners** Promoting importance and strength of our global defense commitments and international partnerships 4. **Modernization** Explaining current and future threats and the general need to accelerate change through investment	**More**
2 1. **Mission Readiness** Requirements for individual units Informing public influencer or small-group stakeholder support of decisions impacting readiness 2. **Taking Care of People** Implementation of programs affecting specific local units, career specialties, or other groups Internal or community engagements intended to resolve small-group issues 3. **Allies and Partners** Key leader engagements to resolve major issues 4. **Modernization** Informing public influencer or decision-maker support of major unit-specific investments Developing relationships with new advocates	**4** 1. **Mission Readiness** Current mission orientations for existing industry partners, advocacy groups, or other supporters Individual community complaints about operations 2. **Taking Care of People** Amplification of individual/team recognition programs Support to individual or small-unit ceremonies 3. **Allies and Partners** Key leader engagements to sustain relationships 4. **Modernization** Engagements to sustain relationships with industry partners, pro-AF advocacy groups, or civic supporters 5. **All Other Business**	**Fewer**

How many people (internal or external) are affected or involved?

PRIORITIZATION PLANS

The table below shows how the basic prioritization matrix on page 3 can be translated into a full employment/ prioritization plan, using the matrix format found in Attachment 4 of AFMAN 35-101. *Please note that, unlike the example in the manual, aligning unit activities with priorities usually means you must identify the **purpose or audience** of the activity, not just the type of activity.* For example, speaking requests supporting local recruiting may rank higher than speaking requests for community groups seeking a general update on military issues. The activities listed in this example do not include all programs or products most units would offer. See the examples in the manual for a more comprehensive list of PA engagements and operations, as well as other formats you can use.

123rd WG/PA Prioritization Matrix			
1. Communication Planning and Assessment			
Activity	*Priority Level*	*Supported AF or MAJCOM LOE*	*Reference*
1.1 Plan activities supporting wing priorities	2	All	2023 USAF Comm Plan
1.2 Stakeholder assessment for top 4 wing priorities	2	Readiness, People	2023 USAF Comm Plan
1.3 Follower audit for wing social media accounts	2	All	2023 USAF Comm Plan
2. Public Affairs Engagement			
Activity	*Priority Level*	*Supported AF or MAJCOM LOE*	*Reference*
2.1 Base tours for recruits or direct influencers	1	Mission Readiness	DAFI 35-101, Chapter 4
2.2 Engagements with school district officials on family support concerns	1	Taking Care of People	DAFI 35-101, Chapter 4 AFMAN 35-101, Chapter 5
2.3 Aircraft orientations for new civic leaders	2	Modernization	DAFI 35-101, Chapter 4
2.4 Air Force issue/program updates to civic leaders	3	All	DAFI 35-101, Chapter 4 AFMAN 35-101, Chapter 5
2.5 Community complaints	4	Other	AFMAN 35-101, Chs 5 & 6
3. Public Affairs Operations			
Activity	*Priority Level*	*Supported AF or MAJCOM LOE*	*Reference*
3.1 Crisis communication activities	1	Other	DAFI 35-101, Chapter 3 AFMAN 35-101, Chapter 4
3.2. Web and social media content on exercises	1	Readiness	DAFI 35-101, Chapter 5
3.3. Media updates on new aircraft bed-down	1	Modernization	DAFI 35-101, Chapter 2
3.4 Public notifications of temporary, localized training impacts	2	Readiness	DAFI 35-101, Chs 2 & 3
3.5 Web and social media amplification of Air Force and MAJCOM announcements	3	All	DAFI 35-101, Chapter 5
4. Visual Information			
Activity	*Priority Level*	*Supported AF or MAJCOM LOE*	*Reference*
3.1 Exercise documentation	1	Readiness	AFH 35-115, Ch 2 & Atch 5
3.2 Ceremonial photo support	4	Other	AFH 35-115, Ch 2 & Atch 5

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

Moving from plans to successful communication requires a continuous cycle in which PA professionals deliberately schedule, coordinate, and assess the execution of engagements or products that support common unit, MAJCOM, and service priorities. Here are a few basics to consider as you organize the activities associated with the 2023 USAF communication plan and supporting unit prioritization plans.

SCHEDULING & COORDINATION

- In a 2022 survey, wing PA chiefs and superintendents identified making time to plan, research, and assess as three of their top barriers to more effective communication. *Make sure you prioritize planning tasks and associated training relatively high in unit plans, and let commanders know when pressure to communicate low-level priorities are preventing you from planning or assessing operations.*

- Activities that generally require longer lead times for coordination and approval include those involving *allies and partners, advanced technology, and adversary deterrence or other information warfare activities.* MAJCOM/PAs can help you identify special coordination requirements and points of contact.

- Highlighting your unit's deterrence operations or work with advanced technology may have unintended effects, especially when it comes giving adversaries open-source intelligence that erodes our warfighting advantages. Be sure to work with program offices and MAJCOM/PAs to ensure all spokespeople and engagement organizers *have and know how to apply current operational security and information protection guidance.*

- Since Airmen desire localized information on issues that impact them, *units should plan to provide initial amplification followed by unit-level details on major Air Force or MAJCOM announcements.*
    ⇒ Contact local subject matter experts for information on how they will implement new programs or changes. If the SME or you lack sufficient information, ask for it up the chain.
    ⇒ Knowing that an announcement is coming implies an obligation to keep that information close hold until an official announcement is made. *Have good local procedures in place to control the coordination of planning materials to prevent a premature release or leak.*

> *Vector is the PA enterprise's common scheduling tool. Unit entries in Vector should align with the 2023 plan's monthly topics and activities (Attachment 2) if the unit doesn't have nested priorities that follow a different local schedule.*

ASSESSMENTS

- Most communication tries to drive behaviors, but until you can observe those behaviors you need to use interim measures to see if you're creating conditions that promote change:
    ⇒ *Measure your efforts.* Most objectives require persistent communication. Logging activity in Vector provides you with built-in measures for how much effort you are putting toward competing demands, allowing you to better manage your focus on topics or audiences over time.
    ⇒ *Evaluate your audience.* Determine if your preferred channels reach an acceptable quantity of intended audience members, or if individual audience members provide feedback or take actions that support the outcomes you want. This guide provides simplified procedures for two kinds of audience evaluation that your unit and the PA enterprise as a whole can use to determine how well we're postured for more effective campaigning in 2023 and beyond.
    ⇒ *Assess whether the quality and quantity of relevant content in the information environment would reasonably support your objective.* If you see accurate, on-message content from you that's more pervasive than competing narratives and endorsed by others experts and authorities, then you're on track. MAJCOM/PAs or SAF/PAX can provide tools and training on how to do this kind of assessment, which is not covered in this guide.

- Every measurement is two measurements: the outcome you see, and the baseline used for comparison. *Have previous baseline data or make an initial baseline assessment when you start*, using a method listed above.

> *The 2023 USAF communication plan requires both baseline and follow-on assessments for stakeholder support of priorities (see p. 9) and the make-up of unit social media audiences (see p. 13).*

STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

Why we assess perceived support

Aside from public-facing activities that meet specific legal or ethical obligations, most deliberate communication is intended to generate actions that advance an organization's objectives. Sometimes those actions may lie far in the future, in which case engagements may simply build or sustain relationships that will be useful later on. But if an organization limits its efforts just to sustaining relationships, both organizational leaders and their public audiences can become complacent—releasing and consuming content with no expectation that actions should occur, and with no examination of whether communication informs or inspires positive change. The *status quo of expecting no definite returns on investment from public communication is unacceptable* in a security environment that requires consensus from many groups on urgent actions needed to accelerate change and build enduring advantages over the pacing challenge posed by the People's Republic of China.

The 2023 USAF communication plan therefore sets an *expectation for Public Affairs offices to evaluate their audiences' perceived support of four or more major unit objectives on a semi-annual basis and report results*. PA offices are not resourced to conduct surveys or other quantitative research into the knowledge and opinions of their external audiences, and government policies limit such research even where resources exist. However, *PA routinely receives or can observe qualitative feedback from audiences* that can inform standardized assessments of group support. Unit-level scoring provides a common standard to assess the value of engaging particular groups on particular topics that commanders and PA personnel can apply from assignment to assignment. Aggregating common data also helps MAJCOM and service officials observe larger trends or emerging issues that require closer attention.

Perceived support is undeniably colored by individual bias and other factors that influence subjective estimates. In the absence of a better alternative, *conducting common assessments at the local level offers the best chance that those evaluations will be informed by direct observation*.

Stakeholders defined

PA offices should evaluate stakeholders, defined as *groups of individuals who can help or hinder decisions or actions impacting unit priorities.* The *three As* define stakeholder support on a given issue:

- *Agency:* Stakeholders have varying levels of influence or authority they can exercise on an issue.
- *Attitude:* Stakeholders exhibit—or, based on their known interests, they can be assumed to possess— supportive or non-supportive sentiments about desired outcomes.
- *Activity:* Stakeholders may or may not be seeking information on an issue that impacts them, or they may or may not be engaged in activities intended to shape desired outcomes.

SAF/PA reporting will track *nine categories of stakeholders*:

- Currently serving Airmen and family members
- Currently serving personnel from other services or the Department of Defense
- Military veterans
- Military or civilian officials from partner nations
- Congress and other elected officials
- Civilian defense experts
- Defense industry leaders, contractors, or industry advocates
- Civic leaders not connected to the military
- Interest groups associated with an issue or demographic linked to unit objectives

Note that *media content providers are not stakeholders* unless they fit another category, like a think-tank expert who writes op-eds or appears on podcasts. Units usually will want to be more specific when identifying stakeholders—for example, looking at local educators as a sub-group of civic leaders who can assist local recruiting efforts. SAF/PA will use these eight categories for reporting, however, so when possible unit stakeholders should nest within these types. *Units should not define or assess individual stakeholders. Units should evaluate how influential individuals affect overall group support.*

STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

Stakeholder scoring criteria

The table below lists scoring criteria for stakeholder support factors (the three As). *Units will use these criteria to track stakeholder support of <u>four or more</u> high-priority topics or objectives identified in their unit prioritization plans.* There are two acceptable methods for stakeholder scoring:

- Score once for each assessed objective or topic at the end of the assessment period, considering direct observations, stakeholder feedback, or other relevant factors recorded over time.
- Complete a scorecard for each major engagement on the topic, then average the results. While this method can be less subjective than comprehensive six-month assessments, it may be necessary to weight engagements based on the size or importance of the engagement. SAF/PAX can help units set up an appropriate weighting system.

SAF/PA will collect MAJCOM-aggregated baseline scores from units in early 2023 and then every six months after that. Units should nest their evaluated objectives or topics under MAJCOM and Air Force lines of effort as shown in the sample scorecards on page 11 in order to make data aggregation easier. To help units with their initial scoring, page 12 shows baseline ranges for stakeholder support as they typically relate to many topics associated with the four lines of effort in the 2023 USAF Communication Plan.

Support factor	Score	Description
Agency	3	*Owners:* The group controls one or more decisions or actions that must take place in order to meet the desired objective.
	2	*Facilitators:* The group must take actions other than or in addition to communication before owners can act.
	1	*Influencers:* The group can use communication to shape the attitudes or activities of owners or facilitators.
	N/A	*No Agency*: Group members are not stakeholders on this topic
Attitude	5	*Supportive:* The group overwhelmingly supports the official (unit/MAJCOM/AF) position
	4	*Slightly Supportive:* A slight majority of the group supports the official position
	3	*Neutral or Mixed:* The group neither supports nor opposes the official position, or attitudes are about evenly mixed within the group
	2	*Slightly Non-Supportive:* A slight majority of the group opposes the official position
	1	*Non-Supportive:* The group overwhelmingly opposes the official position
	N/A	*No Position:* The group does know about the official position **and** has not exhibited opinions or behaviors that suggest what their position would be
Activity	5	*Public Action:* A significant number of group members are using public media or events (meetings, rallies, protests, etc.) in a way that may cause or prevent change
	4	*Private Action:* A significant number of group members are communicating or taking other actions in private (personal meetings or correspondence, small-group closed social media discussions, etc.) that may lead to public action or otherwise cause or prevent change
	3	*Limited Action:* A small minority or individual members of the group are engaged in public or private actions that may or may not lead to wider group action or other results
	2	*Interested:* Group members are actively seeking information to inform their attitudes or future private or public actions
	1	*Latent:* Group members are not actively following or are unaware of the issue, but could become interested through accurate or inaccurate information
	N/A	*Uninterested:* Group members are not actively following the issue **and** are unlikely to become interested unless communication strategies or incentives change. Units with true stakeholders who remain uninterested must find different paths to influence or action.

STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

Sample scorecard

The following sample scorecard shows a notional baseline assessment for a unit seeking to use PA engagements and products to help struggling local recruiters. The optional color-coding highlights groups that represent existing support the unit can leverage (green), groups that need more information to act in ways that advance unit objectives (yellow), and groups actively deterring desired outcomes who may change their attitudes more slowly or only through the influence of other stakeholders (red).

Unit Priority: *Increase wing support of local recruiting activities* Performance objective: *Increase engagements with community leaders from URGs as a percentage of total outreach activity by 15% above 2022 levels* Desired outcome: *Recruiting detachment generates 10% more leads in 2023*				USAF LOE: Mission Readiness AFMC Priority: Strengthen Our Team
Unit stakeholder	**SAF/PA category**	**Support factor**	**Score**	**Engagement Recommendations**
High school teachers and administrators	Civic leaders	Agency	4	Meet to discuss ways base and local Airmen presentations can better integrate with STEM or civics courses
		Attitude	3	
		Activity	3	
Public event organizers (minor league team, amusement park, community event)	Civic leaders	Agency	4	Meet to discuss an expanded range of options for recognizing service members and connecting fans to recruiters during events
		Attitude	4	
		Activity	2	
Leaders of predominantly Black and Hispanic churches	Civic leaders	Agency	3	Conduct base visit to see range of academics-based mission activities and meet with diverse Airmen to discuss their career paths
		Attitude	2	
		Activity	2	
Congregants of predominantly Black and Hispanic churches	Interest groups	Agency	3	Seek invitations to services during Veterans Day and provide Airmen to speak about their beliefs and the value of military service
		Attitude	2	
		Activity	4	
Base Airmen	Airmen and families	Agency	4	Use CC calls and unit social media to have base Airmen who support recruiting programs encourage less active units or individuals
		Attitude	3	
		Activity	2	
Local veterans	DoD, other services, and veterans	Agency	3	Counter "woke military" narrative driving group activity with mission-focused content in base common areas and veteran-heavy media
		Attitude	2	
		Activity	5	
Recruiting-age youth	Interest groups	Agency	5	Sustain current levels of direct support to youth activities while building influence base through other recommended actions
		Attitude	2	
		Activity	2	

Using stakeholder assessments

Units should review scoring data over time to determine if they are making progress with improving stakeholders' positions on issues and their willingness to take positive actions (or refrain from negative actions). Scoring trends may suggest useful changes to engagement planning, based on the groups, spokespeople, messages, formats, or channels that produce the most effective or least effective results.

STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

Typical ranges for baseline stakeholder scores

Line of Effort	Stakeholders	Agency	Attitude (with respect to USAF positions)	Activity
Readiness	Airmen, family members	High	Positive to Neutral or Mixed	High
	DoD, other services, veterans	Medium	Neutral or Mixed	Variable
	International partners	Low	Positive	Low
	Elected officials	High	Variable	Variable
	Defense experts	Medium	Mixed	High
	Defense industry	High	Variable	High
	Civic leaders	Medium to Low	Positive or Mixed	Variable
	Interest groups	Medium to Low	Positive or Negative	High
People	Airmen, family members	High	Variable	Variable
	DoD, other services, veterans	Low to Medium	Neutral or Mixed	Low
	International partners	Low	Neutral or Mixed	Low
	Elected officials	High	Variable	Variable
	Defense experts	Medium	Mixed	High
	Defense industry	Medium	Variable	Variable
	Civic leaders	Medium to Low	Positive or Mixed	Variable
	Interest groups	Medium to Low	Positive or Negative	High
Modernization	Airmen, family members	Low to Medium	Variable	Variable
	DoD, other services, veterans	Medium to High	Variable	Variable
	International partners	Low to Medium	Variable	Variable
	Elected officials	High	Variable	High
	Defense experts	Medium	Variable	High
	Defense industry	High	Variable	High
	Civic leaders	Medium to Low	Variable	Variable
	Interest groups	Medium to Low	Positive or Negative	High
Partners	Airmen, family members	Medium to High	Variable	Variable
	DoD, other services, veterans	Variable	Variable	Variable
	International partners	High	Variable	Variable
	Elected officials	Medium to High	Variable	Variable
	Defense experts	Medium	Positive or Mixed	High
	Defense industry	Medium to High	Positive or Mixed	Variable
	Civic leaders	Low to Medium	Variable	Variable
	Interest groups	Medium to Low	Positive or Negative	High

SOCIAL MEDIA AUDIENCE ANALYSIS

Why we are analyzing account followers

Official social media accounts administered by Public Affairs are often associated with internal communication to Airmen and Guardians, who are assumed to be avid consumers of social media content. However, the most recent Where Airmen and Guardians get Information (WAGGI) survey suggests that a minority of personnel use official social media accounts as a source of information compared to other sources like web sites, organizational emails, or word of mouth. Because official accounts must remain open to all followers who abide by platform standards, an account's audience can include a wide range of people seeking different types of information posted to the account. *As a professional communication enterprise, Public Affairs has a responsibility to know who is receiving information provided by unit social media accounts* in order to:

- Better meet the needs of identified audiences following the account
- Adjust or improve account content to reach a larger percentage of priority audiences
- Inform plans and risk assessments associated with use of the account.

The 2023 USAF Communication Plan therefore sets a requirement for *units to conduct an annual audit of their social media account followers and report the results to SAF/PA through MAJCOM/PAs.*

Follower analysis

Units should *review the profiles of 10% of the account followers or 200 followers, whichever number is lower*. Unit records and reporting of the audit results should *refer to individual followers as numbers and remove any identifying information such as usernames*. Units may use either of the following methods to select which followers to review:

- **Every *n*th follower via manual scrolling or an exported follower database:** Units divide the total number of followers by the sample size (10% of total followers up to 200) and use that number (*n*) to review every *n*th profile on the account's list of followers. Examples:
  ⇒ A commander's Twitter account has 1,157 followers. The PA office would review 116 followers, or every 10th follower (1,157 divided by 116): 10, 20, 30, 40, etc.
  ⇒ A host installation's Facebook account has 17,682 followers. The PA office would review 200 followers, or every 88 followers (17,682 divided by 200): 88, 176, 264, 352, etc.
- **Random ordering of an exported follower database:** Visit Waypoints > Resources > Assessments > How-Tos for instructions on how to export or request a database of followers that can be reordered by random numbers and then reviewed from 1 to the sample size. Using the example accounts above, for example, the office would review randomly ordered profiles 1 to 116 for the commander's account, or 1 to 200 for the base account.

Through MAJCOM/PAs, *SAF/PA will request annual unit data on the number of followers from unit social media accounts in the categories listed on page 14*.

Using follower analysis

More precise information on the composition of social media audiences may confirm that the content posted on official accounts is meeting unit objectives, the intended use of the platform, or audience expectations. If so, then no changes are required. However, units may discover that they want to change platform content to better serve existing audiences or to attract different types of followers. Follower analysis also could inform decisions to discontinue the use of specific accounts based on risk assessments or limited returns on investment in terms of reaching desired audiences.

SOCIAL MEDIA AUDIENCE ANALYSIS

Follower types and profile characteristics

Follower type	Definition	Typical profile characteristics
Airmen or other assigned personnel	Active, reserve, Guard, or civilian personnel	Current military position listed in profile. Photos or other posts reflect current military affiliation
Veterans	Person separated or retired from USAF or other military service	Former military service listed in profile or referenced in posts
Military family members	Family members of a current Airmen or other military member	Affiliation with current military member listed in profile or posts
Other USAF or DAF accounts	Organizational or individual senior leader accounts from other units or agencies within the Department of the Air Force, to include Space Force units	Verified or otherwise officially recognizable account
Other DoD or US government officials or organizations	Organizational or individual senior leader accounts from agencies outside the DAF, USAF or USSF	Verified or otherwise officially recognizable account
Friendly or neutral foreign military members	International airman, other military member, veteran or family member affiliated with a friendly or neutral country	Profile position indicates current or former service in the armed forces of a friendly or non-hostile country. Posts appear in other languages or are auto-translated and feature military subject matter and overseas locations.
Adversary	Individual, organization, or state-run media outlet formally affiliated with the People's Republic of China, Russia, North Korea, Iran, or a violent extremist organization	Verified or otherwise officially recognizable account for adversary state officials or acknowledged organizations
Pro-adversary foreign accounts	Non-U.S. individual or organization that routinely expresses support for adversaries (PRC, Russia, North Korea, Iran, or VEOs) without having any official affiliation with those adversaries. Can include accounts suspected of being state-sponsored—e.g., unacknowledged troll farms or bots that actively post content	Profile location, post language, and content identifies the individual or organization as residing outside the United States. Profile or post content reflects strong, routine support of adversary positions—not just anti-U.S. sentiments.
Elected officials and staffs	Individual serving in an elected position in local, state, or national government, or a staff member supporting the elected official	Verified account for known elected official. Staff profiles normally will specify their association with an elected official or organization on which the elected official serves (e.g., committee) and include position-related posts.
Defense experts	Person employed by a think tank, academic institution, non-governmental organization, or similar body who specializes in military matters or issues that impact military operations	Profile lists current and former positions with research institutions. Profile includes publications and education related to defense or foreign policy. Posts include pro or con opinions on defense issues, pro or con.
Defense industry representatives	Employee of a company providing systems or services to the Air Force or other military organizations. Also includes a company's unattributed but otherwise official web and social media content	Verified company or company executive account. Personal profiles may list a current position with the company and include posts related to company business.
Civic leaders	Individual with direct influence on local, state, regional, or national opinions or decision-making by virtue of their professional status, relationships, or position	Individual is a recognized civic leader
General U.S. public	Other individual accounts that appear to originate in the United States	US-affiliated content in profile or posts
General international public	Other individual accounts that appear to originate outside the United States	Foreign-affiliated content in profile or posts
Unidentifiable accounts	Followers who cannot be identified or seem to be someone or something other than what the account name or profile picture suggest	Minimal profile information or post content, or generic or inauthentic content that account holder appears to have appropriated from other users/sites
Other accounts	Accounts that do not align within another category	N/A

OTHER ASSESSMENT TOOLS

Previous sections of this guide have discussed actions PA offices are required to take in support of the 2023 USAF Communication Plan. This section provides starting points for other resources units can use to assess their communication performance or effectiveness.

FREE RESOURCES

- *SiteGauge and built-in social media analytics:* In general, the platforms used for official web and social media content provide two useful metrics: *reach*, roughly understood as the number of people who could have seen the content; and *engagement*, the number of positive or negative reactions, comments, or shares the content produced. PA planners can use the *engagement rate*—the number of engagements divided by the reach of the content—to evaluate if their content is doing a good job attracting attention. As always, the numbers need context. Are the reactions positive or negative? How does the rate compare to other results the unit or other units see?
    ⇒ **Example of use:** SAF/PAI noted that its lowest engagement rates came from live tweets of senior leader remarks that were all text. By adding photos, engagement rates with this content improved.

- *Vector engagement tracking:* By entering planned engagements in Vector as required by the 2023 plan, PAs can automatically generate engagement reports that show how their activities are divided among different priorities, topics, audience groups, or types of engagements. This information can help PA planners adjust their engagement strategies to achieve a desired weight of effort.
    ⇒ **Example of use:** SAF/PA uses Vector to track how the topics of senior leader engagements relate to their priorities. When external factors result in senior leaders spending limited time discussing their priorities, PA uses the data to recommend a shift in focus or the delegation of engagements on those topics to others.

- *Vector content analysis tool:* Vector allows users to record information about the internal or external media content generated from their events, campaigns, or communication plans. Article entries have an analysis tab that allows users to record whether the content met objectives or contained themes and messages from their communication plans. The same tab allows users to answer three simple questions about the content that generate an industry-standard measure of content quality (Paine score). Users with multiple article entries can view a media coverage report that summarizes all content analysis associated with their unit or a particular communication event, campaign, or plan. Changes in media content over time can indicate trends in message alignment, reporter knowledge or positions on issues, the way spokespeople present information, or other factors.
    ⇒ **Example of use:** SAF/PA uses content analysis to evaluate message prevalence and alignment during events that generate a lot of media coverage, like the annual Air Force Association conferences. Reports have driven decisions on what leaders talk about and the need to provide better pre-event guidance.

UNIT-FUNDED TOOLS

- *Commercial social media management, media analysis, and audience analysis software:* A growing number of companies provide systems that deliver insights on news and social media activity on certain topics, or the composition of audiences in a certain media space. Often, results depend on elaborate search criteria that limit the amount of irrelevant content the system captures, and the value of the resulting data can decrease if the organization has a relatively small digital footprint. SAF/PA recommends that units conduct hands-on experiments with a system—like the Meltwater accounts SAF/PA provides to MAJCOMs—before they invest in software licenses.

- *Surveys and focus groups:* SAF/PAX maintains a contract for surveys and focus groups and will entertain proposals for internal audience research that benefits multiple units. Also contact SAF/PAX for requirements, guidance, and advice if you want to conduct your own audience research.

RECRUITING SUPPORT

GO Inspire

- General Officers seek out and conduct outreach to youth and youth influencers from Under-Represented Groups (URGs) in order to increase the diversity of our applicant pool in the rated community
- *All DAF GOs are mandated to participate in two GO Inspire engagements annually*
- Check the engagement tracking tool in Vector to find an event
- To support an engagement, email AFRS.GO.INSPIRE @us.af.mil

- Job Security
- Education, Training
- Benefits
- Travel
- Values & Meaning

GO BLUE...Help recruiting by connecting more youth and direct influencers to your units

- **Tours:** Have more robust support of community tours, especially for younger groups. Bases also can sign up to support AFRS educator tours, which bring teachers and other influencers nominated by recruiters to bases where they can experience the mission
- **PA flights:** Become an AIM Wing (see below) or use provisions for PA travel to support orientation flights
- **Speaking engagements:** Send Airmen and Guardians with their gear to attend school career days, STEM events, or other youth education activities
- **Formal programs:** Support recruiting programs that connect personnel to outreach opportunities outside the local area: We Are All Recruiters (WEAR), the Recruiter Assistance Program (RAP), and Guardians Engaged in Active Recruiting (GEAR)
- **Volunteer:** Coach, mentor, and support community projects that benefit youth
- **Provide visual content:** Help feed recruiting web and social media platforms with fresh videos and photos uploaded to DVIDS that feature Airmen and Guardians on the job...especially features that showcase "a day in a life."
- **Partner with AFRS:** Supporting service marketing efforts by committing to host small- to large-scale filming projects, sponsored events, and other opportunities
- **Support recruiters:** Recruiters are encouraged to tell the Air Force and Space Force story. Those near bases could benefit from PA advice and support.

STAY BLUE...encourage separating active-duty personnel to continue to serve

- **Open doors for in-service recruiters:** Go beyond out-processing checklists to have local air component recruiters provide information on reserve and Guard opportunities through commander's calls, base community events, and web and social media platforms.
- **Highlight:** Value of not losing job experience, time toward retirement, or other benefits while continuing to serve with a flexible full– or part-time schedule.

Why do people serve? Opportunity — Community — Purpose!

AFRS DET 1

Resources

Websites:
www.Airforce.com
www.Spaceforce.com
www.recruiting.af.mil

Aim High mobile app
Download and share the app with potential

Informing, influencing and inspiring tomorrow's leaders

AFRS Det. 1 leads the **Aviation Inspiration Mentorship (AIM) team** composed of Total Force rated officers (pilots, combat systems officers, air battle managers, and RPA pilots). These ambassadors serve as role models, mentors, and Air Force representatives in environments where they are highly engaged in recruiting. Air Force units can also join the 31 active AIM Wings across the service, which support decentralized youth engagement through inspiration flights and other local outreach.

#InspireAF

Read more about the Air Force's Rated Diversity Initiative. For more information about inspiration flights, AIM Wings, and other rated recruiting support, email afrs.det1.inspire@us.af.mil or call DSN 565-1448.

SAMPLE TACTICS

Allies and Partners

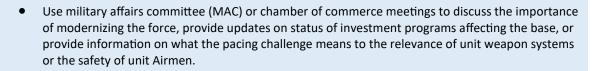|	
Civic Outreach	• Host dialogues between civic leaders and international partners assigned to the base or frequently training there, in order to ensure communities are providing supportive environments and addressing enduring or emerging concerns. • Host local elected officials, tribal leaders, and influential civic leaders to observe operations with allies and partners to gain and maintain support for partnership activities and investments. • Leverage Band performances to open doors to more substantive engagements or deliver broad messages on ties between the United States and other nations. • When feasible, incorporate partner capabilities or personnel into open houses or other major community events.
Media Engagements	• Invite news media to cover bilateral or multilateral exercises. • Conduct interviews or release visual information on unit deployments supporting deterrence or partnership-building operations. • When approved for OCONUS media engagements, contact regional media hubs to expand pool of potential media engagements with exercise directors, mission commanders, or other participants. • Update media talking points to put unit missions in the context of integrating with allies and partners—i.e., how unit capabilities enable combined operations or compliment the forces that partners field.
Command Information	• Prioritize timely imagery collection, review and dissemination in order to maximize potential international reach of products. Accession all approved imagery to an established DVIDS feature page, using common DVIDS tags. • Encourage social media amplification by including established hashtags in posts and sharing unit content with more prominent platforms (Combatant Command, USAF, US Embassy, partner military headquarters) • Leverage AFN reach by facilitating coverage by local teams or capturing B-roll of

SINGAPORE PILOTS TRAIN AT MOUNTAIN HOME

PRO TIP:
Most of these tactics involve longer lead times to coordinate approvals. Plans and foreign media assessments may need to be worked through OIE working groups, COCOMs, Embassies, or partner governments.

SAMPLE TACTICS

Modernization *Understanding the Department of the Air Force's Operational Imperatives*

Civic Outreach

- Use military affairs committee (MAC) or chamber of commerce meetings to discuss the importance of modernizing the force, provide updates on status of investment programs affecting the base, or provide information on what the pacing challenge means to the relevance of unit weapon systems or the safety of unit Airmen.

- Conduct orientation visits to demonstrate the limitations of legacy systems or to preview future capabilities with aircraft transiting the base.

- Meet with local governments, homeowner/landowner groups, conservationists and tribal leaders to get ahead of potential land use, airspace, or environmental concerns for mission bed-downs. Support Civil Engineer Squadron Environmental Flights with mandatory media notifications.

- Work through local contacts or state veteran or military affairs officials to identify influential regional civic leaders with interests in defense beyond protecting the base's current mission. Integrate them into outreach programs and nominate them for HQ civic leader groups or orientations.

- Coordinate with MAJCOMs to establish ways for civic leaders to receive accurate information or discuss concerns about service divestments or investments.

- Showcase new systems during public events: open houses, flyovers, or videos used during Band or Honor Guard appearances.

Media Engagements

- Prep leaders to answer questions on unit modernization impacts when interviewing with national defense reporters on other topics.

- In coordination with MAJCOMs, conduct media interviews to discuss local impacts of legacy force structure or unit progress/milestones in testing and fielding new systems.

- Facilitate local interviews to provide tactical perspectives on new unit systems.

- Where relationships of trust exist with local media, work with MAJCOM to conduct embargoed releases if needed to provide official positions on issues that local opponents will raise before or immediately after planned announcements.

Command Information

- Amplify higher HQ modernization announcements in multiple local channels and provide local POCs for questions or concerns. Request additional information to answer questions or otherwise enable unit-level communication as needed.

- Use in-person or virtual face-to-face meetings to update Airmen on modernization plan impacts on unit operations and personnel. Upchannel issues to MAJCOMs so that future PA guidance updates can address them.

- Ensure Airmen, civilian employees and families have updated information on mission transitions and related community impacts ... for their own awareness and to spread accurate word of mouth.

- Establish feature sections for new mission content on unit web sites.

- Collect and accession video and photos of new mission milestones and major operational activities.

PRO TIP: Waypoints has a searchable database of talking points and senior leader quotes on the Air Force's major modernization programs and the threats that drive them.

SAMPLE TACTICS

Mission Readiness

Civic Outreach

PRO TIPS:

SAF/IE runs the Air Force Community Partnership Program, which provides processes for local agencies and bases to collaborate on solutions to shared opportunities and challenges

Check Waypoints or contact your MAJCOM for PA Guidance on major joint or international exercises.

- Use military affairs committee (MAC) or chamber of commerce meetings to update civic leaders on unit readiness challenges and opportunities. Ensure civic leaders have enough context to understand the relationship between readiness and modernization—e.g., how readiness challenges linked to legacy aircraft also put long-term relevance at risk, while dips in readiness rates for new aircraft may be the price of continued relevance.

- Invite elected officials, civic leaders, and recruiting influencers to observe training.

- Coordinate to offer readiness boot camps or orientation flights to capable civic leaders and recruiting influencers.

- Provide advance notifications and otherwise discuss impacts of changes in training with tribal leaders, homeowners, landowners or other affected groups.

- Showcase unit training or equipment during large public events: open houses, community celebrations, or visual information used during Band and Honor Guard performances.

- Where necessary and in close coordination with MAJCOMs, sustain dialogues between military officials and civic leaders in communities where conditions negatively impact the workforce or unit operations. The engagements should ensure officials know how local conditions may affect the long-term viability of the mission or installation, and whether and how military or civilian solutions are being worked.

Media Engagements

- If your unit faces known readiness challenges, then coordinate standing Q&As with MAJCOMs and prepare leaders to address readiness during interviews on other topics.

- Conduct media orientations or interviews during exercises or other unit readiness events.

- In coordination with MAJCOMs, conduct media orientations or interviews to provide local perspectives on common readiness challenges or implemented solutions.

- Seek defense or trade media coverage of innovative solutions that enhance readiness.

Command Information

- Amplify higher headquarters news and information on readiness concepts and programs (Agile Combat Employment, Air Force Force Generation, Ready Airman Training, etc.) through localized products in multiple media formats. Request additional information to answer questions or otherwise enable unit-level communication as needed.

- Use in-person or virtual meetings to update Airmen on unit readiness. Upchannel issues of concern to MAJCOMs so that future PA guidance updates can address them.

- Collect and accession video and photos of exercises and other major readiness activities.

SAMPLE TACTICS

Taking Care of People

Civic Outreach

- In collaboration with relevant base officials, establish methods for regularly discussing and working solutions to community issues affecting Airmen and family members.

- Update civic leaders on new programs for Airmen and families for the purpose of reinforcing or adjusting appropriate levels of community support in those areas.

- Conduct targeted amplification of DoD- or service-level announcements to business or community leaders—e.g., local health providers for changes in medical policies or local colleges for changes in educational benefit policies. Request additional information to answer questions or otherwise enable unit-level communication as needed.

- Where necessary and in close coordination with MAJCOMs, establish dialogue between military officials and civic leaders in communities where local conditions negatively impact Airmen and families. The engagements should ensure officials know how local conditions affect people at the installation, and whether and how military or civilian solutions are being worked.

- Diversify civic outreach to include people who offer perspectives or services that could improve the well-being or sense of inclusion among Airmen and families from under-represented groups.

- Host community events that advance local recruiting goals.

- In coordination with unit legal advisors, work with community businesses and organizations to expand opportunities to recognize the service of unit Airmen and families.

Media Engagements

- Conduct media interviews to highlight events and programs that take care of Airmen and families.

- Work with local recruiters to develop media pitches for relevant recruit or influencer channels that highlight unit missions and opportunities to serve.

- Where media attention to local issues could help mobilize civic leaders or civilian helping agencies, coordinate with base officials and MAJCOMs to conduct interviews with affected personnel, or provide background information highlighting shortfalls in Airmen and family support.

Command Information

- Prioritize the communication of unit and higher headquarters news and information on personnel and benefit programs, which are the categories of information judged most important by Airmen. Request additional information from local or MAJCOM experts to answer questions or provide details not covered by guidance.

- Provide methods to receive anonymous feedback on quality of life and quality of service programs, and upchannel issues of concern to MAJCOMs so that future communication guidance updates can address them.

- Use in-person or virtual commander's calls and town halls to update Airmen and families on programs that benefit or impact them, with an emphasis on local implementation.

PRO TIP:

For major Air Force personnel and benefit announcements, there's usually more to the story at the base level. Talk to local subject matter experts and provide your audiences with more details on how programs will be implemented. Help flag relevant content with descriptive headers, ledes that emphasize the bottom line, or bullets with key take-aways.