Subject:	MEETING: Jan 12 Volunteer Huddle
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Please register for the volunteer huddle on Weds, Jan 12, 2-3 p.m.
https://gsa.zoomgov.com/meeting/register/vJIsf-moqDorGczGxI74DEhEaQuTF6P2Nj4

Find out what you can do for a stellar 2022 with the PL-COP. Bring your questions! We'll be sending out a list of possibilities soon.

And now for a word from our sponsor:
We can only accept help from current federal employees. Sorry - I know it's disappointing; we've had a lot of people offer their help. We appreciate it. We just can't accept it.

Also, you'll need to get your supervisor's approval to volunteer. Volunteer projects range from a set of hours (weekly/monthly) to a time-limited project. But you will have to get your boss's approval, and you'll have to meet whatever criteria your agency has for volunteer work.

Katherine Spivey
Co-Chair, Plain Language Action and Information Network (PLAIN)
plainlanguage.gov

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Plain Language

Please stand by for realtime captions.

Surprise, hello everyone
We will begin started in just a couple minutes, we will give folks another minute to join Peter
I think I was on the academic calendar just long enough for it to change everything so I think of things one hour is actually 50 minutes.
Exactly.
Okay do you want to get started?
Do you want to do the admin stuff?
Today is way more informal, thank you everyone for joining. More of a huddle style talking about the plain language community needs especially for volunteers from federal folks and in the confirmation email that was sent there was a rough outline agenda if folks want to take that and follow along. We want be doing, there will not be any formal thing today other than of course live captioning is in the chat for folks who need it or want to have a transcript copy but other than that freeform informal take it away Catherine.
Thank you so much, thank you everyone who joined, we finally have some sunshine which is encouraging for me.'s as said this is informal. We will not be distributing or publishing the conversation. We're just talking to people interested in volunteering about how our needs and your desires can intersect, so this sounds like a great start and I will start by asking for a volunteer to take notes here you can just respond in the chat, I am also assuming you got the invite which has the notes and agenda in it. The thing from I think Eventbrite. Yes. From Zoom the confirmation calls has all of that and to have a taker for the official notetaking for today? It helps us stay on track and if I get involved in talking and forget to write something down I don't forget someone's valuable contribution. Okay. I guess thank you so much really appreciate it. And you don't need to worry about excessive formality and extraordinarily writing up notes it's just to make sure we all remember the conversation. Katina has kindly included in the chat the information about our needs and wants and let's take a look at that to look at some other things. I think that I wanted to start by saying any community of practice runs on volunteers because we have to, there's no way around it. What we were hoping to do is get people who were interested and were looking for something they could do to benefit the community and this is something I have been thinking of a lot. Something people could do also help their own career. There is nothing wrong with wanting to do both things. It is perfectly okay to have that. You know, there are certainly some things involved in that. One of the things we will need you to do is consider what you are interested in doing, what you are capable of doing and perhaps this is the time to talk about a couple things you will need to do, in a way we prefer you do not all volunteer during this period. You can but one of the things we know you will have to do is you're going to have to check with your boss. That's one of the reasons we had that in the message. You do have to check with your boss and have a clear idea what it is you are doing and with the time commitment is and how it won't interfere with your job in the slightest and in fact will produce benefits such as you bring plain language back to your group and you are bringing skills and testing your skills. I have to say it has taken me a ridiculous amount of time to figure out how to incorporate plain into my IDP because it was usually something I would shoehorn in between my other work and I was like I can manage all of this and I thought I am managing putting together a summit having meetings, writing stuff. I am communicating. I should put something in writing so this is working. So I am happy to draft some language for you to use with your boss and maybe you can think of some of that yourself and we can talk to one another about is this language good and convincing is this what your boss is looking for? Your boss might have ideas so I wanted to make sure we all sort of had that in the front of our mind that it is going to look at that. And I see that Katina would like to say something so I would like to turn the meeting over to her for a moment.
Hi. I put on my video but it's okay so hi I am Katina Stapleton the cochair and I want to echo the sentiment that we are really looking for volunteers and I appreciate so much you guys joining us to learn a little bit more about what the needs are. Many of you may not know how small of a group to leadership team for plain is. There are four of us that work on the core things. Myself, Kathryn, we have a lead for training and a lead for the website and then we have a social media team. So all the requests that come in are funneled through a really small group of people. So we get a lot of awesome ideas and things we want to do. We get a lot of requests and then we have meetings where we say that would be awesome if only we had the volunteers to help with it so we really trying over the next year to take a different approach to volunteers and to be more proactive, to put out to the universe that we really need folks to help with certain things and set up a structure for it. Something that is sustainable over time. So again thank you guys for coming. What you

see in front of you is some preliminary ideas and rethink we will change some other things over time. So I will turn it back to you.

Thank you and thank you so much for remembering to include the things I forgot because I would've gone straight on into the list. Speaking of cochairs Jamie Stark of training has a new title instead of training lead she is no cochair focusing on training. So it is true we have a lot of really hard-working folks who put a lot of effort into plane and we thought we should formalize recognized by title what she was doing so we are very happy to welcome Jamie Stark to the team, thank you so much for all your efforts in the past and the future because we do get training requests all the time. And wanted to start here with the needs and wants to so you can have an idea of what we are looking for. Our current situation you know with trying to keep our meetings, having a summary for meetings that we have which with digital golf the main monthly meetings that generally feature a speaker or two on a topic, having someone write those up really helps us bring back to the meeting to people who couldn't come some valuable information about the meeting and is sort of solidifies it. Sometimes we are in the moment, in the meeting itself thinking and interacting and unless we take stellar notes it goes proof and if you're wondering why we don't just record, the reason is it is a lot of time and effort to record and to make it accessible so that it can be posted and we were doing that for a while. Digital golf was doing that and finally laid out a couple months ago that we were not getting anywhere near the traffic, you know people were not going to the recordings. They were more likely to download PDF or slides but they were not listening to the recording so to use a marketing term our return on investment was not showing. We wanted to use time and effort for something else so one of the things that helps us is to move toward writing up meetings including slides making sure slides are accessible and trying to bring back something permanent back to the group, back to the website and our legacy to say this is what we had, this is what we learned, here is this information we are sharing and we are making it easy for people. That is one thing we would want. Writers and editors for meetings and I feel we could take an unlimited quantity of number of people who want to write and we will give you feedback and we will give you some samples of what we're looking for to show you where it's going to go but imagine what you could take to your boss and say I'm going to be writing summaries for meetings. Now I hope that doesn't put you in a eventual notetaker at meetings for life but that is a useful skill to be able to not write down everything that happens but these were the important points. This is what the lessons learned, this is what we wanted to keep versus some of the chatter which was interesting but not quite what we wanted. Another element of that is help with the events themselves, we work with digital golf specifically Gabrielle who is a huge help keeping things running and all the things for meetings and our annual summits. But I think we could use help. I would like to figure out the next summit and would like to have people propose to speak rather than just emailing and saying I heard you at this other conference or online would you like to talk for 30 or 40 minutes at the summit? We could just use some help with the logistics, with contacting, with filling out the event briefs. If you would like to get a toehold into event planning, some people get really excited by that. Some people may want to test it out before they do more in their own job so that is another thing we are looking for, not only for the monthly meetings but the annual summit and if we ever get back to in person you know we can look at getting together in person like there is the word museum in D.C. that I feel has our name all over it. If you're interested in event planning that something we could use some help with. Webpage content owners. I want to make sure this is not, I wanted to be very clear about this. We are not necessarily asking you to volunteer to help us update the website. If you use get up and you're comfortable with it we could use your help but what we actually want is for some writer and editor's and web people in the sense of people who are used to writing for the web to say adopt a page or group of patients and help us update it. Help us get more before and after examples. Help us make sure things are clear. It is sort of I guess what I am thinking of as a content owner. I feel I have been talking for hours so, if anyone has a question on the wants can you put it in the chat box and Trenton or I or Jamie can help answer. In fact, while you are thinking about this Gabrielle if you want to scroll slowly people can see the sort of expanded version. So, writer/editor and it would be helpful to have a team lead but that is perhaps more of a want at this point. The event planner meetings and summits, find and suggest speakers and topics. Liaisons from other communities of practice that's a big help. Create or I guess document what people will do. As Katina said, we are getting some help from interns on updating some content but we need to look at it more broadly and see what we can do. Sure, go ahead.

I will just break in. We got one thing under webpage content owners. We sort of buried it unintentionally. That's the guidelines. We actually do really need some assistance on updating the guidelines but it is more than just thinking of it as a website update it's more about helping to conceptualize which of the guidelines need to be updated for the new Internet world because they have been around quite some time without tweaking so if there is anyone, the plain language guidelines so if there's anyone that has an interest in doing that and working with us on that that would be awesome.

That would be web writing and such like? You know updating to include more web writing and the website? Judy that was your question, the guidelines, the plain language guidelines on plain language.gov sort of the fundamental things that people are supposed to be following. Now as I said, this is not a going to get up and making updates although if you know get hub and you are willing to volunteer in your boss says okay, let me know and I can start using you in. I have done a little get hub but I am not 100% confident in my abilities on that. So, so far that is so far, that is our wants. That's what we consider the highest priorities. I am assuming everyone is still thinking of their questions or mulling over how they can convince their boss to do any of these exciting thrilling volunteer opportunities. Another thing, Gabrielle can you get us back to the needs? Thanks. I'm sorry, the wants I meant the wants but you got us there exactly. Some of you may remember some time ago, I can't remember. I can't remember who asked us about men touring. But we thought yeah, we might have some informal things in place but we're interested in doing something more. But I announced it on the list and a lot of people wanted to be meant toward but they were not necessarily, I did not get a flood of people wanting to mentor, people wanted to receive it rather than do it. So I would like to have some people volunteer to work together on how can we arrange it? Maybe not one to one relationship maybe there are mentoring sessions where there is one mentor and three or four or five mentees and they meet every month or so for three months and discuss issues, I don't know. I don't know what would work but it would be what specifically are the mentees looking for and how can we arrange that. So if anyone has done a mentoring program and would like to work on it for plane, love to hear from you. If you have ideas but cannot necessarily commit to doing them I would also like to have your ideas. That is interesting. Another thing that we have is accessibility and Section 508. This is kind of a stretch goal because we have, we have always had the requirement that things for meetings have to be accessible to the attendees and we have new guidance on how to do that. But we also need someone to check slides and PDFs and I don't know if I'm just crazy about it would also may be be a good idea to go back and check things on our website so they are accessible. That is why it is a want. I would really like that, I don't know how possible that's going to be. Right now I don't even know the universe of what it is. I know we have fewer documents and PDFs because we try to move them more into pages rather than to have something living on the site. But I mean that is another project obviously you would need to know accessibility and Section 508 requirements. This is a problem. I cannot read my own handwriting. Terrible. Can you take us back up to the wants at the top? Thank you that's all I need. List to lead. List leads. What I mean by that is for the plain language list serve, periodically certain topics come up. People will say how come it will be health literacy or how to explain science or how to deal with jargon or things like that and while I have memorized plain language you know that's not necessarily a requirement. It would be useful to have people say oh, if someone asks about web writing I am happy to supply more or less answers here is how to do it. Here's the page on plain language here are some of the resources. Here are some recent webinars. If there's a question about financial literacy, really useful to say here is something. If there is a question about medical literacy or health literacy, I need someone else to know about the clear language index or what it is called and the CDC thing and you know Cynthia at the University of Maryland project. I think those things are on the website but I think other people need to be answering those questions. So if you have an interest or your job involves one of these focal points, it would be great if you would take on responding when the questions come up in the list. So you might want to think about what you know, what you feel capable of talking about and things like that. Similarly, this is the get hub I was talking about and that's what you used to support Federalist. There is an interesting question in the chat about the stretch goals and how to do things through GitHub. Light training, yes you do not have to be an expert I think the only requirement that we have is to not make things more difficult. I don't know if that's too ridiculous but I mean yeah, there is room for learning, there is room for experimenting. We would probably limit you to a couple things and with GitHub you have to make it a pull request. So reach out independently, there may be a follow-up email. Don't rely on that, if you want to volunteer, please contact us at info plain language that would be great. I mean, that goes to all of us. So I don't have to remember to forward. That's the only reason I say use that one. So, that is sort of our needs and wants. We have had some people who had to drop off for meetings. Do any of you here have further questions? Okay excellent. Katina did you want to talk a little bit about the point about being a self-starter? Sure, I think it goes to the point that I made earlier we are a relatively small leadership team. And so as we bring on volunteers we don't want to get, find ourselves in the situation where it is creating work managing volunteers as opposed to getting the work done that needs to happen. So it is really helpful if people are self-starters, if they come once we get over the initial training around things don't need much handholding and that we get to a point where we feel like you can do the work essentially on your own. A really good example of that is the social media team. We have an awesome social media team and while one member of the leadership team is part of the social media team they pretty much self sustain and that makes it much easier for us. So I think that is one of the points and the other is we get so many really cool suggestions that

come in and at this point we don't have enough capacity to do all the really good ideas that come through. So, it is kind of like sort of a you suggest it, you own it situation.

Nobody will suggest everything ever again.

I know I probably should not have said that out loud but that is sort of where we are in terms of time. Another thing we talked about as a leadership team is once we get a better idea of the things that people are willing and able to do we will write up more formal position descriptions so that it can be clear what it is that is required for different things. So if there is something that you really want to do that we didn't discuss feel free to suggest it to us. Because at this point we are only limited by the ideas that we have had so if you have other awesome ideas please do share with us.

Those are excellent points and Miriam has been putting things in the chat about the things we are looking for in their echoing what Katina has been saying. As we said before, have supervisor approval on your volunteer activities because I cannot believe I am actually saying this but I did have people not check with their supervisor and they were doing plain language training and they were unavailable for three hours at a time and we had to stop them and say look, we are thrilled that you want to do this but we cannot go talk to your boss about letting you do this. That is not a relationship that we have. This is volunteer, you have to work it out with your boss yourself. That was just really awkward. But you know don't do that to us. Our powers are not unlimited. We cannot make your boss do things. Jamie do you have some ideas for volunteers or volunteer work in general? I know you work with trainers and social media so I am sure you have some ideas to share. If you would like to think about those a little bit more maybe you can post in the chat. Got it, understood. She will post in the chat. Do you have any questions to the audience, were you wondering you know what sorts of things we were going to be asking for? Is this volunteer huddle what you thought it was going to be? Thank you Jamie. Yeah, if anyone would like to volunteer for plain social media team that is excellent. I think they do wonderful work. Looking to maybe branch into some other channels depending on your experience. I am not active enough myself on Instagram but if you have some ideas for that but thank you for the feedback this is what you were expecting to hear. Another thing and maybe this should've been part of the listserv. I will rely on you Gabrielle for getting the transcript because something we use to do is we would have a weekly recap of discussions that would go on the list and it does have to be one week it can be every two weeks depending but there would be no so this week on the list we discussed mentoring and we talked about health literacy. Things like that, nothing too in-depth back with the writing editing things but I always thought that was a huge help. I know you can set up your email for digest but sometimes you miss some of the back-and-forth so this is sort of recapping, a summary and we can get samples if you would like and again Jamie is on the social media team for that. If you wanted to know where else we are. I think it is mostly Facebook and twitter and LinkedIn. Jamie also has some ideas about, for training. We have two directions of needs. I am making this number up but about 15, 16, 17 trainers and we need to do, we need some help with working with the trainers and training. Is other people hoping to go through the process. A big part of the process is observing other people, other trainers and that sort of logistics and it is difficult right now. We are not meeting in person so sometimes it's difficult to pull in people from other agencies into classes so they can get credit for observing. So we need someone to work with the trainers in training and also someone to coordinate events like the train the trainer boot camp sessions where we say so you want to be a trainer? You have to come learn how to do it and then we run those sessions and would be useful, very very helpful to have someone help with this particularly doing it online and getting people through the process. So that could be two separate people. I am checking my messages. Yes, we will be sharing this afterward. Yeah. See how useful it is to have written notes after a meeting? Otherwise it's me trying to decipher my handwriting. I seem to have gotten a little stuck in my chat. Looking forward to volunteering, excellent. We will be sharing the Google document with the notes so it is more complete. Jamie has put her email in the chat if you are already a plain trainer interested in helping with Boot Camp so that's really fantastic. Another one, since I don't necessarily know your backgrounds or what you do I am sort of going beyond the list as usual. One of the things we were looking at is trying to make plain existing class into an online module. So that people would not have to listen to a three-hour webinar to get information. We were hoping to break it down so we could have a section on jargon and a section on you know passive voice and really get those down to little pieces so if people said I need some help with this, we could say here is the written resources and use of information from a class. So if anyone has instructional design elements, that would be really useful. Katina can you think of anything else?

Sorry I keep talking while muted. Those are the big categories of things. I would just also put out there this thought was triggered by what you just said. We don't know everyone that is part of the list or really everyone on the call and we don't know your areas of expertise. So it could be that you are our next great person to feature in the Summit or someone who would be awesome from one of the monthly meetings to do a presentation. If you feel like you have an expertise in the area of plain language, like Catherine said you

work in instructional design or you expertise in customer service or how to write surveys or things like that that are different takes on the plain language lends. Please let us know so that we can use your expertise to help the group but also be able to amplify your expertise. So we are here to support each other so the more we build up each other's expertise and careers that will help so we are really happy to showcase people whose work might overlap what we do with plain language. So that could be in the form of guest blogs or things like that as well.

Think of this as an opportunity. An opportunity to learn, an opportunity to showcase. Put yourself out there. There is some positions that are more behind the scenes and if you're more comfortable with that, excellent, fantastic. We don't need people who don't want to do certain things. We only ask what you take on you keep doing but maybe you are that person. Maybe you are the person to talk about oh, I don't know, making contracts more plain. Doing surveys. Maybe you are a good aggregator from other communities of practice that's also useful. I get a lot of speaker ideas from social media and other conferences. Gabrielle can you think of anything we have overlooked? I know you have been doing a lot of on-the-fly tidying up and I appreciate that so much.

No problem. Thanks to Justin, once I get his notes we can try to incorporate his notes with some of the notetaking. I was just going to mention about the events wise as far as volunteers are concerned even if it is coming to if not myself, if it is going to Jamie, Katina, Catherine, Merriam with an idea that's not just relevant to plain language but really anything like more the community at large that is kind of a twofold accessibility and plain language like all of these topics don't feel afraid or even if it is just an idea, we would love to hear them if you ever want to email us or send me a note directly or have Catherine or Katina link us up together and the same goes for all these things. You volunteer to make plain language better will make all communities better. That is really all from me and if anyone ever the mentor mentee program if anyone has any experience with the user experience mentorship program that they went through and are also a member of the group that would be super helpful to get folks to share their experiences.

You know I wanted to add that you don't necessarily have to come up with all the ideas yourself. You simply have to think about them something applying to the plain language group like the whole mentoring thing I have been sort of turning it over in my mind and sort of yeah that would be nice and then Jean Fox the leader of the UX community of practice went gangbusters and I emailed her and said this is fantastic I am copying your stuff. Straight through the meeting because I thought here is someone who has set it up. You know I don't necessarily have to do too much to make it work I just have to get the people and that's where it did not work so well but at least I don't have to start from scratch. There is a lot in that so I just thought it was an exciting opportunity to apply something that was working in another group and that group could be another community of practice, that could be your workplace, that could be your neighborhood, that could be any kind of community. Communities, good communities tend to work together well in the same way and things apply so it is interesting to say okay this worked there I wonder if it would work here. I think it is also important to be open to opportunities and see where you can go. For example this is just an idea. Not even on the want list but I would love someone who knew something about animation to work on some plain language animations. When she was at did a lot of films, animated a few of them and I think those would be hugely helpful to do. Katina do you have something you want to say?

No that's exactly the type of thing I was talking about when I said we don't know what the skills are so, there could be some awesome skills that are out there that we could utilize.

Yes and even if we cannot use them right now we might be able to use them later. One of the things I try to keep track of you know people to reach out to and say you know that thing you did can you do it for us? I have found often people are flattered. They think about doing that so has this helped you figure out sort of what we are looking for and sort of what we are expecting? Thank you. Yes okay good. I know that we had some comment earlier on how to work with us. You know I wanted to just sort of ripped off of the point we are expecting you to take this on. If you could your supervisor's approval and get back to us and say yes we would like to do this and Miriam is putting the instructions in the chat box of what we are looking for and what you are willing to take on but also don't make us have to email you. Don't drop off the face of the earth is usually what we say. Don't disappear. If you are eaten by sharks just send us a text. If you are promoted beyond your wildest dreams just send us an email. You know if you win the lottery and moved to France we are so happy for you. We will come visit just send an email. Won lottery going to France that's fine. We just have to know, what we don't want to have to do is try to track you down, find out where you are, find out where the project is. Now things happen and keep on happening. You just have to let us know. I don't think we're going to do somebody volunteer for animating yay thank you I'm doing a little in my chair but don't disappear, good or bad reasons don't disappear so yes. Wonderful. This is so exciting. Glad we're clearing up some of the confusion. Always a good goal of things. Miriam thank you so much for putting in, putting the email. And.

Hey this is Katina again. I want to jump in for a second. One comment I have to make as a carryover from my personal life, I know there are people on here that are like if I sent him for this am I going to be stuck doing X, Y, and Z forever and it's going to suck up all of my time. I know there are different types of volunteers. Some are all in, they have the time to take on big projects that last indefinitely. Other folks have the time to do big projects over a short period and some folks might be like I have one hour every other week and that's it. Or just have a couple hours once a year that I can be a speaker for a panel. We need all of those things so do not feel overwhelmed by the idea that you volunteer and it becomes a lifetime commitment. I joke that the lifers are already the leadership team.

I am holding out for supreme president for life.

Yes so it does not require that level of commitment. So even if you have just a little bit of spare time that you want to dedicate just let us know because there might be a tiny project that need some help or even a tiny tiny project.

Thank you so much. That is really useful because again people have different time commitments and life keeps on happening but you know sometimes it's projects sometimes it is one shot sometimes it is behind the scenes maintenance. I used to be on a list of D.C. web women and there was a big team of what we called list moms which guidelines and taking care of new members and clearing up confusion and we rarely heard from them. You know, they were a strong team, they kept things going 10 years went by and you know we started to hear that some people wanted to stop doing it and we were like 10 years, you do this for 10 years? Absolutely take a break. But you know we don't necessarily have that so don't think about having to do that but there's a lot of possibilities so I wanted to emphasize what Katina said. Do you have your hand up or are you applauding?

I had it up but I forgot to put it down.

Fair enough. Unless anyone can think of anything else I will give you six minutes back in your day before your next meeting. Thank you very much for being interested in joining us on the call, thank you to Jamie and Katina and Gabrielle and Miriam for putting things in the chat. Hoping we will get the chat transcript, you know how I rely on those and for the person whose name I forget already volunteered for animation you have made me so happy. Very very happy. Justin, thank you for the notes. When you get a chance if you can send them to info at plain language we will get everything set up and you know we will see you on the list. Everyone have a great day.

[Event concluded]

1/12/22 PL-COP Volunteer Huddle

Currently there are 4 leads for the Plain Language CoP. We're looking for more help in 2022! Welcome Jamie S. as a Plain Language CoP co-lead.

Communities of practice run on volunteers.

We want interested people. It can benefit the community and help your career. Consider what you're capable of doing.

We have—and get—lots of awesome ideas and lots of requests, but not enough hands. So we're proactively looking for volunteers to create a sustainable way to help Plain Language.gov meet its goals.

NEEDS	WANTS
writer-editors for meetings	mentoring program coordinators
event planners (meetings and summits)	accessibility/section 508
web page content owners	list leads
	website

NEEDS

- Writer-editors for meetings - points, lessons learned, helpful chat responses.
- Event planners (meetings and summits) - logistics, event briefs, planning
- Web page content owners
    - Content managers / writers that can adopt page(s) to keep it live and up to date

Monthly meetings

Someone(s) to write summaries helps pass on valuable information for those who can't come, or those who maybe don't take notes. It's a lot of time and effort to record and make accessible for posting, and recordings were not getting much more traffic compared to downloading

PDFs/slides. ROI wasn't worth the difficulties. Writing up meetings and slides brings something permanent to the group/website that is valuable but less intensive.

Need writers/editors for meetings. Unlimited. Everyone is invited. Can help with samples/trainings. Writing summaries for meetings could be helpful to take back to home agency—which is a useful skill.

Events

Could use some help to plan summits and make proposals. Need help with logistics, contacting, event briefs. Good for going into event planning. For monthly meetings and annual summits.

And maybe, someday, in person for things. Someday….

Webpage Content Owners

Not looking for volunteers to technically update website itself (unless you know GitHub). But we need people to adopt a page/group of pages to update examples and/or information.

Helpful to have a writer/editor team lead. Liaisons from other Communities of Practice. Document what people do. Need to look at content more broadly.

Guidelines (on plainlanguage.gov) really need revising. Helping conceptualize which guidelines need to be updated for the Internet World. Current guidelines are maybe a little old. Web writing and such like. Updating to include more web writing (maybe social media too?)

GitHub experience is useful, but volunteers for web updates don't need to know GitHub. There's other useful things you can do.

WANTS

- Mentoring program coordinators
- Accessibility/section 508
- List leads (listserv moderators)
    - Topic owners/responders
- Website

Mentoring

Volunteers are needed to help form/run the program. Help with mentoring program, especially if you have experience with mentoring programs. Also, ideas without volunteering/mentoring are still welcome.

Lots of people want to be mentees. Fewer want to be mentors. Maybe multiple mentees per mentor.

508 Compliance

Meetings must be accessible. New guidance on 508. Need people to check slide decks and PDFs and check the website to make sure Plain Language is accessible. Not sure on the scope of the issue. Fewer PDFs and documents because there are more pages, but it's going to be a project. Volunteers need to know about 508 requirements.

List Leads

List leads for the Plain Language listserv. Periodically, certain topics come up again and again. It would be useful to have people who can supply "canned" answers about common topics, including resources and webinars. [Health, medical, financial literacy, for example.] We'd also use this information to update web pages.

Recap of Listserv Discussions
Digest of Listserv discussions. Could be weekly/biweekly/monthly depending on schedules and need. Someone to help recap key topics/resources shared in listserv and PLAIN's social media channel.

Social Media
Social media is mostly Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn. Currently is self-sustaining. Volunteers could help expand to Instagram, etc. if people are experienced with them and have ideas for content.

Plain Language Trainers and Training

About 17 trainers. Need to work with trainers in training. Logistics are very difficult because of the pandemic, but helping with trainers-in-training and coordinating events and sessions would be very helpful. (Could be 2 separate people.)

Looking at trying to make Plain's existing class into an online module. Looking to break it down into its sections (jargon, passive voice, etc.). Instructional design experience is a plus for this!

If any of you on the call are already a PLAIN trainer and interested in helping with bootcamps, please let us know at info@plainlanguage.gov

Questions from the Chat

"Some of the wants are stretch goals for me as well.. e.g., I manage content on a WordPress website, but would value learning more about doing so through GitHub. Would it be possible to receive light training on any of these topics if we offer to volunteer? Or should I already be an expert?"

Do not have to be an expert. Only requirement is “don’t make things more difficult.” PLAIN can help with training and experimentation, somewhat, to help with volunteers. Contact at info@plainlanguage.gov.

Need supervisory approval for volunteering and have a clear idea of what you’ll be doing (time commitment and won’t interfere with duties/how it will help your job/agency).

You may be able to incorporate your volunteer work into your IDP. If you need help related to this, ask.

Don’t know everyone who is part of the list/on the call. If you feel like you have an expertise of some plain language aspect, maybe you can be a presenter and amplify your expertise.

What are your secret skills that PLAIN can leverage?

(For example: Would love someone who knew something about animation/film because that’d be great for PLAIN.)

Events-wise, ideas beyond plain language can always be brought up because DigitalGov is interested. To make all programs better.

Members of UX mentor program: share experiences?

Need to think of ideas so far as it can connect to PLAIN Language group—borrow from the things you like in other communities of practice, workplace, trainings, any community you are part of. **This worked there. I wonder if it would work here.**

Lots of cool suggestions but nowhere near enough capacity. “You suggest it, you own it” is kinda how Plain has to operate.

More formal position descriptions will come once there’s been some trial and error.

If You Are Eaten By Sharks, Just Send Us A Text

If you volunteer, get supervisory approval first.

Communicate about things that come up, schedule changes, reduced time to volunteer, similar issues. Do not make things more difficult.

We respect different types of volunteers: big projects with indefinite spans, fast and furious, one hour every other week, a few hours a couple times a year.

However you can volunteer is the perfect way to volunteer.

To volunteer, email info@plainlanguage.gov with the following: Name and gov email, skill set and project, amount of time you can commit, and specific project/hours per week/etc

Volunteers: Basic Requirements (notes from Miriam / Jamie)

- Be a self-starter
- (For some things) have a smartphone
- Stay in touch with the leadership team
- For everything else, we can give basic training. Nothing is rocket science
- Have supervisor approval
- Someone to help recap key topics/resources shared in listserv and PLAIN's social media channels
- email info@plainlanguage.gov with the following -
    - Name
    - skill set
    - amount of time you can commit
    - specific project/hours per week/etc
    - statement that you have supervisory approval

1. Writer-Editor (Unlimited people + lead writer/team lead)

-Also see website content leads, below
-Write up list discussion (see web content leads, below)
-writeups/summarizing PL Meetings
-We don't post full recordings anymore

- Helps convey key points and tips
- Helps attendees and others
- Must
    - Attend the webinar/meeting
    - Take notes beforehand
    - See slides before?? If they volunteer in time
- May be able to access the recording for writeup

Event Planners (Meetings and Summits)

- unlimited

- Meetings
- Summits

Both:

- Find/suggest speakers and topics
- Liaisons from other CoPs and other conferences
- Follow up with them to see if they will speak to us
    - Create documentation to explain what DG needs and what PL can/can't offer

- Fill out the event brief
    - Fill out form in Word or
    - use GACA

Webpage content owners

- Adopt a web page or section
- Guidelines - finish revising
- Check webpage(s) periodically

Do not have to know how to update website

-

WANTS

List leads/Community prompters/managers

2-3

- Post jobs
- Post events
- Monthly messages
- Topic owners - Monitor list for questions about content that need a webpage link
    - Science comms, health/medical lit, tech, finance …
- Look at list discussion to see if we can add anything from it to the website

Webpage updaters

- Github knowledge
- Fed
- Access to pl.gov

Accessibility/Section 508 (Hoping for 3-5 people who can help with this effort)

- Send info about acc to upcoming speakers (or part of meeting?)
    - Use the github page - https://github.com/GSA/digitalgov.gov/wiki/Accessible-Event-Tips
    - Check and fix speakers' (meetings and summits) decks
    - Go back and fix existing content on pl.gov ? - baseline

Mentoring program

- **Team members** – We need program structure and processes. We're also looking for people who will help with program ideas, co-lead virtual meetings, and improve the program. You don't have to do both; you can volunteer to set it up without volunteering for the running/maintenance part.

Today is way more informal, thank you everyone for joining. More of a huddle style talking about the plain language community needs especially for volunteers from federal folks and in the confirmation email that was sent there was a rough outline agenda if folks want to take that and follow along. We want be doing, there will not be any formal thing today other than of course live captioning is in the chat for folks who need it or want to have a transcript copy but other than that freeform informal take it away Catherine.

Thank you so much, thank you everyone who joined, we finally have some sunshine which is encouraging for me.'s as said this is informal. We will not be distributing or publishing the conversation. We're just talking to people interested in volunteering about how our needs and your desires can intersect, so this sounds like a great start and I will start by asking for a volunteer to take notes here you can just respond in the chat, I am also assuming you got the invite which has the notes and agenda in it. The thing from I think Eventbrite. Yes. From Zoom the confirmation calls has all of that and to have a taker for the official notetaking for today? It helps us stay on track and if I get involved in talking and forget to write something down I don't forget someone's valuable contribution. Okay. I guess thank you so much really appreciate it. And you don't need to worry about excessive formality and extraordinarily writing up notes it's just to make sure we all remember the conversation. Katina has kindly included in the chat the information about our needs and wants and let's take a look at that to look at some other things. I think that I wanted to start by saying any community of practice runs on volunteers because we have to, there's no way around it. What we were hoping to do is get people who were interested and were looking for something they could do to benefit the community and this is

something I have been thinking of a lot. Something people could do also help their own career. There is nothing wrong with wanting to do both things. It is perfectly okay to have that. You know, there are certainly some things involved in that. One of the things we will need you to do is consider what you are interested in doing, what you are capable of doing and perhaps this is the time to talk about a couple things you will need to do, in a way we prefer you do not all volunteer during this period. You can but one of the things we know you will have to do is you're going to have to check with your boss. That's one of the reasons we had that in the message. You do have to check with your boss and have a clear idea what it is you are doing and with the time commitment is and how it won't interfere with your job in the slightest and in fact will produce benefits such as you bring plain language back to your group and you are bringing skills and testing your skills. I have to say it has taken me a ridiculous amount of time to figure out how to incorporate plain into my IDP because it was usually something I would shoehorn in between my other work and I was like I can manage all of this and I thought I am managing putting together a summit having meetings, writing stuff. I am communicating. I should put something in writing so this is working. So I am happy to draft some language for you to use with your boss and maybe you can think of some of that yourself and we can talk to one another about is this language good and convincing is this what your boss is looking for? Your boss might have ideas so I wanted to make sure we all sort of had that in the front of our mind that it is going to look at that. And I see that Katina would like to say something so I would like to turn the meeting over to her for a moment.

Hi. I put on my video but it's okay so hi I am Katina Stapleton the cochair and I want to echo the sentiment that we are really looking for volunteers and I appreciate so much you guys joining us to learn a little bit more about what the needs are. Many of you may not know how small of a group to leadership team for plain is. There are four of us that work on the core things. Myself, Kathryn, we have a lead for training and a lead for the website and then we have a social media team. So all the requests that come in are funneled through a really small group of people. So we get a lot of awesome ideas and things we want to do. We get a lot of requests

and then we have meetings where we say that would be awesome if only we had the volunteers to help with it so we really trying over the next year to take a different approach to volunteers and to be more proactive, to put out to the universe that we really need folks to help with certain things and set up a structure for it. Something that is sustainable over time. So again thank you guys for coming. What you see in front of you is some preliminary ideas and rethink we will change some other things over time. So I will turn it back to you.

Thank you and thank you so much for remembering to include the things I forgot because I would've gone straight on into the list. Speaking of cochairs Jamie Stark of training has a new title instead of training lead she is no cochair focusing on training. So it is true we have a lot of really hard-working folks who put a lot of effort into plane and we thought we should formalize recognized by title what she was doing so we are very happy to welcome Jamie Stark to the team, thank you so much for all your efforts in the past and the future because we do get training requests all the time. And wanted to start here with the needs and wants to so you can have an idea of what we are looking for. Our current situation you know with trying to keep our meetings, having a summary for meetings that we have which with digital golf the main monthly meetings that generally feature a speaker or two on a topic, having someone write those up really helps us bring back to the meeting to people who couldn't come some valuable information about the meeting and is sort of solidifies it. Sometimes we are in the moment, in the meeting itself thinking and interacting and unless we take stellar notes it goes proof and if you're wondering why we don't just record, the reason is it is a lot of time and effort to record and to make it accessible so that it can be posted and we were doing that for a while. Digital golf was doing that and finally laid out a couple months ago that we were not getting anywhere near the traffic, you know people were not going to the recordings. They were more likely to download PDF or slides but they were not listening to the recording so to use a marketing term our return on investment was not showing. We wanted to use time and effort for something else so one of the things that helps us is to move toward writing up meetings including slides making

sure slides are accessible and trying to bring back something permanent back to the group, back to the website and our legacy to say this is what we had, this is what we learned, here is this information we are sharing and we are making it easy for people. That is one thing we would want. Writers and editors for meetings and I feel we could take an unlimited quantity of number of people who want to write and we will give you feedback and we will give you some samples of what we're looking for to show you where it's going to go but imagine what you could take to your boss and say I'm going to be writing summaries for meetings. Now I hope that doesn't put you in a eventual notetaker at meetings for life but that is a useful skill to be able to not write down everything that happens but these were the important points. This is what the lessons learned, this is what we wanted to keep versus some of the chatter which was interesting but not quite what we wanted. Another element of that is help with the events themselves, we work with digital golf specifically Gabrielle who is a huge help keeping things running and all the things for meetings and our annual summits. But I think we could use help. I would like to figure out the next summit and would like to have people propose to speak rather than just emailing and saying I heard you at this other conference or online would you like to talk for 30 or 40 minutes at the summit? We could just use some help with the logistics, with contacting, with filling out the event briefs. If you would like to get a toehold into event planning, some people get really excited by that. Some people may want to test it out before they do more in their own job so that is another thing we are looking for, not only for the monthly meetings but the annual summit and if we ever get back to in person you know we can look at getting together in person like there is the word museum in D.C. that I feel has our name all over it. If you're interested in event planning that something we could use some help with. Webpage content owners. I want to make sure this is not, I wanted to be very clear about this. We are not necessarily asking you to volunteer to help us update the website. If you use get up and you're comfortable with it we could use your help but what we actually want is for some writer and editor's and web people in the sense of people who are used to writing for the web to say adopt a page or group of patients and help us update it. Help us get more before and after examples. Help us make sure things are

clear. It is sort of I guess what I am thinking of as a content owner. I feel I have been talking for hours so, if anyone has a question on the wants can you put it in the chat box and Trenton or I or Jamie can help answer. In fact, while you are thinking about this Gabrielle if you want to scroll slowly people can see the sort of expanded version. So, writer/editor and it would be helpful to have a team lead but that is perhaps more of a want at this point. The event planner meetings and summits, find and suggest speakers and topics. Liaisons from other communities of practice that's a big help. Create or I guess document what people will do. As Katina said, we are getting some help from interns on updating some content but we need to look at it more broadly and see what we can do. Sure, go ahead.

I will just break in. We got one thing under webpage content owners. We sort of buried it unintentionally. That's the guidelines. We actually do really need some assistance on updating the guidelines but it is more than just thinking of it as a website update it's more about helping to conceptualize which of the guidelines need to be updated for the new Internet world because they have been around quite some time without tweaking so if there is anyone, the plain language guidelines so if there's anyone that has an interest in doing that and working with us on that that would be awesome.

That would be web writing and such like? You know updating to include more web writing and the website? Judy that was your question, the guidelines, the plain language guidelines on plain language.gov sort of the fundamental things that people are supposed to be following. Now as I said, this is not a going to get up and making updates although if you know get hub and you are willing to volunteer in your boss says okay, let me know and I can start using you in. I have done a little get hub but I am not 100% confident in my abilities on that. So, so far that is so far, that is our wants. That's what we consider the highest priorities. I am assuming everyone is still thinking of their questions or mulling over how they can convince their boss to do any of these exciting thrilling volunteer opportunities. Another thing, Gabrielle can you get us back to the needs? Thanks. I'm sorry, the wants I meant the wants but you got us there exactly.

Some of you may remember some time ago, I can't remember. I can't remember who asked us about men touring. But we thought yeah, we might have some informal things in place but we're interested in doing something more. But I announced it on the list and a lot of people wanted to be meant toward but they were not necessarily, I did not get a flood of people wanting to mentor, people wanted to receive it rather than do it. So I would like to have some people volunteer to work together on how can we arrange it? Maybe not one to one relationship maybe there are mentoring sessions where there is one mentor and three or four or five mentees and they meet every month or so for three months and discuss issues, I don't know. I don't know what would work but it would be what specifically are the mentees looking for and how can we arrange that. So if anyone has done a mentoring program and would like to work on it for plane, love to hear from you. If you have ideas but cannot necessarily commit to doing them I would also like to have your ideas. That is interesting. Another thing that we have is accessibility and Section 508. This is kind of a stretch goal because we have, we have always had the requirement that things for meetings have to be accessible to the attendees and we have new guidance on how to do that. But we also need someone to check slides and PDFs and I don't know if I'm just crazy about it would also may be be a good idea to go back and check things on our website so they are accessible. That is why it is a want. I would really like that, I don't know how possible that's going to be. Right now I don't even know the universe of what it is. I know we have fewer documents and PDFs because we try to move them more into pages rather than to have something living on the site. But I mean that is another project obviously you would need to know accessibility and Section 508 requirements. This is a problem. I cannot read my own handwriting. Terrible. Can you take us back up to the wants at the top? Thank you that's all I need. List to lead. List leads. What I mean by that is for the plain language list serve, periodically certain topics come up. People will say how come it will be health literacy or how to explain science or how to deal with jargon or things like that and while I have memorized plain language you know that's not necessarily a requirement. It would be useful to have people say oh, if someone asks about web writing I am happy to supply more or less answers here is how to do it. Here's the page on plain

language here are some of the resources. Here are some recent webinars. If there's a question about financial literacy, really useful to say here is something. If there is a question about medical literacy or health literacy, I need someone else to know about the clear language index or what it is called and the CDC thing and you know Cynthia at the University of Maryland project. I think those things are on the website but I think other people need to be answering those questions. So if you have an interest or your job involves one of these focal points, it would be great if you would take on responding when the questions come up in the list. So you might want to think about what you know, what you feel capable of talking about and things like that. Similarly, this is the get hub I was talking about and that's what you used to support Federalist. There is an interesting question in the chat about the stretch goals and how to do things through GitHub. Light training, yes you do not have to be an expert I think the only requirement that we have is to not make things more difficult. I don't know if that's too ridiculous but I mean yeah, there is room for learning, there is room for experimenting. We would probably limit you to a couple things and with GitHub you have to make it a pull request. So reach out independently, there may be a follow-up email. Don't rely on that, if you want to volunteer, please contact us at info plain language that would be great. I mean, that goes to all of us. So I don't have to remember to forward. That's the only reason I say use that one. So, that is sort of our needs and wants. We have had some people who had to drop off for meetings. Do any of you here have further questions? Okay excellent. Katina did you want to talk a little bit about the point about being a self-starter?

Sure, I think it goes to the point that I made earlier we are a relatively small leadership team. And so as we bring on volunteers we don't want to get, find ourselves in the situation where it is creating work managing volunteers as opposed to getting the work done that needs to happen. So it is really helpful if people are self-starters, if they come once we get over the initial training around things don't need much handholding and that we get to a point where we feel like you can do the work essentially on your own. A really good example of that is the social media team. We have an awesome social media team and while one member of the leadership team

is part of the social media team they pretty much self sustain and that makes it much easier for us. So I think that is one of the points and the other is we get so many really cool suggestions that come in and at this point we don't have enough capacity to do all the really good ideas that come through. So, it is kind of like sort of a you suggest it, you own it situation.

Nobody will suggest everything ever again.

I know I probably should not have said that out loud but that is sort of where we are in terms of time. Another thing we talked about as a leadership team is once we get a better idea of the things that people are willing and able to do we will write up more formal position descriptions so that it can be clear what it is that is required for different things. So if there is something that you really want to do that we didn't discuss feel free to suggest it to us. Because at this point we are only limited by the ideas that we have had so if you have other awesome ideas please do share with us.

Those are excellent points and Miriam has been putting things in the chat about the things we are looking for in their echoing what Katina has been saying. As we said before, have supervisor approval on your volunteer activities because I cannot believe I am actually saying this but I did have people not check with their supervisor and they were doing plain language training and they were unavailable for three hours at a time and we had to stop them and say look, we are thrilled that you want to do this but we cannot go talk to your boss about letting you do this. That is not a relationship that we have. This is volunteer, you have to work it out with your boss yourself. That was just really awkward. But you know don't do that to us. Our powers are not unlimited. We cannot make your boss do things. Jamie do you have some ideas for volunteers or volunteer work in general? I know you work with trainers and social media so I am sure you have some ideas to share. If you would like to think about those a little bit more maybe you can post in the chat. Got it, understood. She will post in the chat. Do you have any questions to the audience, were you wondering you know what sorts of things we were going to be asking for? Is this

volunteer huddle what you thought it was going to be? Thank you Jamie. Yeah, if anyone would like to volunteer for plain social media team that is excellent. I think they do wonderful work. Looking to maybe branch into some other channels depending on your experience. I am not active enough myself on Instagram but if you have some ideas for that but thank you for the feedback this is what you were expecting to hear. Another thing and maybe this should've been part of the listserv. I will rely on you Gabrielle for getting the transcript because something we use to do is we would have a weekly recap of discussions that would go on the list and it does have to be one week it can be every two weeks depending but there would be no so this week on the list we discussed mentoring and we talked about health literacy. Things like that, nothing too in-depth back with the writing editing things but I always thought that was a huge help. I know you can set up your email for digest but sometimes you miss some of the back-and-forth so this is sort of recapping, a summary and we can get samples if you would like and again Jamie is on the social media team for that. If you wanted to know where else we are. I think it is mostly Facebook and twitter and LinkedIn. Jamie also has some ideas about, for training. We have two directions of needs. I am making this number up but about 15, 16, 17 trainers and we need to do, we need some help with working with the trainers and training. Is other people hoping to go through the process. A big part of the process is observing other people, other trainers and that sort of logistics and it is difficult right now. We are not meeting in person so sometimes it's difficult to pull in people from other agencies into classes so they can get credit for observing. So we need someone to work with the trainers in training and also someone to coordinate events like the train the trainer boot camp sessions where we say so you want to be a trainer? You have to come learn how to do it and then we run those sessions and would be useful, very very helpful to have someone help with this particularly doing it online and getting people through the process. So that could be two separate people. I am checking my messages. Yes, we will be sharing this afterward. Yeah. See how useful it is to have written notes after a meeting? Otherwise it's me trying to decipher my handwriting. I seem to have gotten a little stuck in my chat. Looking forward to volunteering, excellent. We will be sharing the Google document with the notes so it is more complete.

Jamie has put her email in the chat if you are already a plain trainer interested in helping with Boot Camp so that's really fantastic. Another one, since I don't necessarily know your backgrounds or what you do I am sort of going beyond the list as usual. One of the things we were looking at is trying to make plain existing class into an online module. So that people would not have to listen to a three-hour webinar to get information. We were hoping to break it down so we could have a section on jargon and a section on you know passive voice and really get those down to little pieces so if people said I need some help with this, we could say here is the written resources and use of information from a class. So if anyone has instructional design elements, that would be really useful. Katina can you think of anything else?

Sorry I keep talking while muted. Those are the big categories of things. I would just also put out there this thought was triggered by what you just said. We don't know everyone that is part of the list or really everyone on the call and we don't know your areas of expertise. So it could be that you are our next great person to feature in the Summit or someone who would be awesome from one of the monthly meetings to do a presentation. If you feel like you have an expertise in the area of plain language, like Catherine said you work in instructional design or you expertise in customer service or how to write surveys or things like that that are different takes on the plain language lends. Please let us know so that we can use your expertise to help the group but also be able to amplify your expertise. So we are here to support each other so the more we build up each other's expertise and careers that will help so we are really happy to showcase people whose work might overlap what we do with plain language. So that could be in the form of guest blogs or things like that as well.

Think of this as an opportunity. An opportunity to learn, an opportunity to showcase. Put yourself out there. There is some positions that are more behind the scenes and if you're more comfortable with that, excellent, fantastic. We don't need people who don't want to do certain things. We only ask what you take on you keep doing but maybe you are that person. Maybe you are the person to talk about oh, I don't know, making contracts

more plain. Doing surveys. Maybe you are a good aggregator from other communities of practice that's also useful. I get a lot of speaker ideas from social media and other conferences. Gabrielle can you think of anything we have overlooked? I know you have been doing a lot of on-the-fly tidying up and I appreciate that so much.

No problem. Thanks to Justin, once I get his notes we can try to incorporate his notes with some of the notetaking. I was just going to mention about the events wise as far as volunteers are concerned even if it is coming to if not myself, if it is going to Jamie, Katina, Catherine, Merriam with an idea that's not just relevant to plain language but really anything like more the community at large that is kind of a twofold accessibility and plain language like all of these topics don't feel afraid or even if it is just an idea, we would love to hear them if you ever want to email us or send me a note directly or have Catherine or Katina link us up together and the same goes for all these things. You volunteer to make plain language better will make all communities better. That is really all from me and if anyone ever the mentor mentee program if anyone has any experience with the user experience mentorship program that they went through and are also a member of the group that would be super helpful to get folks to share their experiences.

You know I wanted to add that you don't necessarily have to come up with all the ideas yourself. You simply have to think about them something applying to the plain language group like the whole mentoring thing I have been sort of turning it over in my mind and sort of yeah that would be nice and then Jean Fox the leader of the UX community of practice went gangbusters and I emailed her and said this is fantastic I am copying your stuff. Straight through the meeting because I thought here is someone who has set it up. You know I don't necessarily have to do too much to make it work I just have to get the people and that's where it did not work so well but at least I don't have to start from scratch. There is a lot in that so I just thought it was an exciting opportunity to apply something that was working in another group and that group could be another community of practice, that could be your workplace, that could be your neighborhood, that could

be any kind of community. Communities, good communities tend to work together well in the same way and things apply so it is interesting to say okay this worked there I wonder if it would work here. I think it is also important to be open to opportunities and see where you can go. For example this is just an idea. Not even on the want list but I would love someone who knew something about animation to work on some plain language animations. When she was at did a lot of films, animated a few of them and I think those would be hugely helpful to do. Katina do you have something you want to say?

No that's exactly the type of thing I was talking about when I said we don't know what the skills are so, there could be some awesome skills that are out there that we could utilize.

Yes and even if we cannot use them right now we might be able to use them later. One of the things I try to keep track of you know people to reach out to and say you know that thing you did can you do it for us? I have found often people are flattered. They think about doing that so has this helped you figure out sort of what we are looking for and sort of what we are expecting? Thank you. Yes okay good. I know that we had some comment earlier on how to work with us. You know I wanted to just sort of ripped off of the point we are expecting you to take this on. If you could your supervisor's approval and get back to us and say yes we would like to do this and Miriam is putting the instructions in the chat box of what we are looking for and what you are willing to take on but also don't make us have to email you. Don't drop off the face of the earth is usually what we say. Don't disappear. If you are eaten by sharks just send us a text. If you are promoted beyond your wildest dreams just send us an email. You know if you win the lottery and moved to France we are so happy for you. We will come visit just send an email. Won lottery going to France that's fine. We just have to know, what we don't want to have to do is try to track you down, find out where you are, find out where the project is. Now things happen and keep on happening. You just have to let us know. I don't think we're going to do somebody volunteer for animating yay thank you I'm doing a little in my chair but don't disappear, good or bad reasons don't

disappear so yes. Wonderful. This is so exciting. Glad we're clearing up some of the confusion. Always a good goal of things. Miriam thank you so much for putting in, putting the email. And.

Hey this is Katina again. I want to jump in for a second. One comment I have to make as a carryover from my personal life, I know there are people on here that are like if I sent him for this am I going to be stuck doing X, Y, and Z forever and it's going to suck up all of my time. I know there are different types of volunteers. Some are all in, they have the time to take on big projects that last indefinitely. Other folks have the time to do big projects over a short period and some folks might be like I have one hour every other week and that's it. Or just have a couple hours once a year that I can be a speaker for a panel. We need all of those things so do not feel overwhelmed by the idea that you volunteer and it becomes a lifetime commitment. I joke that the lifers are already the leadership team.

I am holding out for supreme president for life.

Yes so it does not require that level of commitment. So even if you have just a little bit of spare time that you want to dedicate just let us know because there might be a tiny project that need some help or even a tiny tiny project.

Thank you so much. That is really useful because again people have different time commitments and life keeps on happening but you know sometimes it's projects sometimes it is one shot sometimes it is behind the scenes maintenance. I used to be on a list of D.C. web women and there was a big team of what we called list moms which guidelines and taking care of new members and clearing up confusion and we rarely heard from them. You know, they were a strong team, they kept things going 10 years went by and you know we started to hear that some people wanted to stop doing it and we were like 10 years, you do this for 10 years? Absolutely take a break. But you know we don't necessarily have that so don't think about having to do that but there's a lot of possibilities so I wanted to emphasize what Katina said. Do you have your hand up or are you

applauding?

I had it up but I forgot to put it down.

Fair enough. Unless anyone can think of anything else I will give you six minutes back in your day before your next meeting. Thank you very much for being interested in joining us on the call, thank you to Jamie and Katina and Gabrielle and Miriam for putting things in the chat. Hoping we will get the chat transcript, you know how I rely on those and for the person whose name I forget already volunteered for animation you have made me so happy. Very very happy. Justin, thank you for the notes. When you get a chance if you can send them to info at plain language we will get everything set up and you know we will see you on the list. Everyone have a great day.

[Event concluded]

Subject:	MEETING: Managing Stakeholders Weds, Feb 9, 2-3 pm (ET)
From:	Katherine Spivey - ZC <katherine.spivey@GSA.GOV>
Reply To:	Plain Language COP Main <PL-COP-MAIN@LISTSERV.GSA.GOV>, Katherine Spivey - ZC <katherine.spivey@GSA.GOV>
Date:	Wed, 2 Feb 2022 10:01:05 -0500
Content-Type:	multipart/alternative
Parts/Attachments:	text/plain (1563 bytes) , text/html (8 kB)

It's another huddle!

Join us on Wednesday, February 9, 2022, from 2-3 pm (ET) as we discuss managing the stakeholder relationship and getting agreement on plain language edits. Bring your tips to share and learn from others.

You don't need to register beforehand.

Here's the meeting info:
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(b) (6)

Katherine Spivey
Co-Chair, Plain Language Action and Information Network (PLAIN)
plainlanguage.gov

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Plain Language

Please stand by for realtime captions.
Good afternoon. Welcome to the plain language huddle. We will get started in just a couple of minutes. I just want to give you a chance to hop on. Folks returning from lunch and other meetings. I will give it another minute and then we will get started. Thank you.
This is Catherine Spidey and I am making some vague introductory remarks while we get settled. This is the stakeholder, managing stakeholder relationships. I did post a read me article before and the PLAIN monthly message. I also wanted to let you know that today's official drink, according to co-chair Stapleton is the raspberry lemonade Mountain Dew. If you are having your special drink, let's keep it with no hard liquor, don't tell me these things, you can drop that in the chat and let me know what your official drink is. Thank you for dropping that in the chat. Bethany, you are out of coffee, that is terrible. How did that happen? Yes, of course. I experimented with three kinds of tea today. I've got, I had the plain Indian tea. I had -- sparkling ice, pink grapefruit. And now I am in the lemon ginger drink. Representing tea drinker. Second coffee. Thank you for the order of the rings reference. Escort. I'm not sure what that is. Interesting. I am glad that we are sending you to the giant drink. I did not realize that all of these were possible. Similar to Fresca. I recall fresco. Just because it is over 40 degrees it does not mean it is summertime. Green tea. Grape rush energy. I am wondering about your expectations for this meeting. We were just anticipating a relatively calm discussion. I did not realize everyone would be entering drinks. I am pleased that everyone is staying hydrated. That is excellent news.
It looks like, this is Gabby from digital.gov. It looks like we have about 81 people. If you would like me to give my brief, digital.gov intro and then we will get started. Welcome everyone to the plain language huddle. I am Gabby from digital.gov. This is less formal, feel free to put your questions in the chat. Captioning for today's huddle is available. I will drop the link again in the chat for folks who don't have it. I will turn it over to the code leads for the plain language community of practice.
Thank you. I appreciate that. Managing stakeholders. I was hoping that we could approach this from a optimistic standpoint. And then I thought to myself, with some of the content problems I have had -- what was the question? You just joined. We are talking about managing stakeholder expectations and managing stakeholders themselves. And I was thinking, if it were not for people, we could produce a wonderful, wonderful content. But there's always people. One way or another. Whether they are producing producing it or approving it, whether they posted. It always tends to be a problem. Katina, did you want to chime in as we get started?
I was just about to drop something in the chat or money people that today's session is a huddle. There is no formal presentation. But what we would like to do is have everybody sharing their best practices and challenges. And hopefully as a community, we can work through these things. Back to you.
Katina, you were going to insist upon being the optimist on the team and I am sticking firmly with the pessimism. If it were not for people, we could produce wonderful content. I am saying that of a person with long experience in communications. The number of times I have had to arm wrestle anyone over passive voice or active voice, or style guide or anything, thankfully very few. But there is a lot of personality and communication. What are some of your current challenges? What are some things you are facing right now? Jargon. Do you have someone who wants to use jargon and you want them not to? Somebody wants more jargon. Lawyers. Lawyers are our friends.
Katherine, let's see if we can link that to a question. What is it about the stakeholder expectation? What are you trying to manage? Getting them to use less jargon?
Better jargon? Your agencies jargon, not just stuff they make up. We have a specific. We have talent instead of people. I will be snarky and I am sure this is only the first of many, have you asked them for the talent show, Karen? Just wondering.
Katherine, do you mind if I provide an example and then we can work through this one. If other people put some examples, we can figure out how to solve these particular problems. When I first saw the topic for this time on managing stakeholder expectations I tried to figure out, what was my major plain language topic where I had to do this. For those of you who do not know me I am a program officer in the Department of Education. I am in a grantmaking office. Our major document every year are these things called, request for applications. A few years back, we were trying to do a plain language rewrite and we were having all sorts of back-and-forth around how do we make it better. I said finally, why do we actually figure out who all the stakeholders are. So we made up a table that showed everyone was impacted by the document. So that people who provided input and people who have had to receive it. And we wrote what each group needed

from the document. And what their pain points were. And then we were able to one by one go through and see whether or not the documents actually addressed those particular issues. That was one approach, to try to manage what was going on. That is one example. One that we solved, does anyone have a particular example of something they struggle with that they may want feedback from the group on?

I was wondering, did that chart succeed? Did people back down on their desire to use jargon once they saw the multiple audiences?

Yes and no. We still ended up with a fair amount of jargon. But what we were able to do is make sure it was defined. So we was clear that all the groups that had to use the document, would have the same understanding of what the terms meant. Our documents are super long, much too long. But they are clear because they are thorough. Because we really did go through and figure out what people really needed. Our documents have to please what I refer to as the, boss people. The people providing the money for the grants as well as the applicants. The field in air quotes and Congress, who ultimately at some point will look at what we are funding. And ask how we put these things together.

It is too much to hope they just keep giving you money without looking at the results. That would definitely be the best case scenario. At least auditors can be on our side. I wanted to mention --

The lawyers were also stakeholders in the documents.

Right. I was also thinking that sometimes they like to call themselves the advisors. But we know they are being lawyers. I wanted to mention, you mentioned Katina in your excellent case study that it made the document longer. And that has come up recently, often enough for me to be moderately concerned. While we aim to make long, meaningless sections shorter and more meaningful, just making it shorter does not necessarily make it plain and does not necessarily meet people's needs. Katina when you said we made it longer because of the explanations, but it was clearer, clearer is the goal. Shorter is sometimes a good byproduct and sometimes it is bad. If you decide to delete stuff that people might need, that is bad and not plain language. Clearer is definitely the goal. Sometimes explaining the weird stuff, whether that is jargon or the interpretation, does make something longer. Katina, the answer is, fine with me .

Awesome. We cannot have everyone speaking at once but we are going to call on folks, with specific examples. First, we might go to Karen. It looks like she has something she is trying to work through. Them into Paul Schwartz who has some advice for us all.

Gabby, can you unmute Karen?

And also Paul Schwartz.

Absolutely. I am trying to find her. I found it under Caryn. I just sent you a request you unmute, Caryn and let me know if that works .

In case you are not looking at it, I will read the question. I work to help a very technical group of scientists edit their work for the public. We are so sorry for you, Caryn.

My apologies.

It happens every day.

Did you want to talk about your situation?

I constantly feel like a critical and mean monster because I am bleeding all over what they're doing. I'm trying to figure out if it is better, if the technical folks start the draft and I edit or if I start and they have to make it more technical to correct. I cannot remember what I wrote down. It is emotionally challenging for me to be critical all the time when I am editing this stuff. They are very gracious about it. We constantly end up with something that is way more technical, just because it is so hard to translate technical information for the public. That is my topic.

I was just wondering if you are facing this sort of situation yourself, put it in the chat. This is not helpful I know, but I was thinking, embrace your inner monster. They need it. I have told the story before. When I was working in homeland security public affairs office, I worked on the website and we were dealing with scientists and technologists. And their stuff scored the high 20s on readability. We kept going back and going back and making them rewrite and we finally got it down to 13 or 15, which was about half as complicated as it needed to be. It was worth doing because we could not guarantee the audience. If you are writing for the public, you are standing up for the audience that is not in front of you. It is the people who may need to know and they may not know they need to know. I would say, embrace your inner monster. At least you are just being paid to be a monster. Does anyone have any more encouraging words, perhaps for Caryn ? I have not worried about being a monster for years. It is a little difficult to go back and think about that.

I have a question, who is the audience for the technical piece? Depending on who the audiences -- it is the general public. Do you mind telling us what kind of general area you are in?

I you I work on Superfund cleanups. We are explaining why toxins may be left in the sediments after the cleanup or how much. We explain health risks. It is so complicated. There was multiple levels of technical details. And the other challenge I am facing, we are writing a fact sheet by company so we have four different agencies representing. We got four different technical experts, a couple different PIO's and we are all sort of editing together. I have to give sometimes. I hope that people will ask questions. The one thing I have been encouraging technical experts to do is, even if we cannot pay someone to do this for us, print out this sheet and handed to their neighbor to read it. So they can get it in their heads, what they think is clear. And to Emily's comment on the chat, I am constantly saying, you are the technical folks and I don't know anything. I know about language. You have to talk to me like I don't know anything. And that really helps them verbalize it. But when we try to put it in writing it is a much harder.

Caryn, I think that works to your benefit in this case. The audience is you. If you read it and you don't understand, there is no chance.

I don't understand this. That is where the criticism comes in. I want to be gentle with their feelings, but also let them know, who do you think is reading this.

This reminds me a little bit of some of the conversations we had at the last summit. What do you do -- some of our work is more critical than others. There is some work, it is a little more technical than it should be but who cares, if they really want the money they will figure it out. It is important but not life or death. But, with Superfund cleanup, you are in a life or death space. I started off when Katherine said embrace your inner monster and now that you work on Superfund I have changed my mind . I think part of your argument might be, this really matters and it is not acceptable for us to put out information that people cannot understand. And actually getting them to pony up some funds, possibly to test out some of these documents. Might be helpful. Gabby, can you let Emily break in . She has her hand up with a comment.

Absolutely. And Paul is on deck.

I want to say thank you so much.

Emily, your comment is on this.

Yes. As I said in the chat I work with medical professionals and I have a library degree and I don't know medical stuff. One of the things I found that is helped is how would you explain this in a room to a patient. I work with pediatric doctors. That is something that clicks for them. Writing it out makes complete sense. When they write into real lateral something something. How would you explain is if you are looking at a child in the room and that sort of clicks for them. Why did nine think of this? That's why you pay me to do this job.

Not enough.

You are looking at this material. And you have that inferiority complex. But I have come to be like, I am an expert and I have the credentials that allow me to look at your document. If you're going to question my credentials, just look at the volumes of paperwork that I have done had worked on and have helped other departments. I just wanted to say, you are doing a good job and we are all doing a good job. My recommendation is flip it around and be like, if you talking to someone at a cocktail party, how do you explain your work so they understand. That has helped my audience we like, why didn't I think of that myself? That is how I do it.

It is always a good idea to try and bring the audience into the room. I know that writing is often very isolating. Even if you are working with the committee. It is still your brain to your fingers to the keyboard to the document. But it really helps to try and get that straight. Who are you writing for? Who is being affected? What difference are you trying to make? Caryn, you are dealing with life and death stuff. On the question I would ask is, what do people need to know? Sometimes for the reports I understand the scientists have to put information in. Like here is how it develops and here is the half-life and here is the water poisoning potential et cetera. But that particular audience, what do they need to know? What do they need to do? This is a flashback from my homeland security years, one of the things that some research has shown that in times of crisis, our ability to understand complex information plummets. In the early teens, maybe just early 2000, I am not 100% sure. There were wildfires in Australia and people died because the guidance was, you can evacuate now or do it later. And what that guidance needed to be was, get out now. None of this nuance. Clear directions. Paul, you have been on the phone. You were mentioning that I cannot read my screen right now. You were chiming in on something.

When Caryn was talking about working on Superfund sites I was not sure if she was talking actual Superfund sites or the state of the copy she was working with. Can you hear me?

We can hear you. I don't know who is able to answer your question.

Sorry. I was muted. The actual Superfund sites through the Environmental Protection Agency which are hazardous waste sites.

Okay. This is my first time in the group. Thank you for having me. I am with the U.S. patent and trademark office. Brand-new position as a plain language expert. A new project we are working on involves the very issue that came up concerning jargon. One of the things we are doing on this particular project that involves the patent side, actually applies to what the trademark side did when they were doing a major revamping of their website. For an external facing webpage, website. How they handled the jargon issue was, if they left jargon in the text, what they did was they hyperlinked it to a glossary that defined those terms. If you insist on leaving jargon in the text, one way you can manage it is to hyperlinked people to a glossary that will enable the jargon to be defined for the user. In doing that, the text itself does not necessarily have to be longer. I think someone made a reference earlier that in doing so, that the page is longer. And my point to that was, it does not necessarily have to be longer because you can break up the text and have people link to another source to get the additional information. That page does not necessarily go on forever, like it might potentially do, if you did not break it up in that way.

Thank you for that. It might be our intranet at GSA but we have jargon sometimes and what we have decided to do is to explain it in text on the first reference so people know. The way we treat acronyms. Unless you put in some kind of tracker and you don't know whether people are clicking on that particular link and how useful it is. But that is an interesting point. We had some other questions. Christine Garcia. Katina, I think you might have the question in front of you. I'm still trying to find it.

Christine should be able to speak.

Okay.

Can you hear me?

Yes.

Okay. My question really has to do with someone who is an expert in their field. May have just delivered some information to their target audience, if you will. It is over the head of the target audience. And because the person is an expert in the field, I am a little hesitant to even broach the subject. But I have a real interest in that audience. And their need to understand what the expert is saying. How do I prevent the defensive reaction but I am expecting? I think there have been some good suggestions. I'm just looking for anything else people might be able to suggest. At this point, I need all the help I can get.

I know the feeling. I am sorry that I have not had the chance to look at the suggestions that other people have made. I have been talking and responding to questions. I think what I would start with is, a very deliberate outline of the audience and what they need. And to say, I don't think they will be able to follow your article or whatever the expert has produced. Your lecture, your article or whatever. Can we turn this into the top 10 or a summary or a basic overview. Experts, although this is difficult to do once you know a subject very thoroughly, one of the obligations of expertise is to be able to say, this is the very basic part of it. This is what you need to know. This is the base. There is more computations or elaborations on all that. But this is the bedrock. You could also, depending on the personality of the expert you can say things like, they really need the information you have. But, they need it in a particular way. Or, this is an audience that is time crunched or maybe traditionally lower literacy or whatever kind of issue. But we will do it in this format and we need it geared toward this audience. Enemies changing -- and that means you are changing, I am making this up. You cannot give an hour-long lecture and what we have is a seven minute podcast or something like that. Does that make sense? And does anyone else have anything to offer?

I do. I just put resource. It is not a plain language resource but it is really helpful to this specific question. There is a group called, Compass and they work with scientists across all different fields. To tailor their messages. And the way they present it is, how much greater which are impact be if people understood what it was you were trying to say? And what the people do with this particular way of looking at their work, not only get down to with the key actual messages, but also what they were trying to achieve. Because those are two different things. And to make sure the document or if they are talking to speaking points, does it achieve the impact they are trying to meet. We offered this training to a bunch of our grantees who are all researchers. And a lot of them said we don't need this. And came to it grudgingly. At the end we had even the statistical people saying, wouldn't it be great if people understood what it was that I did. They had a lot of practice on refining their messages. I think the why of it all might be the thing to help. Through the discussions. We respect the fact that you are an expert, we just want to rewrite this some more people get the benefit of your expertise, than just other scientists. And that is one approach.

Another approach also might be, I am looking at some comments about major changes in things like that. This will be difficult. But we should always be on the side of the audience, not the writer. We can do that

with varying degrees of gentleness or monstrosity, depending on how you roll. If what they are producing, if it is just not going to work for the audience or it is not in the right format it is overwritten or it is obscure or any of those sins, they need to be called on it. You may still end up doing the work. The reason I did all these changes is because we are reaching a very particular audience, which we told you about because you should not be surprising these people. And we explained to you the requirements for what they needed. And there's always plain writing asked. You can always say, we do have to make this comply with the plain writing act of 2010. That was some ideas. Yes. Gabby said if you have a question to ask and want to come come off mute, use the race the hand button or chat Gabby. It looks like we have some interesting resources. This is exactly what we were hoping would happen. That people would share resources and hints dealing with stakeholders. I had a situation last week, where I was editing a report, an annual report for a program. They said, can you do this. It was 18 pages and I thought, sure. Easy. Should be done by tomorrow. And I looked at it in more detail, that is on me making that mistake. And I thought, I'm going to have to unpack every single sentence. And I did. I did practically have to unpack every single sentence because it was a lot of delayed impact and I was trying to flip that and I was trying to make sure who was doing what, was reflected. And that is a qualitatively different problem from what I usually face. I spoke to the person who asked me to chime in and I said, this is supposed to be a report, annual report, on the project and to gain support for the project. Which is always an implied part of a report. He is making it really hard for people to follow what he is trying to say. He's got excellent information on maybe we could turn this into a podcast where maybe he would feel comfortable speaking and using a script and speaking. But I felt was damaging the program by making it hard to understand what it did and what kind of impact it helped the agency but the U.S. public as well. Does anyone else have a question? I am trying to go back in the chat and see. People have been very industrious and putting in questions and things like that.

We had a question earlier from Judy. What do you do when the person writing is not an expert? How do we get experts to write clearer, but what do we do if the person sounds like they are not quite qualified? Not just doing plain language but correcting errors.

Errors of fact or heirs of language?

Fact.

That would be body of knowledge.

Judy, did I get that right and paraphrasing your question?

Gabby, can you unmute her, please.

Absolutely.

Judy, I am not sure -- there we go. Judy.

We might have lost Judy. Or she might be muted.

Judy, unmute yourself. Okay.

She said that is correct. Does anyone have any advice for Judy? On how you deal with both having to navigate plain language edit and editing the content. How would you even know? Unless it was egregious.

I was thinking about that. We have had a lot of scientific people who work with scientists on the call. I'm not sure, short of someone claiming that gravity did not work I'm not sure I would be at all helpful with science communications. Sometimes, the only thing you can do is query. And say, this does not make sense.

Judy, this is not an answer to your question but maybe thing to make you feel better in solidarity. I am working on a blog series. We are getting pieces from researchers. And they go through multiple rounds of editing, content editing, plain language editing. We had a piece that went all the way through four levels of review. And it got to the person I referred to as the big boss person who challenged the accuracy, easily half of the things. The factual things. In terms of stakeholder navigation, now we have to go back to the original person, and the boss, and try to figure this out. From my point of view, I did not know if it was right or not. It had citations. This happens. We ended up having to go to each citation to see whether or not it really did imply what it was that the person said it did. That took a really long time. But we think that we have someone, we think we have a version that can go forward. We disagree it was as wrong as she thought it was. I made some plain language wordsmithing to clarify things and hopefully we fixed it. But this will happen. Especially if we do not have the personal background to verify each and every point.

At that point, you are making me think that this is part of the stakeholder relationship. The setting of expectations. Honestly, I was thinking, one of the things you don't want to happen as a result of anything that has been published by your agency, you don't want people calling the agency into disrepute because of facts. You may be able to get away with style irregularities and maybe even a typo. But if you are claiming something is true and the evidence is ambiguous or equivocal, there are times when we don't want to be in

the newspapers. We want to be in the newspapers for another great website launched or outstanding job by the Inspector General or what have you. We do not want to be in the paper for blogs did not make sense.
Looking at a comment from Christie that is helpful. There are multiple layers of review. And that was the case. It is crazy it went through all those levels and it was not until it got to the last person, that they objected to all that had come before. Years ago in college I was a fact checker. We actually check every fact. For Congressional quarterly. You had to independently check every fact in everything they put out. That is someone's job. And that was mine. I do understand the role of that. I do not think it is the role of the plain language person. But, as we simplify things, often times we change the meaning. So there will be a relationship between the content experts and the plain language person, to make sure that you have not actually change the meaning of something, as you have rephrased it.
That is an interesting thing. Sometimes, I do my edits as suggestions or retract changes so people can see what I have changed. Sometimes, they want to come back and say, this making a verb out of a noun has changed the meaning and I reserve the right to say how. They say the phrase may, we produce the report and I changed to reported and that changes the meaning and I say, how? I have to go back to the grammar and say, this is what you did. He turned a verb into a noun. I turned back into a verb. Where is the change in meaning? Sometimes wants to talk, sometimes if you wear them down with giving them the grammar behind every conceivable rule, then they sort of cool down about challenging. It may have changed the meaning but the burden of proof is on them. Owning our monster personas. I am picking my favorite monster right now. Also maybe it is worth going back, to the stakeholder expectations and who does what. And maybe have a meeting. I was thinking if you have a known group of experts that you are working with, maybe you have periodic meetings for you say, just as a reminder. This is the process. This is who looks for what. And this is -- these are some of the changes we will be making. For this reason. You can learn more about this or not. Rachel I cannot see your question right now. But I understand you have been unmuted.
I am a new member of the team and I am trying to start to incorporate plain language and some of the advice she said generate on behalf of of my agency. I do records consulting so I am helping state and local agencies across the board with their records management. I am just wondering, I know I am working with website and content that has developed a continuity and I know that I have received a little bit of pushback in disturbing the continuity of content essentially by changing the way that I write advice sheets and some of that has been a challenge because it does not fit in with our historical messaging and how you advocate for yourself in the face of -- I fully understand how important continuity is in messaging. But I am concerned that plain language is losing the battle right now.
We don't have a complete record of overwhelming victories. Sometimes what we have is a steady pace of victories. I think one of the things I would look at in a couple of different ways, continuity for continuity, I don't know. I feel like we learn more and we find out how general worker don't work. And I have to admit I know nothing about records management. But what I was thinking, I would look at how far they are talking. Are they talking at new information about accessibility, like descriptive language. Are they looking into some of the inclusion material or are they looking at the basic things like readability. And looking at that. I don't ever feel that language is set in stone. And it is entirely possible that some of this material has been missing the mark for some time but I also find that it is useful looking at analytics. It does reveal so much. If you can find out how many people -- if your stuff is on the web or you are emailing newsletters you can see how many people are going there. What are the most popular are the most visited pages? And if you can get any kind of testing or feedback link. Did these things, did this material help you do your job better? And I would do it from there. It is certainly true that people resist change. It helps if you can start showing the value. It is a lot of work and sometimes people resist it. I'm not sure that helped.
It is important to think about analytics. I know that we don't have a lot of backend functionality that gives us that kind of insight. I do think there is some rudimentary insight that I can glean from page views essentially. It could be as simple as that. I think I was hired to push for the change that is inherent to a language mindset so I'm hoping that it is just early days.
One thing I found at GSA, what I started with was in my office I was dealing with acquisition professionals. I had a brown bag. I got a conference room. I brought my lunch and I will talk about plain language. I was totally expecting to be eating my lunch all by myself. In the room filled. People brought their lunch in a talk and there was huge excitement. I was sitting there thinking, I don't know what to do with this. But it was really nice to get that energy. If you can follow up with me afterwards, I have some ideas of how to start the plain language. Can contact Katina and me . The question about the style guide. Janet, one of the things that I always say about style guides. I say, plain language works with every style guide. Plain language is not a style guide issue. Except that the style guide should be in plain language. It also helps that plain language

leads to inclusion and accessible content. It is useful to frame it to that for people. It is the language itself. It is not really choices. It is for the audience. I feel like I may have lost control of my thoughts on plain language and the style guide. It helps to have the style guide say our material will begin plain language. But as far as capitalization goes, one of the things I have done, when I run across research that says more or less, people are scanning. The right talk webinar, research into how people read online. I do remind people that too many initial capitals are all capitals makes people not see them. It is interrupting the information flow they are expecting. All right. Gabby, I am hoping you can get a copy of the chat transcript because this will give us a lot of ideas for future huddles. Katina, do you have anything ?

I do. Someone actually sent me a draft of the document. In this case it was not a government person. They were seeking funding. They asked what my opinion on it was. They said they wanted feedback. I told him I could not give feedback because I stopped reading. Because after the second page I cannot get past the italics. It was italics, underlined, bold italics on the line. Every combination of those things. Okay, we understand. I said you don't understand. I am telling you I stopped reading. I cannot give you any feedback. That is my feedback. No one will read this. I need you to fix it. And send it back to something decent. They were really upset. If you look closely at your reviewer comments from last year, they told you that. Just more politely. I am getting straight to the point. Don't do it again, it is terrible. Sometimes you just have to tell people that people will not read their work if they keep doing it. They will have spent all of that time and all the effort. I told them that you put all this effort in for nothing. Because people will not read it.

People have to hear that.

I love the someone typed in, unleash the monster. Sometimes you have to drop the treats.

Pick your favorite monster. And the next huddle we have we will all share in emoji of our favorite monsters. I am going to give some thought to my best one. I guess the huddle has ended. We are not entirely sure what is happening next month and we hope to have someone talk about content teams and things like that. And lessons learned they had from that. This was really productive. I thank you all for bringing your great questions. And Katina, anything to close us out ? Or shall Gabby just up the closeout process.

We love ideas. If you have a question that you want us to address in the future, let us know. You can email us individually or email the plain language email address.

That would be great. I guess it is time for a refill for whatever drink you liked the best. And we look forward to chatting more on the list and pursuing some more of these ideas. Thank you all for joining us and we hope you have a fantastic day.

Take care everybody.

[Event concluded]

Subject:	SUMMARY: Stakeholder Huddle Writeup
From:	Katherine Spivey - ZC <katherine.spivey@GSA.GOV>
Reply To:	Plain Language COP Main <PL-COP-MAIN@LISTSERV.GSA.GOV>, Katherine Spivey - ZC <katherine.spivey@GSA.GOV>
Date:	Mon, 14 Feb 2022 09:41:28 -0500
Content-Type:	multipart/alternative
Parts/Attachments:	text/plain (7 kB) , text/html (28 kB)

On Wednesday, February 10, 2022, the PLAIN community discussed managing stakeholder relationships. We discussed problems, solutions, resources, metaphors, and monsters.

Some problems we're facing

- Lawyers/legalese.
- Jargon, nuance, in-house lingo (HR insists on "talent" or "assets" instead of "people" or "employees" or "colleagues").
- Euphemistic language, archaic terminology when referring to certain populations.
- Factchecking as part of the process. Incorrectly spelled things include diseases or the names of experts or sources. To wait for an editor to clean it up seems a bit late in the process.
- Tensions between our technical/subject-matter experts who use jargon and communications staff. How do we provide clarity while maintaining accuracy? Who makes the final decision?

Discussion of the use of glossaries to define jargon

In some cases, we have to include jargon (legally or because the expert/boss/agency insists). What are potential solutions?

- Defining the jargon is essential. One way we're addressing this is to hyperlink them to glossary entries that explain them. However, glossaries are great if you have time/room.
- I think a lot of readers will skip over the hyperlinked jargon and not read the glossary.

For a discussion of how the General Services Administration (GSA) uses online glossaries, see this presentation at the 2021 Federal Plain Language summit.

Another "fix" for jargon is to define the term in the text itself. Here's an example that PLAIN co-chair Katina Stapleton likes from Federal Student Aid that uses a glossary and within-text definitions.

If you have examples of great within-text definitions of jargon or glossaries, please send them to PLAIN.

Suggested resources from Huddle participants

- Plain Language Pediatrics by the American Academy of Pediatrics (on communicating to stakeholders the case for clear communication to families of sick children)
- AHRQ toolbox (to help track and improve inpatient quality and patient safety)

- Article by Dartmouth researchers: Poor COVID test instructions lead to improper quarantining (for reinforcing the consequences of poor communication)
- Message box technique (for working with "experts" to tailor their messages for specific audiences)

Metaphors participants suggested to navigate stakeholder relationships

- I describe writing to experts as "You're used to writing classical music, which is detailed and has nuances and themes...We need to write POP. Something that's accessible to a broad audience that can get the point in a single sit-down/listen."

- Making the content more accessible - Yes, that's how I pitch it--the advantages to the writer of broadening the reach of the message.

- Sometimes it might be helpful to explain something you edited that might be perceived as a "major change," or perhaps, add a comment that you're open to chatting about the "why," or add a link to a resource that explains the "why." Sometimes, I'll provide the grade level/ reading level scores from the original copy vs the edited copy.

- I do like to try and teach them so that they can learn. Especially about passive voice. I say things like, "WHO is doing the sampling" "WHO is writing the report"? and then I rewrite the sentence. I think they prefer that I just re-write it but I want them to try and integrate active language!

Monsters

Are plain language editors monsters or are we heroes?

Here's some quotes from the chat:

- I work to help a VERY technical group of scientists edit their work for the public. They generally start a draft of a fact sheet, and I get in there and edit it. I struggle with how to make changes without feeling like I'm being a critical monster. I try to explain why I'm making the changes I'm making, and they're very gracious, but it's hard emotionally to be constantly critical. Our challenge is that our topic is very technical, and it's so nuanced so we have to pass through the fact sheets over and over again and still end up with something that's really technical.

- I work with medical professionals and it can be a struggle to both critique their works but also have to acknowledge my ignorance of certain medical terms while still trying to maintain that I am an expert in what I do and am highly educated, just not in medicine

- I'm an editing "monster" too, but usually the feedback is not received graciously

- I have the same issue--I sincerely praise the audit work and inform them that I want their work to be read, understood, and persuasive and how plain language helps that, and I am just there to ensure their work gets the attention it deserves.

- I tear documents to shreds and am usually met with grace, but there are times where it is clear the author is defensive and looking down on me because "I'm not clinical".

- I, too, deal with researchers/ scientists, and that is one thing I struggle with as well, in terms of how "gentle" to be/ how much rationale to provide, etc. I think there is a fine line between how many "comments" you want to provide along with your edits because YOU are the expert and you shouldn't feel like you have to always explain your decisions, but it's easy to lose confidence, esp when you have multiple people providing feedback/ balancing time, etc., as well as wanting to "teach" people the "why" behind your edits.

BIS-GSA-Plain Language and Compassion to Meet Moments of Crisis
3/9/2022 2:00 PM

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GSA
Plain Language and Compassion to Meet Moments of Crisis

MARCH 9, 2022

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>> For folks that are here with us. Thanks so much. We'll be getting started in just couple of minutes. We're just doing last minutes check prep. And Moremi says,

Katherine, I think you might be my spirit animals.

>> I can only give credit to Douglas Adams and his wonderful invention of the SEP, which as everyone knows stands for "someone else's problem." Yeah, we didn't actually fix it. We just directed an SEP all over it. Oh, solving the problem isn't an option? Solving the problem is not something you actually have to do? Huh, okay... [Laughter]

>> Please go ahead.

>> Well, everyone, it is 2:01. We'll give just another minute. Because it seems we're getting kind of a steady stream of folks attending coming from other meetings. In the meantime, I'll go ahead and start the recording. (Recording in progress).

>> I guess that means we stop talking about coyotes. Too late. It's official now. [Laughter]

>> Hello, to everyone who's putting in their location in the chat. People from all over. Cordelia, I was going to mention earlier, looks like you have the same weather we have, gray and rainy as opposed to our 75 degrees sunny area. So we're into second whip lash of the season, I suppose.

So someone from Hawaii. I'm so thrilled. Wow. I can't even work out the weather from that. Someone from Cuba. Canada. Portland. Two people from Hawaii. Wow.

>> I have to say someone from Minnesota, if there are other folks around the Twin Cities area, and once we get into patio weather, I'm happy to meet up if anybody [Laughter]

>> Someone says hum Dee Hawaii five O theme. London UK. [Laughter] Spain. So we're having a lot more fun in the chat than as usually for, you know, for our meetings here.

>> Fantastic!

>> Yeah. The Kool-Aid part, certain.

>> GABBY F.: Should we go ahead and get started?

>> KATHRINE SPIVEY: I think so. I have a feeling that Amanda and Cordelia is going to be a jam-packed session which I going to be fantastic. As people are coming in, well, let us just go ahead and I will pull up -- defeated by technology right again.

So, Cordelia, and Amanda are part of the Technology Transformation Serviceses, G is a 18F and they work at the substance abuse and mental health administration.

In 2019, to help transform and focus find treatment.gov. And what that website does is connect people looking for substance use disorder treatment with the facilities that can help. So if you could, Cordelia, and Amanda, take it away.

>> Before you get started, this is Gabby from digital.gov. Just some brief housekeeping notes and information. And then I will leave it in your wonderful hands, Amanda and Cordelia. Thank you for coming to the Plain language and compassion meet moments of crisis webinar. This event is being recorded. There's live captioning for this event if you are in the Zoom app, you can use the integrated live captioning by selecting the CC button on the bottom of your screen.

If you prefer live captioning in a separate window, my colleague Mara is putting the link in the chat now. There is also a link for the slide available downloadable on digital.gov so you can follow along today's wonderful presentation via slides if you like to. As a reminder, all attendees will be muted. Feel free to continue to make general chat, networking, share info in the general chat. For specific connections for Cordelia and Amanda, please put them in the Q&A Box. And that way, we can easily get to them when Katherine and Katina start the moderation of the Q&A portion of the event after the presentation. With that, thank you again for joining. Amanda and Cordelia, take it away.

>> Amanda, do you want to start?

>> AMANDA COSTELLO: Hey, everyone. This is a presentation. This is really super weird way to do and we haven't done this in a long time but so thrilled to be here and talk about this work. I want to shout-out number of our colleagues who have worked on this with us and we're thrilled to have you here, even though we're talking about a very limited scope of this work, there is a ton of work we will not have time to talk about today. But we're looking forward to hopefully talking about it more in the future. Even though it's just my name and Cordelia's name on the slide and speaking to you today, but I really want to call out how much of an absolutely massive huge work and effort this was with ton of people. And we're so grateful to them.

So let's see if the PowerPoint does the thing. It did! Yes! Here's us. I'll do a quick intro of myself. My name is Amanda Costello. Me pronouns are she/her. I am calling you today from beautiful surprisingly Sunny Minneapolis Minnesota. And I'm a content strategist at 18f. I've been a content strategy for 12 years. And I've been at 18F since very late 2018. And my hair is obviously, as you can see way longer than it

was in the picture, because it was old.

So yeah.

>> CORDELIA YU: I'm Cordelia. My pronouns are she/they. I'm from Lenape land in downtown Manhattan on the 55th floor of the World Trade Center where this is my first time back in the GSA office in two years. It is weird and snow is falling sideways. It's great. So happy to chat with you all.

>> AMANDA COSTELLO: All right. I'm going to start out with Cordelia on slide 3. Right.

>> CORDELIA YU: So, when we started, like, when we started on this project, the thing we were told was we want to make it easier for people to be able to find and get like a bed out of a treatment facility if they're dealing with -- if they're trying to find addiction recovery services. And so the first thing that we sort of did was try to look at the whole journey of people trying to go through, trying to figure out like what does addiction support mean?

And we tried to map out the entire process, which you can see here of we did what, like what we often call a service journey map. And as we were doing it, we realized we could use what was called the 3D lay model which is a fantastic thing to surgery online. It is primarily used for -- it was originally used as a way to think about barriers to maternal health in global development. And it sort of like breaks down, it groups the barriers into 3 things. The first, our barriers to seek care. And so for maternal health as well as we did research and talked to people in recovery, and families of people who were supporting people who were trying to get through recovery, we found, like, a few things that is shared across people trying -- people in crisis or people trying to find support.

One like the first is like social status. Especially if you're dealing with addiction, oftentimes there are a lot of biases to people going, wait, you have what!? Which like means people really want to keep it hidden sometimes. There's a lot of stigma. And then there's also like, people don't fully understand the risks. Or they just accepted the risk, right? Either those things have happened. Or like people have tried, and like they had poor past experiences.

3D lays model, if you look around, you will find that around help but you can apply it to, it's really useful to apply to a lot of things.

And then this is looking for healthcare. So a lot of times, there's financial hardships. Or people go I don't have a lot of people or I'm unemployed, I'm not even

going to bother trying to find help, because of course it's going to be like too expensive.

The second barrier, once people sort of like start deciding to seek help, the second is getting to care. Finding a place that will help them. Three-delays model.

The distance to care facility. Not everyone has a car or access to transportation. Not everyone lives in a place that has good public transit. Not all care facilities are next to a bus stop or subway stop.

And then like the cost of transportation. Right? If you're unemployed and you've been unemployed for a while, not everyone has resources to even get you a $2 or $3 bus fare, right? So distance. The effort it takes to get to a facility, or even especially if you're living in a rural area where you need a car, and you don't have one. Or finding a place that takes your insurance. In a lot of cases, just getting someone on the phone is difficult. You can't even get to that first step of you call the place, and the line is busy. And Amanda and I can go into this later, but like phone numbers change. Places close. Right? The information on a website might not be up-to-date. The facility might have sort of like moved or whatever. And the website isn't up-to-date. Or the phone book isn't up-to-date and whatever. And there's so many blockers getting to a facility once you decide it.

And the third area of, the third delay is like once you get to a care provider, or once you get to a provider, people still face barriers. The person helping you might not be trained. If you call 911, a police officer might not be trained to deal with someone in addiction crisis or mental health crisis. Right? Or even if you get to a care facility, not all places, like not all people at all places are well-trained. Which is a sad reality. A lot of facilities are poorly run. They can get you through the 24 or 48 hours, but they don't have wrap around social support to get you from I'm detoxing to I'm in recovery. Right? There's so many parts to that, of getting from I need help. I'm going to find help to I am healthy and well. And all those things are things that need to be worked on. And while we were never going to solve that whole problem, right? That requires tackling the entire United States healthcare system. And us, F18 cannot do that.

>> AMANDA COSTELLO: That was out of scope.

>> CORDELIA YU: Way out of scope. Wish it wasn't but way out of scope. Understanding that for us is sort of like, the model, having that model to think about it help us and it was useful for us, because it helped us understand two big things. The first is like the whole journey that people take to recovery isn't just about one person's action. It isn't me going I need support. I'm going to find it. It's about having a community of support. It's about the social infrastructure. It's about learning about the

social blockers that get me from where I am to health, to happiness. And then the second is, once we have that map, we understood what our vertical was. We understood what our product or platform, or our program even, like, our place in that full picture. Right?

And when we do that, we can help people understand -- we can sort of understand what levers we had to move around to improve outcomes? And what was outside of our control? And how our works are fitted into the broader ecosystem? And next slide. By understanding that, we can articulate to leadership. If you wanted to be effective in helping people recover, we could just concentrate on getting people to a phone number. We also had to help people understand the whole process. Because not everyone knew, like, a lot of people just go if I call this number, they're going to figure things out for me, because they're overwhelmed. They're like, I need help, and I don't know what to do. And so I can make a phone call. Right? And when things work well, the person on the end of that phone call will be able to take it from there. But a lot of times, they aren't like empowered to help someone through the whole journey. But that meant that like the website we made couldn't just focus on getting people to a phone number. We also had to like give people information. Right?

We had to help people understand the process and the options that are available to them so they can make decisions for themselves, right? We can't tell them what to do, but we can give them tools to make a decision for themselves. And in our research from talking to people in recovery, and people who have helped friends and family through the process, we found that, like, making sure families and friends, and other sort of like caregivers be it co-workers or whatever also had the information to support someone. That would improve the chances for outcomes as well.

Amanda, do you want to take a quick note about like why we're saying People v. users?

>> AMANDA COSTELLO: Yes, because the word "user" has a very different connotation in terms of substance use disorder. So you will see throughout this deck and throughout the language that we use in here of we use the term people and action they're taking on the site. You're viewing the website. That was a mindful language that was common in our line of work where, you know, relearning what language we use and learning different words have different meanings and different context. In this context, that word wasn't useful. So wonderful part about language and its flexibility is that we can still, obviously, find words to be able, you know, it took some relearning, but great news. People can learn new words. And it's definitely carried with me beyond this work. I think about it twice. I think about it when I'm referring to stuff that's completely

different subject matter area. Is there a better word here? Does this word really work for this? Even having that pause is a tremendous gift doing this work.

>> CORDELIA YU: Yeah. It's the same. For me, I often sort of like default to people now because of my time on this work. And working with folks, because boy, how a user is a problematic word, especially in this context, in a lot of context, but especially in this one.

>> AMANDA COSTELLO: Yeah.

>> CORDELIA YU: To the next slide. Thank you. So this is slide 5 for folks following on that way. I want to take a quick pause here before, like, passing it off to Amanda to dig into the content to note that like there's a trend in, like web design to sort of create different navigation and content for different audiences and personas. Which is really frickin' tempting here, right? To create content that specifically speaks to people looking for recovery services and create separate content for people helping them. Those are two whom we normally think about dividing up our audiences. These seem like two very useful buckets, right?

And this sort of gets the answer why we don't always -- I don't think about it as people seeking treatment either. Because a lot of times, in our interviews, actually, the first day we went to talk to the White House, the person at the White House was like, oh, I'm sorry for being 20 minutes late. I'm like you're from the White House. Don't apologize for being 20 minutes late. But then she was like because I was on the phone with a mother in Colorado who is trying to find a bed for a son. I'm like, oh, oftentimes the person who make the phone call isn't the person searching for the help for themselves. Right? It is very often a loved one, a co-worker, a family member. And the thing that sort of like made us think about making the content work, like instead of creating content for different audiences, the thing that we realized was those two audiences wanted the same content. And they wanted it in ways that were, like, they wanted the same content. And they wanted it in ways to -- like the same content could speak to both of them. So we didn't have to -- in fact, it would have been detrimental to create different navigation for different people.

Amanda, over to you.

>> AMANDA COSTELLO: You bet. So looking at these things again. Again, Cordelia talked about it differently. Like where is this site in terms of one of the things? This is the phrase I came up with which is I'll never let go which is the federal ecosystem of response, so crunchy to say but this was a part of whole lot of things being done. So when we were looking at the content and yes, I saw in the chat. Don't

worry we're getting to the content specifics. Cordelia and I worked together and Cordelia was the first strategist on ground with this. She did a ton of research. She led a lot of interviews. She sent a lot of that stuff, that wild mural board yearly with all her. And was able to hand it off in a more plain language writing crafty way and that's what I'm going to get into more.

So here are the common blockers to people connecting with finding treatment options that meet their needs. What kind of treatment do I need understanding the different types. Finding something that is nearby that fits their needs and paying for it. Those are the 3 things. If they can't find the answer to that, they will stop their search. That's a huge deciding point to seek treatment. It's a really, really huge move and takes a lot to go in. If that decision is stymied by not being able to find stuff, someone can have a setback building up to that point. So we don't want to essentially, harm them or prevent them from getting to that position by addressing the most common blockers. So here's an exciting before-and-after.

So this was the before and the after. Again, as many of you have worked on web projects, you know this was not just a content redo. This was something done with ton of different experts across engineering, design, product, subject matter experts, leadership, a whole lot of people doing a whole lot of work to make things a lot more clear, scannable, understandable. I come from a background of working in higher education. And I have an allergic reaction to someone asking for a back to be on something. Because there's lots of different ways to display spatial or location-based location that's not a map. Also someone who really loves maps.

>> CORDELIA YU: In addition to this, this is a map looks cool. But it doesn't tell you how hard it is to get somewhere. Right? It doesn't tell you where the bus line or train lines are. It doesn't tell you, like things could be quarter mile away. But it's divided by like a 6 lane highway that has like the nearest under pass that's 3 miles away. Maps don't tell us that.

>> AMANDA COSTELLO: If you drive nickel and dimed, that was quite long time ago. Minnesota and St. Paul, it's really hard to get around without a car. Tremendously hard to navigate without a car. And they are less so now, but it's true. All the samples here are going to be about Minneapolis because I'm from here and I love to shout it out when I can.

So here, we'll dive some more deeper into some of this stuff. So don't worry. We're going to click away from this. One of the big things, guiding principles, this is what we said. This is content strategy at the site. We're meeting people where they are and we're reducing cognitive load. However, someone comes to the website, there's a

right way to come to the website. We don't get to choose where they come. And friend of mine used to work in the emergency medicine used to tell her ER staff, remember, people in here are probably almost definitely having a bad day and might be having the worst day of their lives. That was the mindset that we had to be in is that people are coming in likely state of crisis to this space. So we had to reduce the cognitive load.

And I think Cordelia has some other things to talk about cognitive load if you're not familiar with the concept or how to apply it here.

>> CORDELIA YU: Yeah, this is one time I want to shout out the book design for real life. Because something they talk about is, in certain persona going this is a mother with 3 children or whatever. You sort of design for, like, what is the worst possible scenario, right?

Me as a person sitting there, sitting here in my office has a different, like, I can process things differently than if I am sort of like on the way to the ER because my friend just showed up there. Right? Even if I go to the website, I'm going to be able to read whole lot less, even though I'm college-educated and whatever else. I just don't have the attention span when I'm under stress. Yes, design for real life. Yes, this is one of the beat-up books on my desk that I reach for often.

>> CORDELIA YU: And so sometimes like for when I'm starting to think about the audiences and where they are, I sort of start going down. What are potential things that sort of like reduce their ability to -- reduce someone's ability to comprehend what we're trying to tell them?

Because that sort of help us go, oh, this is how much stress someone might be under when they're trying to come to our website to figure out how to, can I park at the ER? Or where is it? Where is the entrance? How do I get to my son's hospital bed, because he went there in the ambulance. And I'm following along. Right? So thinking about those things sort of like help us go, okay, we need to write at this level and not that level.

>> AMANDA COSTELLO: Also, say someone is coming to a website and not in a point of high crisis or eminent stress. Then they can read it and do something else. They don't have to spend the cognitive load reading the website. I love it when people read what I wrote, but this is something to read and do something else with. It's not reading for reading sake. So, yeah. So with reducing cognitive load, here's how we did it with this. We talked about people coming in at high stress, possibly in full crisis mode. A lot of this, we did ton of testing with this site on mobile and how it would be able to get to click through things and get the information you needed with mobile. And what you

can see before scrolling quickly thereafter. We also with reducing cognitive load, you really have to be honest about what new requirements you might have for people on your site. A new website layout. Like if you ever have seen someone do a workflow through 3 different systems, if you haven't done desk observation of someone using a bunch of old systems, it's amazing. Because human beings are amazing and can memorize and put through a ton of steps, even if it's complicated and outdated and weird, people can fly through stuff and we like, I click here. I open this. I wait for 5 minutes. That's when I make my tea. Now I open this record. So if there's a new system, it's still disruptive, even if it's simpler or fewer steps. It's still a new thing carving a new path through the woods. This is also a tool to use. What button do I click? What does it do when I click a button? Many of you might have seen with the COVID tests site that launched. There was a point where it said, you know, you were ordering these tests, but they were free. But it still looked like a shopping cart but it had the price of $0. So this is really free. And it cost $0. And I'm saying okay to $0. And it's a new tool people are using and people know clicking button means things, and we want to make sure we build trust in our designs.

Also language and terms. So this was a real big space in here where we took a look at what kind of language and terms are being used. How the language and terms might with those 3 blockers prevent people from seeking treatment, finding care that's knowing this is where I'm supposed to be and this is what I need.

Especially I learned a ton about this. The big area of this was medication assistant treatment. You're using the names of medications that are very long pharmaceutical names. Many people are not -- may not be familiar with the names of medications and the differences in them. So we looked at reducing what we could for cognitive load. And I have a screenshot that I'm going to talk through.

This is our search results page on finding treatment.gov. We show this a little earlier but I'm going to go through the specifics on here. On the sidebar under treatment type, it says detox. People are searching for detox. It is supervised with drug substance use and you're with somebody else and this is part of what's happening. There are much more clinical names for it. But again, we didn't have time. If someone, again, is in crisis and looking for service, we needed to meet them where they are. Having a clinical or medically or more accurate term was a hindrance towards people getting from I need help to making the call.

Also big shout-out to ton of our partners on SAMHSA who helped us go to bat on this one. And you can see under the treatment type area. We have a lot of design choices that we made that are based on other things you might see on other websites.

Usually not government websites, but on our websites. You have the info button next to treatment type. That brings you to more definitions and the differences between them and what you might look for. You have what we ended up calling, we called them the Airbnb definitions. If you browsed on Airbnb, it offered different types of experiences you could have. It has a super short, like 6 to 10 words short very nailed down definitions so you don't have to click into a separate thing to get an idea. If you wanted dive deeper, you can. But we wanted to make this page usable as possible without having to go learn other things.

So that is within the treatment type sign. And other thing here is we have a lot of other design affordances that people have seen. We have show more button. And we have the alert box, which again, you see alert boxes on this kind of this, this is using the web design system. But people are used to seeing this alert box information. This alert box, it comes up every time, because it's stuff that's really important for people to know before you go, before you call. You should call first. That this isn't a point where you can just find something here and go there right away. There is another step. You do have to do other things. It also addresses the needs of not sure what you mean? There's more about treatment options so you can be able to break this down more. The other thing with this is be honest about the things that are hard.

A lot of this stuff is hard. And it doesn't help anyone to try to candy coat it and brush it over. Plain language is not about dumbing it down. It's about opening it up. And when things are hard, say that they're hard. People will appreciate the honesty and be able to go into something with an adequate view of this is going to be a hard thing. This is difficult to understand. This is complex. And it doesn't say anything about the reader or the person looking for things. You can say you're doing a tough thing. You're not at fault here. This is hard and confusing, and frustrating.

So some of that stuff we have at the top around what to know before you call. We wrote lists of questions. So that people can be ready to know what they're going to be asked. Have that information ready. This is incredibly hard call to make. And we wanted people to feel as prepared as they could when making it. And let them know, I should know if I'm calling for myself or someone else, which drugs and alcohol is being used and they this is confidential and they can be honest. No one will call the police or report them. This is about getting help.

Also what are their current health conditions? What other medications might they be on? And what financial resources are they working with? Are they looking for free or reduced sliding scale? Do they have health insurance or MediCare or Medicaid? And also this is one of the empowering spaces. Is you can ask the facility questions. Is this

is not a one-way thing you hoping they have space for you. You also deserve to find treatment and care that fits what your needs are. So when can I get an appointment? How much does treatment cost? Do you take this insurance? What should I bring and not bring? How do I get there? Is there a bus stop nearby? Is there a train station? Can you pick me up? Some facilities will have transportation as part of it. They can come get you.

Also asking questions that are appropriate for your situation. Is there smoking here? It's an important thing to know if you yourself ever struggled with having, if you struggled with, frankly, using smoking and stopping smoking is really, really tough. Going to this space and knowing if you can smoke or not is important. We didn't put judgment or shame on that. Can the facility fit that? For some people, having a fully non-smoking facility would be too much. And it wouldn't be a fit and they shouldn't get in touch with that place, because it's not the right place for them. Is there childcare options available? What kind of medications can I'd be on? Can I see my family while I'm here? Who can come see me? So we really tried to both get people ready for the call, but also let them know it's a conversation. This has to be a good fit for you too, and you have the ability to ask questions around that.

>> CORDELIA YU: Amanda, there's a really good question, we can get to later, but right now is a good fit. How did you figure out what sort of questions and to answer?

>> AMANDA COSTELLO: There is a ton of really great awesome amazing literature that is already published by a bunch of amazing federal agencies with questions exactly like this. But it didn't all exist in one place. It would be in a pamphlet somewhere or PDF that wasn't searchable. A lot of the content was not new. A lot of the content was just brought together. Our partners at SAMHSA were amazing saying, here, here is all this stuff. And we could go through stuff that already been vetted, had already been approved, and was already official guidance and just bring it into one space. So these came from a bunch of different places. We just brought it all together. Some of the content we did create, however, was about health insurance. Something that is notoriously easy and chill for everyone. It is not chill. There's nothing chill about health insurance. When we looked at this, again, we had a lot of content to work with. We had a lot of information for folks that maybe didn't have insurance or had MediCare and Medicaid or could access state services around paying for substance use disorders. But when it came to having health insurance, the official guidance was call the number on the back. Because health insurance is so complex. It has so many different angles of everything. People didn't want to issue any guidance for something that could be so complex. We didn't want to risk and be wrong. Which, again, when it

comes to health insurance, I completely get it. But it turned out that we could still give some guidance.

One of the things we were able to lean on is what can we say that is true for private health insurance? And what are some of the stuff we can say is true for the Federal Government and one of the things was finding common terms p services. What is a deductible or co-pay? Deductibles is an annual thing for not just this kind of treatment. Other things apply to your deductible. You can ask about preferred providers. You can ask for case managers. Here are things you can ask your insurance for. Also there's parody covering mental health disorder. We cited the first access around this. Mental health and parity and addiction equity act. Italics here is from the first website. This means your insurance company can't tell you we don't do substance abuse treatment or mental health isn't covered. If they do this, they're breaking the law. All of our content went through a number of level of review and every level of review people said, that's right. They are.

And that's something that we can say, because we're the Federal Government. And these are the laws we made. So being able to say that and also, again, empower people when they're talking with health insurance company which often can be extremely stressful to deal with and there's still things you can do. Yes. Lawyers absolutely signed off on this. At least 3 agencies of lawyers signed off on this.

>> CORDELIA YU: Including the White House.

>> Yes. So that is some of the specifics about the plain language content that we did. Another big aspect of this was about self-care. So slide 13, I'm going to turn this back to Cordelia. This is something earlier in the project that continued with us through launch.

>> CORDELIA YU: So, before coming to government, I worked with communities and journalists, and one of the heartbreaking things to watch is seeing people who are caring and dedicated get sent into difficult situations grow numb and jaded. Right?

And we all know the federal employees that has happened to. Their work changes. If you're working with journalists, their report changes and their demeanor changes, their ability to care changes, right? And this happens to those of us in government, especially if we're in an agency and we're tired of dealing with the interoffice dynamics. And because we're also so human. We're civil servants, but we're also human. And the thing is we can't afford to get jaded. Right?

So we have to take care of ourselves. We can't drive ourselves to exhaustion.

Especially if we're trying to make a career of this, five years of being good at this and then however many years of good enough at this doesn't serve the public well. So there's two major reasons Amanda and I are both here. One of them is I concentrated on the early stuff and I concentrated on the content strategy and Amanda was good at content design. And our skills sort of like, like we were able to switch out the skills as the project changed. But one of the other reasons, honestly, because the reason I want to work on this project was because I have loved ones close to me who have dealt with opioids.

So I want to make sure that my [Audio fading in and out] at some point, this stuff gets hard. And you have to step away, otherwise, you're not going to be fresh for the next project. Right? So we did a bunch of stuff around what we're doing when we're doing research that we made sure that we all had time to debrief afterwards. We made sure that we had time to, when we were going into an interview with someone who has been in recovery, that we knew might go deep into something that is hard, we gave ourselves like 15 to 45 minutes afterwards. Right?

To go take a walk. So watch something on YouTube. To scroll through Instagram. To just process. Or sometimes we set up like one-on-one with each other to go, hey, that was hard. How are you doing? Do you need some tea? Do you need to go get a drink of water? Or do you want to talk through this? So we could help take care of each other and help each other process through this. And this also let us -- and shout-out to Kate White who I saw in the chat. She was our content partner over in SAMHSA who was the best person who was there to advocate on the inside over advocating as people from the outside.

To make sure that, like, yeah, we just went through something hard. Let's take a moment and then put down what we learned in a way that the rest of the team can process through. Right?

And sometimes you have to hand the baton off to someone else. And that's okay. That's not weakness. You can hand it off to someone who's fresh. And the goal is you give them the information that you have processed through. So they can learn what you have learned without having to go through the stress of it as well.

>> AMANDA COSTELLO: I'm going to go through the next slide and we also want to make sure we can get to some of the questions you all had. We just had follow-up and takeaways. With this one, connecting with other people and agencies as much as you can to avoid duplicating effort. It's a big government, y'all, and state and local governments are really big too. So it's highly likely you are not the first person or only person doing this work. Don't get weird and, like, possessive of this stuff. Share

the information. Bring some sunlight. Help each other out. We were able to use definitions of different kinds of medications and assisted extremity from other agencies that wrote really good plain language definition. Why redo the work? And now we have continuity if people move between websites, they will get the same information. The other one is you might get stuff wrong, but have a process to fix it quickly. This means telling other people when something goes wrong. This could be a whole second presentation. But it turned out before we were set to launch, we had a big issue how much traffic this could sustain. The database was not keeping up. And the site couldn't go down. If we pushed it out the way it was, it could have. So we had to tell people and make decisions from there. So the right answer isn't saying "I" hope "this goes fine ."

Also celebrate every small victories you can. They're tiny changes, but they're happening at a huge level. Reason why I joined 18F and this was in the job description. The work we do can create civic change and civic tech change in a massive scale. Doing something, even little, at the federal level to help bring clarity can have a huge impact on folks. And really, in this case, make a real positive impact on their lives, which is a big part of why we do this. We're working in and building a system that will last beyond the project Sprint and last beyond the time it takes to launch a website. We're building towards something bigger and we have to pace ourselves and remember that that's what we're here you had to.

So with that, thank you. And we will take questions.

>> CORDELIA YU: Yeah, go to the first bullet on the last slide of, like connect with other agencies. One thing we wish, like we were doing a little bit, but we wish we did more of was other agencies are doing like, like they're orthogonal or overlapping what you're doing if building those connection and making sure you have those connections. Kaitlyn was able to connect us through OIH and there was a lot of content there.

And, like, the more we can do that, one, the better everyone's content is going to be. Two, the more intersectional the content is going to be. Because they're thinking about it in slightly different ways. So we might be focused on substance use disorders, but other people are working at the intersection of homelessness and poverty, and we can bring all that stuff together to make the content more helpful for people. To the questions.

So the workaround discovery, you asked can you tell me more about the team you worked on for discovery? I did make the journey map, but one person, Nora Maki put together the journey map. She was a service designer here at 18F and we also had user researchers. And so we were going out it talking to directly to people who were in

recovery where we're going out and directly talking to social workers. We're talking to family members who had helped like people recover. Yeah.

>> AMANDA COSTELLO: I'm looking at the question box too. That would be easier to follow along than the chat. So I'm going to start rolling down some of these. The book we just referenced that was purple that's "design for real life." We threw a link in the chat. And I think we can put any URL in there.

How did you learn content design? What training did you need to learn with designing in mind? A lot of this is about, a lot of stuff about content design is reading a lot of books about content design and then just starting to do it, which I realize is an incredibly privileged answer. But also starting for me, it was starting to make changes where I was. I was not always a content strategist or designer, but when I worked my big first job, I was at a desk doing instruction stuff. So we could write instructions that are clear. What do people need to know? And starting to think about the people who are going to use the information and rewrite it and start to do it. And also keep your before-and-afters. Amanda, can you stop sharing your screen? Okay. So one of the amazing things about content strategy and content design is that we all come from really different walks of life. Because you can bring some part of like your other work into this. And that makes the field better. I was a scientist in political science. And I went through web design. And then I came into content strategy. We have people who came through library sciences, through editorial. Everyone brings a slightly different background. And that's great, right? I like this field as a big tech.

>> AMANDA COSTELLO: Umm-hmm. One of the next questions I saw. Finding ways to validate the word design process. We had amazing UX researchers on this that ran tons and tons of tests about what is this site? What do you see? Where do you click? Where do you go? Again, that could be a whole another talk about the UX and the research and the UX design that went into this as well as with the visual and product design. So what we did with the content is, I tested the content both outside of the site and then within the site.

So we would do a first pass for clarity of just the content. Usually like a Word document. Just the stand alone content what does this mean? And then we did a second password where we put the content into context and does this still make sense and the search results page which is certainly cleaned up from where it was, but still is a really, really busy page with whole lot of things that are happening. So we test things both in and out of context and that gave us a guide idea where things were going.

>> CORDELIA YU: Something I don't think you all had time to do but I wish we had time to do is, like, for a lot of the things that we work on, there are people on the

ground. There's social workers. There are caseworkers. And sort of like handing it to them and go, try using this. As you're using this, are there things, as you're trying to use this when you're working with someone, like is it helpful? Is it a tool that is going to be useful for you? Is it like, umm -- am I just remembered, I did this. That summer. My dad surprised quadruple bypass. He's fine. So I learned hanging out in hospital for quite a long time. And ICU recovery and he had surgery and he recovered from it. And I would make small talks with the nurses at the nurse's station. And I would say, hey, I'm working on a thing and do you have a 5 minutes? And have the nurses taking a look. So I was around a place where there was a lot of healthcare workers. So this thing. This thing. That was fortuitous, also my dad is fine.

>> CORDELIA YU: Touch on steps we essayed to barriers and needs. I can talk through the barriers. For the barriers, we started doing ethnographic research. We talked to folks and sort of like asked what was hard about the process you went through? What do you wish you had? Like, what worked well and what didn't? As we were isn't synthesizing that. We got themes. What was hard looking for help? What was hard when they got there and they're trying to get to recovery? And you don't need to talk to that mean people to start like a good picture. Of any if you're good finding people to talk to, even talking to 5 to 10 people is going to get you so much.

>> AMANDA COSTELLO: Another book shout-out is Erica Hall. Kind of research you can do with this, because you can find things so quickly that need to be fixed, we often found, and rightfully so, we were often in odds with folks who do academic research, which is extremely different from this research. It has different outcomes and different methods. Being able to say here's what we mean by research and here's how we use it helps a lot of especially with subject matter experts to understand what you're doing and why. And that you are not talking down about academic research. Again, I have a background in Higher Ed so this is coming from couple of different places. But research is a term that's good to align around. And also being able to say, yeah, talking to 6 or 8 people will give us enough to go on to start with, like it won't dig up everything, but it will dig up stuff we can start with and we'll do more research. So I highly, highly recommend Erica Hall's book. Also the idea of if you have ever called a customer service line, and have heard the phrase, recording tell you that this call may be recorded for training and supervisory purposes, that also means that people can be listening live. And there are some hotlines that you can listen into live. And where you work has an option to do this, it is absolutely life-changing to listen to people in the moment. It is also amazingly hard to listen to people in crisis calling.

But this is another space of essentially a way to do this research that is with -- that is ethical and caring. You are not confronting someone in crisis and saying, so

what would you really like to see on this website because that's bad. But with this, you can listen to what people are needing. You can hear the words they're using while they're still getting.

>> CORDELIA YU: Amanda, you want to tackle the question about content? And content on the page? And FAQs?

>> AMANDA COSTELLO: Is that in the question box? Holy cow, there's 19 questions. There's so many. Which question is this? Just read it to me?

>> CORDELIA YU: The slide about what might we ask you? And what questions you might ask the facility? What questions you might ask the facility, did you have a link to that as FAQ or did you have it on the actual page?

>> AMANDA COSTELLO: It's on the site. It's up there right now if you go to find treatment.gov, those treatments are under seeking treatment. So we didn't -- I also am allergic to FAQs, because the questions are asked so frequently. So, cool, here's our Frequently Asked Questions. Sweet. It sounds like happy research is done. Mic drop. Umm-hmm.

>> CORDELIA YU: Question from Emily. What were the measures of success? How did you measure that? Or how it we measure that?

>> AMANDA COSTELLO: So, one of the things. So one of the quantitative measurement of success was, I will say lower reading score. I hate the phrase grade level reading, because I think that is awful and classist and gross. And it assumes whole lot about a person based on what they "can or can't read." And there's a lot bound up in that. I like to just give it a number and say, right now, this is at 14. We're going to need to add an 8. Instead of saying this grade or this grade. I still have to find the numbers, but I think we had things from average of around 15th, a 15 reading level. And we got pretty much everything down to about a 9. But we had a lot of before-and-after stuff. And we would say here's this page. And run this stuff through. A great app we used for figuring out level. And say this page right now is looking at like 13. We're going to change this. The new level looks about a 10. So let's work on the sweet 8 or 9. That's one of the quantitative measures we used. And we're at time.

>> Holy crap. We're at time.

>> CORDELIA YU: There's so many more questions.

>> Amanda and Cordelia. Take it away, Kathleen.

>> I was just going to say that somebody, Katina or Gabby or Mara, if you can

grab the questions. Maybe we can explore the questions. I'm seeing a lot of requests also for a follow-up. So it's no hardship to invite you back to the plain language meeting. We're not recording. I mean, we have recording, but we will not be publishing it. There will be a write-up though that I've been steadfastly hurriedly typing on. So you can correct all of my errors of interpretation. [Laughter] And we can see where we go flex, because there's a lot of interest in content strategy and content design of which this was one example. And I feel positive just by following you on Twitter that you have more to say. And in fact, if you wanted to put your Twitter handles in the chat, perhaps other people who are on Twitter can join you there. So someone is going to search on Twitter right now. I don't think that gets much better than that.

>> AMANDA COSTELLO: I mean, I will also tell you my Twitter account is just a big old mishmash of stuff. Yeah, there's content strategy on there, but also we're in the last couple of weeks of bachelor's season and I have opinions, everyone.

>> You know, I think that's a feature, not a bug. [Laughter] You know?

>> KATHRINE SPIVEY: I see no reason to even caveat that. I do warn --

>> AMANDA COSTELLO: We can connect lessons from that. Spoiler free, bachelor's and the work that we do. We don't want to expect people to read your mind. It's important in reality TV as Federal Government.

>> KATHRINE SPIVEY: There are important plain language lessons everywhere.

>> AMANDA COSTELLO: Plain language for the right reasons.

>> KATHRINE SPIVEY: I'm even one to say I don't care if you're doing it for evil reasons, as long as plain language is coming out. So Katina, do you have something to add? Or shall we let our friends go get some tea and cookies? Whatever self-care they like.

>> Only thank you. This has been such a great time for me to listen to. Like how thoughtful your approach was. So it distinct just start with the writing, which is where a lot of us start quite frankly. So it was really encouraging to see how much time and research went into finding out what your clients and working on the rights. We know people, not users, really need before you change the content. So thank you.

>> KATHRINE SPIVEY: So this was spectacular. Yeah. A great pleasure. You've been the highlight of the entire day. And I include my chiropractor appointment in that. So, well, thank you so much. Thank you, Gabby and Mara for taking care of all

of the things.

And who knows? You may drive more people to the bachelor's. So Cordelia, Amanda, thank you so much. Talk to you soon. Great, great job. Thank you so much.

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Writeup from PLAIN's March 9, 2022 event: The FindTreatment.gov Story

Katherine Spivey - ZC <katherine.spivey@gsa.gov> Wed, Mar 30, 2022 at 9:04 AM
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Plain language and compassion to meet moments of crisis: The findtreatment.gov story

Cordelia Yu and Amanda Costello, 18f content strategists

The slides

As much as we wish there could “just be a website” with every related resource people need, these one-stop shop solutions often become digital junk drawers that harm those we set out to help.

In the ecosystem of federal response to the opioid crisis, 18F knew findtreatment.gov needed to complement, not compete with, other resources. Through broad research, compassionate content, and sharply defined scope, we helped launch a nationwide resource that answered questions and bridged a critical gap for people seeking help with substance use disorder.

Notes from the meeting

We’re content strategists from the federal government; we’re here to help. Shout-out to colleagues: this was a massive effort.

Our goal: Make it easier to find a bed at a treatment facility for addicted people to get treatment.

First, we did the whole experience journey to map it (a service-tree map).

Three delays model

We discovered we could use the Three Delays model**.** It was first used as a way to think about barriers to maternal health in global development—it groups the barriers:

- Delay in deciding to seek care
- Delay in reaching care at a facility
- Delay in receiving adequate care once at the facility

People face many obstacles in getting care:

- **Social status:** biases/discrimination, stigma, sometimes people want to keep quiet, don't understand the risk, have had poor past experiences.

- **Many factors in getting help**: getting there, transportation, cost $$, time to get there, finding place that take insurance, getting someone on the phone, getting a working phone number, finding an open place, getting outdated information on a website.

- **Post-provider barriers**: ill-trained people, people can't deal with addiction crisis, not all people at all places are well trained, some facilities are poorly run, you can get through 24-48 hours, but not to recovery.

Scope

There were so many stops on the journey from I need help to I will find help to I am healthy and well. We knew we'd never solve the entire problem: we had to focus on scope.

People face delays: deciding to seek care; reaching care; receiving adequate care. We wanted findtreatment.gov to remove these delays.

Journey to recovery — not just one person's recovery — requires a community of support, infrastructure and social structures that help.

Once we had the customer journey map, we understood what the product (findtreatment.gov) would be.

When we got that, we understood what levers we had to use and what was outside our control, and how our work fit into the broader ecosystem.

Then we could explain to leadership that we couldn't just concentrate on publicizing a phone number; we had to convey the entire process.

Sometimes people on either side of the phone are not empowered. We had to explain the options available. We couldn't tell the people seeking treatment what to do.

Audience

Research on people in recovery found that family and friends also needed information that would help the patient's chances.

People v Users

Why do we say people vs. users?

Users had a very different connotation with our audience. To them, users meant people who used drugs.

We tried to use people-first language: searchers, people, readers. It was a lesson that different words have different meanings in different contexts.

Website

FIndtreatment.gov would connect seekers with treatment options that met their needs,

Common blockers:

- Understanding different types of treatment
- Finding nearby treatment option that fits their needs
- Paying for treatment

We knew we didn't want different audience-based navigation or information architecture (IA). We knew that often the person searching/making the phone call isn't the person who needs the space/bed/treatment.

But those two audiences did need the same content in the same way. So we didn't need different navigation for these two audiences.

For a sample before and after snapshot of the website, go to slide 6 in the findtreatment.gov presentation slides. The before version had unclear content hierarchy; the after version shows scannable search filters and results.

We removed the map from the before section. The map looks cool but doesn't explain how hard it is to get to. This map didn't show bus lines.

Reduce Cognitive Load

One guiding principle was meet people where they are.

However they come to the website to find treatment is the right way.

The day they decide to seek treatment is very probably a bad day—it could even be the worst day—of their lives. We shouldn't make it any harder.

We recommend Design for Real Life. It says, instead of using personas, design for the worst possible scenario. In crises, people can't read properly or quickly, and they can't deal with nuance.

Consider what stops people from getting info: questions like where's the entrance? How do I get to my son's hospital bed; I'm following an ambulance; where can I park?

Our audience needs to be able to do something with the information. Nobody comes to government websites to just read.

Any time people come to a website, they have to learn the layout, the language and terms, and the tasks. Anything we can do to reduce their burden will make it easier. That's why we speak their language and give definitions.

Ways we reduce cognitive load:

- Be honest and clear about new requirements, specially if they are hard
- Reduce these new requirements when you can
- Speak their language ("detox")

New websites are disruptors: what button do I click, what does it do when I click.
For example, the covid test kit site: the tests were free, but the website used a shopping card where price equals zero.

Language

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) really helped us with what language and terms we were using. We wanted to make sure that the language and terms didn't keep people from getting treatment

Medication-assisted treatment often has pharmaceutical names of medicines that not everyone knows. We tried to substitute more familiar names. For example, some people are looking to detox. There are much more clinical names, but those terms would keep people from getting treatment if they didn't know they stood for detox.

Examples

Under treatment, we made design choices based on other websites (not necessarily government:

- Info button so we could keep the text short
- Airbnb-like definitions (6-10 words)
- Clear questions to prepare for the next step

We did want people to know that they'd have to do things before they went to the facility. We also tried to explain complicated things like health insurance. We also had to be honest about hard things. We couldn't use soft words for hard things.

Plain language

Plain language doesn't dumb it down, it opens up—tell them it's hard. Treatment is hard and confusing and frustrating.

Plain language does allow you to empower the person. Our page on questions you may be asked and questions you may want to ask the facility puts power into the person's hands.

Questions about insurance, transportation, smoking, childcare, medications, and family contact put the seeker and the facility into the conversation on an equal footing.

The content on Findtreatment.gov was not new. The content already existed in printed pamphlets or non-searchable PDFs. Since the content was already vetted and approved, findtreatment.gov brought all the information together at one spot.

We did create content for people who had health insurance. We defined common terms or services, and explained mental health and substance use parity. We also explained the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act (MHPAEA) of 2008, and what that means in plain language.

We could explain this on findtreatment.gov because it's a federal government law and because three agencies' worth of lawyers signed off on it, including the White House.

Self-Care when you're working on difficult subjects

Federal workers are human as well as civil servants. We can grow numb and jaded on difficult assignments. We can't afford to get jaded, so we have to take care of ourselves. You have to step aside to stay fresh for the new project.

We made sure that we had time to debrief, time to take a walk, watch something funny on YouTube, scroll through Instagram, whatever, to process your feelings, thoughts, and emotions. We also tried to take care of each other

But also try to connect with other people and agencies so you're not duplicating effort. Make sure you have a process to fix mistakes. And celebrate every victory, no matter the size.

Resources from the chat

Slides from the presentation (PowerPoint, 3.3 MB, 15 pages)

Design for Real Life - Design it for people hurriedly scrolling through their phone in the middle of an emergency

Finding Empathy for Users

Just Enough Research

If you've ever called a customer service hotline, you can listen in to calls. Really important and life-changing to listen to people in the moment. It's life-changing to hear people in CRISIS in the moment. It's a way to do research that's ethical and caring. You can hear the words they're using while they're still getting help.

Thanks for joining us!

Katherine Spivey
Co-Chair, Plain Language Action and Information Network (PLAIN)
plainlanguage.gov

Subject:	Invitation: PLAIN Huddle Meeting: PL Social Media @ Wed Apr 13, 2022 2pm - 3:30pm (EDT) (pl-cop-main@listserv.gsa.gov)
From:	Katherine Spivey - QTDCB <katherine.spivey@GSA.GOV>
Reply To:	katherine.spivey@gsa.gov
Date:	Tue, 12 Apr 2022 13:49:47 +0000
Content-Type:	multipart/mixed
Parts/Attachments:	text/plain (3133 bytes) , text/html (15 kB) , text/calendar (15 kB) , invite.ics (15 kB)

You have been invited to the following event.

PLAIN Huddle Meeting: PL Social Media

When Wed Apr 13, 2022 2pm – 3:30pm Eastern Time - New York **more details »**

Joining info Join with Google Meet

(b) (6)

Join us on April 13, 2022, from 2-3 pm ET to discuss PLAIN's social media and plain language accounts to follow. Share what social media you've found useful, and what kind of content you like to see. Suggest people and organizations to follow. Hear how we use social media to expand our outreach and amplify our message. Meet PLAIN's social media team.

No need to register--just join us on April 13:

https://gsa.zoomgov.com/j/1606969601?pwd=cDJMVnVUcGZOZmFtRGJYSTAyZjdrUT09

Live captioning
https://www.streamtext.net/player?event=BIS-GSA-MG

Join ZoomGov Meeting

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Going (pl-cop-main@listserv.gsa.gov)? **Yes** - **Maybe** - **No** more options »

Invitation from Google Calendar

You are receiving this courtesy email at the account pl-cop-main@listserv.gsa.gov because you are an attendee of this event.

To stop receiving future updates for this event, decline this event. Alternatively you can sign up for a Google account at https://calendar.google.com/calendar/ and control your notification settings for your entire calendar.

Forwarding this invitation could allow any recipient to send a response to the organizer and be added to the guest list, or invite others regardless of their own invitation status, or to modify your RSVP. Learn More.

This Community of Practice is managed by https://digital.gov, a service of the General Services Administration (GSA).

To unsubscribe from the list, create a new email message, addressed to: PL-COP-MAIN-unsubscribe-request@listserv.gsa.gov. The message content does not matter and the sender's email address will be removed from the list.

This LISTSERV is provided by the GSA, a federal agency subject to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

>> Katherine Spivey: Great. Thank you so much. Good afternoon; I'm Katherine Spivey. This is the plain language huddle on plain social media, hours and hours of endless amusement, I hope.
This is a huddle which means we are not recording this. We are putting a great deal of things in the chat and I will be sending out a write-up or summary later this afternoon. Or probably tomorrow, now that I come to think of it.
So I wanted to do a little explaining of some things, and then I'm hoping that we have a giant sharefest in the chat.
In a few minutes, I'll invite you to take yourself off mute, and we can talk, but if you're sharing anything, any Facebook account, any Twitter account, any LinkedIn account, please put that information into the chat, because it is very hard to get exact spelling, correct spelling, taking it down verbally.
So that's just something that we'd appreciate.
I'm going to go through some housekeeping items, just to make sure that we're all literally on the same page.
I'm going to be introducing some -- and presenting some material, not presenting, just sort of explaining about it. We'll have a more open conversation where you can have permission to unmute. And to mute or unmute, click the microphone button at the bottom left of the Zoom app and if you're on the phone, all you have to do is press Star 6. In the meantime, you can put questions in the chat. I see some people are already introducing themselves on the chat, which is great.
Please abide by the TTS Code of Conduct. We have put the live captioning link in the chat.
Mara, can you check that you've put the link to the TTS Code of Conduct in the chat so people know what they're agreeing to?
>> Mara G: I've put it there, and I will put it again.
>> Katherine Spivey: Fantastic. It is difficult sometimes to get the timing straight because what I've found through doing this is I preloaded a bunch of things and since I was like 20 minutes early, when new people joined the chat, they didn't see those because it was there beforehand. So just reminding that we may have to do some reposting. But again, I will be sending out the things that you add to the chat, if there are social media accounts to follow. Then I will be sending those back to the plain language list serve.
As I said, I'm Katherine Spivey. Katina Stapleton, our own co-chair, was not able to make it and I don't think our other co-chair, Jamie, has been able to make it either. It's hard to tell. We have a lot of people, it's wonderful, but it's hard to decide who is particularly there.
And just in case you are wondering, if case you had scheduled like an hour and a half for this, we are actually closing at 3:00 p.m., and that's our deadline, so if you're hoping

for an extra half-hour, that's fine with me. You can do whatever you like in that particular thing.
So, social media. We have been talking about this as a way to publicize plain language and how we can get more people to know, and we're trying to find out what sorts of social media accounts you follow. And I'm going to, as it were, prime the pump with some. And these are just some plain language organizations that I personally follow.
As always, and I want to make this really, really clear, your mileage may vary; so if you're new to plain language -- if you're new to social media, all I can say is you can try it, and if you don't like it, you don't have to keep doing it.
I think that's about as fair as we can say.
One thing I wanted to do, there was something that happened last week. I had put in -- I had added to the listserv something that said if you would like to join this particular conversation about financial regulations in plain language that's being hosted on clubhouse By Deborah Rose [Name] who are two plain language practitioners, and I wasn't going to be there; I'm not sponsoring that. So I just said this is something you can do if you like.
And some people responded personally to me saying, you know, I'm really interested in the topic. But I don't want to download a new app, which is fine, but that's where some of the conversations are.
I felt the same qualms. I mean, I really enjoyed the discussion I was in when I finally did download Clubhouse but it took me a couple of months to decide this is going to be worth it.
That is just one of the things you we have to consider. Do you want to download another app? Do you want to try something new?
Now, I think I personally spend more time on Twitter, and I'm putting that in the chat because for the -- I'm sorry; for the plain language groups, Twitter, I consider Twitter like postcards. So that's our particular Twitter handle. We have a team. Judy Edelhoff is a member of the team. She's on the call today; I'm not sure if anybody else is from the group but we have a team that puts out plain language social media tweets about PLAIN. We really appreciate them.
We have 4,561 followers on Gonplainlang, which I think is cool and we get to use it on outreach. We use it for plain language exampless plain language in the news, meetings, things like that.
For Facebook, and, gosh, this seems unbelievable, we have 2,700 followers, which is again very interesting and we get to use a little more visuals and repost things that we do.
And our LinkedIn presence, and we'll be adding these to the link, we have 350 followers on LinkedIn.
So I think we have some respectable numbers. There's been some discussion about whether we're going to start using Instagram. But unless we have someone whose

hobby it is to do mediums and GIFs, I'm not (memes) I'm not particularly sure plain language pictures of people is going to do much.
Let me add my first row of organizations into the chat. And let's have some discussion. You can take yourself off mute, if you like. And you can have questions and you can have recommendations, but I'm going to ask you to put your recommendations -- you can mention them, but please put the specific information into the chat.
(Pause)
>> Can you add the information about Clubhouse to the chat?
>> Katherine Spivey: I will. It's part of the list that I've developed. And I discovered this when I was following both Leslie O. Leslie [Name], and Deborah ( ) on Twitter and they started mentioning this Clubhouse. Sorry about that coughing. (Deborah Bosley). When I got more into Twitter, I did realize that a lot of other people were on Twitter as well, and it was an interesting thing in finding people. Like some of the people I had met at conferences, at plain language conferences and online, and things, who have spoken at some of our summits or generally been friends to plain language.
I found that they had Twitter presences and I could get some very, very good plain language information.
Are you following anyone currently on social media that other people might find useful? I can't add the gain, because that's an attachment. So what I can do is add that when I send out the write-up. Or I might do a separate thing to -- or people can just email me if you'd like me to send out the PDF of the game.
(Pause)
>> Katherine Spivey: So do you have questions about plain language in social media, like using plain language for social media?
(Pause)
>> Mara G: It looks like you've got a question, Katherine, from Amanda.
>> Katherine Spivey: Okay. Amanda, do you want to take yourself off of mute and give me your question, or is it in here?
>> I dropped it in there, but I think we probably covered this before, but when we're thinking about social media and plain language, in the acquisition space we have tons of acronyms and sometimes language that with not be considered plain but it's kind of terms of art and stuff you would use to reach wonky people.
I was wondering if there are any general recommendations around that. And also thinking of kind of the universe you're speaking to, if it's important to consider broader applicability and why you would want to be plain versus why you would want to be wonky and specific.
>> Katherine Spivey: Well, I would say that it would depend on whether you're in -- what your audience is, and I would think that social media is much broader than, say, audiences that you would -- what do you call it? -- that you might email or have newsletters.

And I can't really imagine why you would want to be too wonky. So, I mean, that just seems a little odd to me.
I also have an issue of someone trying to get into the meeting, so let me try and handle that as well.
>> Mara G: Yeah, Katherine, they wouldn't be in a waiting room --
>> Katherine Spivey: Understood, but they seem to think they are. So I'm trying to get them out.
>> Mara G: Okay. If you want to just send me their emails, I can also communicate with them.
>> Katherine Spivey: Okay. Amanda, I'm so sorry; I feel that I have missed some of your question.
If you're talking about hashtags, obviously it's going to be what a particular audience is going to recognize as important to them. Yes?
>> That's kind of what I was wondering because I'm think of CSCRIM or GWAX where they might be widely recognized in the space, but they're also going to limit the wider sparing capabilities -- wider sharing capabilities.
>> Katherine Spivey: I don't think social media is supposed to be all things to everyone. So, you know, I'm wondering if they can -- I'm not sure that this is necessarily a plain language issue. It is certainly an audience issue. And so what I was thinking is maybe what you need is a better way of recognizing what people are looking for. And that's the sort of thing that you'd look at and say, hmm, what are the other hashtags that people are using? It would be interesting to know if you searched Twitter, as you say, for GWACS, to see is that used often enough and is your audience on social media for that particular thing?
And are acronyms plain enough? I think that again is a question of what are people searching on. This comes back to let's use the language our customers use. And, for example, I was getting my list together of social media accounts to share with you, and I searched on plain writing and plain language, just to see if I could cover those things. And I think that you can have social media in plain language, even if you're including the what you call the term of art to see if you can get it in. I mean, you know, to get people there.
But you should always know that you're dealing with a huge range of audiences because you can't just say, all experts in this topic, please look here. You know, you might be getting someone who's interested but doesn't necessarily know very much. Yeah, I think one of the things that plain language is starting to cover a little bit more is the inclusiveness of language, and some of the debates about terms. I mean, one thing to get things clear, and clarity is always good; but you also have to look at specific terms and think, is that exactly what we want? Is that what the people themselves are using? I'm going to put another bunch of social media accounts. This is some of the plain language leaders.

And these are people that have spoken at our summits or our meetings or I've immediate at other conferences -- I've met at other conferences. And I just realized I have completely forgotten to include my own. If you want to follow me, let's see; having the sort of day where I can't really remember all of those things. Okay.
And I'm@katherinspivey for that.
Are you already, any of you, following plain language accounts right now that you'd like to share? Or are you trying to decide whether you should go back, or should you go to use some of these social media accounts? Where are you in the social media process?
(Pause)
>> Katherine Spivey: Okay; you're trying to transition from AP format for social media to plain language text. Can you take yourself offline and discuss -- I mean, off mute and discuss this a little more? Because I'm not entirely sure what you mean.
Christina? From VBA? Not sure what you mean from that. And William Swanson, you're trying to get your membership dialed in to plain language. What does that mean? You can take yourself off mute and discuss this.
>> I want them to be familiar with all the organizations and possibilities. I don't think many of them are.
>> Katherine Spivey: Okay. And when you say -- I mean, do you mean -- okay. You are trying to get them to at least know what plain language is, or you want them to use plain language?
>> Both, but mainly the first one. Mainly get them aware that you folks even exist.
>> Katherine Spivey: Mm-hmm. Well, always glad to know about these things. Glad to know that there are new groups. I have seen a couple of social media pieces from ACES, so it's interesting to see how some of our realms, what do you call it, coincide.
La Sean I see you have an email out to your communications director to talk about plain language in our social media posts.
Do you want to take yourself off of mute and talk about that?
>> Really briefly, we have had challenges from the very outset, when the executive order came down about plain language, and until we were dinged in a report, meaning department-wide, no one really gave plain language a second thought.
And so once I brought that to the attention of leadership, they were like, oh, we can't do this. And as a matter of fact, I had one director tell me, oh, you've got to be kidding. There's no way our department would get a D.
I said, don't believe me; look it up.
So when we did, we slowly began to grab those folks who were kicking and screaming, especially the attorney community, because everything has to be in legalese, and so we were saying, no, it can be in plain language. But we have to develop a strategic plan to do this because we're talking about 18,000 law enforcement entities as our external stakeholders and then our internal stakeholders, and if we buy in and start speaking plain language to them, then perhaps we can translate this across all of our media

programmers. She hasn't gotten back to me yet because we've got some things going on in the agency, but I am so looking forward to the conversation and finally bringing everybody on board.
>> Katherine Spivey: I appreciate your energy and your ambitions. That sounds really good.
I try to -- I usually find that not everyone rejoices in language the way I do, and I try not to make that my determineator. But I do try to tell people things like, with the IT group, I do try to tell them, look, people will follow your instructions better if they understand what they are. And this is apparently news to people. Like it is totally clear.
And no, no, it's not clear.
So that is a way to start, and definitely for -- to get people to comply, it's really useful if they know what they're supposed to do and not just sort of having to figure it out or at least try to figure it out, because people can go in several different directions.
So I'm just really pleased to hear that you're having that. Having that conversation.
One of the things that I tried was just taking some screenshots of some social media and suggesting different things, and you know, sometimes that would be like, can we put this in bullets? Can we make this big block of text smaller? Can we link it to something so we have a sort of built-in call to action?
So that's what the social media folks are interested in, because one of the things I've tried, when I was -- when this was fully part of my responsibilities, I was the person scheduling these. And I always went in and tried to make it plainer, in the sense of -- this was when we had stricter word limits or character limits, say on Twitter, and I would make every character earn its keep, you know. No long, puffy words; I would pull it down.
But I do know that the compliance report that you mentioned, Lashawn, has a very big effect on people because they may not have ever realized it.
And also -- the federal report card that the cert nor language does, and I've also found that they do -- when they're able to do the clear mark awards, that's something that's really interesting to look into.
And I see, Christine, that you can't use your phone to come off of mute; I'm so sorry.
But it's interesting that you should say that you're moving from AP to more plain language. Because my understanding has always been that you have plain language in the style guide doesn't matter in a sense, in that plain language is style guide agnostic.
So I'd be interested in hearing more about what people say about that.
Jacqueline, I appreciate that you're so excited about it. That's always so much fun to find more people interested in plain language.
And Bill, who says, I suspect I'm the only one in my entire mode who even knows about the 2010 act or the plain language movement.

There's surprising pockets of enthusiasm in different departments. I mean, sometimes you'll be so surprised; sometimes it comes from lawyers, sometimes it comes from the communication folks, sometimes it comes from completely different.
When I worked in the acquisition, in GSA's acquisition group, we had a brown bag. This was right around 2010 right after the Plain Writing Act, and we were trying to tell people in easy stages about it. We were sort of testing the waters, seeing how easy a sell that might be.
And we had a brown bag where we grabbed a conference room and all got together. And some people, honestly I was as surprised as anyone, some people who were long-time acquisition contracting officers and contracting officers' representatives, they were so excited. They were standing up and they were like, this is fantastic! We need to redo our policies and our agreements and we really need to make this useful for the customer!
And I'm thinking, I'm dreaming! I'm totally dreaming. This is exactly what I wanted to know.
Let's see what other questions we have.
There's a question about newspaper style and plain language, and gearing it toward a grade level. And we've discussed on the list a little bit that readability of formulas can take you further along. But they're not going to fix everything. I mean, it's not a substitute for knowing your audience.
People have never complained, however, that something was too easy to read. I mean, people appreciate having their time and their energy respected. And to I see that there's a followup here. So I'm trying to follow the questions.
And if you can, you can take yourself off of mute. Sore I'm not reading the questions out of the chat. Let's see.
Ah, AP style in social media. Yes, I can see where that would be a conflict, because newspaper stories -- well, that's one thing. There is an aspect of storytelling that some people feel doesn't require plain language, and sometimes what we have on websites or instructions or forms is not newspaper in the sense of storytelling. You know, it's the user experience writing, it's the, here's how to do this.
And I think you have to just figure out what is suitable for the audience and the medium. Stanley says, some class between AP guidelines and breezier register oft used in social media.
But I don't think anyone has ever won an argument using the style guide. No one looks at a piece and say, oh, they recommended the specific emdash, or whatever guideline; oh, they must be correct in all things.
Style guides are for the writer's convenience so you don't have to keep remembering what's going on, or what decision has already been made.
It's entirely possible, Jacqueline, that you missed the 2010 plain language act. It was part of open government, really, and only applies to federal agencies.

A lot of people would like to have it applied to other things but you have to actually read the act to find out what's involved in it.
I'm going to put a link about the report card. It's at the Center for Plain Language. I am not sure right offhand what that link is.
Oh, thank you so much. Someone put in the --
>> Bill put it up there, Katherine, Bill Swanson.
>> Katherine Spivey: Thank you so much. Getting ahead of myself.
And la Sean, congratulations, your plain language PowerPoint is now part of the onboarding process. Took almost five years. Yes, yes, it can do that.
One of the things that my group, my team discussed was it's helpful to let new people know what they have to do and don't make it a surprise.
But, yeah, it can take a lot of time, which is difficult. And you're not wanting your fellow editors to look square by holding specifically to AP style or. That's an issue no matter what style guide you personally use. I am personally on a team right now redoing our style guide where we incorporate the latest AP style edits and decided to not adopt some of them. We said these are exceptions. We are not doing these things.
And we had already done that for some things, but like I believe that we, all of us said, you know, we hate these dashes for the bulleted lists. So we're just going to stay with the bullets.
And you can do that. You just have to make sure that everyone knows. But that is one of the things that we're figuring out, how do we promote it, how do we make people know about these things? How do we share it?
I wanted to put in, into the chat, another group of things. These are some podcasts. I am not quite so much into the podcast world that I would like, but I am finding that some podcasts are really useful. And if you have any podcasts that you're on that would be on the subject of plain language or language in general, those are really good ones, please share.
And generally, I get -- oh, congratulations, Paul, on the new hire. Working to improve the agency's grades. I'd love to talk to you about that! (Laughing).
That's been an interesting experience.
One of the things about the report card that I find useful is that a lot of agencies simply forget to do their annual report. And they get an F on the compliance grade, and that's a big shock. So you know, sometimes that perks people right up and they know more about it.
This is some of our -- some of the people who have spoken, either at a summit or at a recent meeting. Amanda cast tell low was in last month's huddle on the fine treatment.gov website, and it was very interesting to hear what she had to say.
In fact, that's one of the ways that I find out that people are -- might be good speakers. I follow them on social media. And I think, huh, that might be a good person. You know,

that person has an interesting tweet or a thread or an article. Or they've sponsored an event or something. So it's interesting.
I'm putting up some people that I listen to at confab. Becky Spurbeck did a presentation on plain language and UX writing, which is user experience writing, and I thought there were some really interesting things.
Two of the things also, the Communicator's Hub, which I think is every other week, and the Clubhouse, it says weekly but I think it's more monthly, at least right now, on Fridays.
So here's some more things.
Do you have social media to share? Or how many of you are not on plain language because you don't want to? Which is perfectly fair.
Thanks. Thanks, Lashawn; Communicator's Hub is every two weeks. It's hard to tell sometimes.
UX collective, yeah.
Okay. It's also interesting, and this is like the more I learn, and I learn a lot from social media, because that's one way to get to presentations and speaking events and things like that, is to see the particles and intersections that plain language has with customer experience, user experience, customer service, the user experience writing, just some of the different things, content strategy, you know, things like information architecture. I came to plain language from a Web background, so those -- that's the goal posts for me, that's the things that I look for.
You may have other ideas.
Plain language Janet: Sometimes -- plain language adjacent: Sometimes there's a particular discipline, and for right now, I'll use customer experience, or customer service, rather.
And customer service can use plain language, too, in their -- to, in their phrase, speak the words that their customers use or use the words that their customers use. And in that way there's an intersection of plain language and customer service. They're not exactly the same thing, but plain language supports customer service. It's next to customer service, or customer experience, or user experience.
Or even, you know, some of the other things. That also comes in when you talk about things like content strategy, which also has a plain language part, where you say, so, one of the questions you have to ask about content or text or whatever is, why are we publishing this? Why are we putting up a page on this?
And if people can't answer that, you know, then you shouldn't do it. And that's part of the strategy before you even put a word, before you even open up a document and start typing, should be, what are you doing? Why are you doing this? What is your goal?
So are these your sorts of questions about plain language? Did you have different ones related to social media? How many of you are looking for social media content just on the Web? And what do you find?

Maybe a better question is, how many of you are using social media now? Because that's one of the things that, when I -- when new people join my team, I see if they're on social media. See if there's a way. I will admit I use Twitter more because it's -- what do you call it? -- it's faster. It's a postcard. It's easier to move around in.
Facebook, I think is a little photo-heavy, and I find it sometimes exhausting just because there's so much.
And LinkedIn, I dislike the format very much! So I'm not on there very often.
So did you join today because you're already using social media, or if you were wondering to start using social media because of plain language?
Have I had issues with Twitter? I have not. I'm also a little -- I just realized that one of the things I do perhaps too much is favorite things, so that's difficult. If you mean by difficulties, do I mean by -- well, I'm not sure what you mean by difficulties or controversy. Me personally? No. I haven't seen too much controversies on -- I mean, I tend to follow language sites and cats and books, and there's not a lot of controversy there! (Laughing).
That may yet happen.
I think it depends on whom you follow. I have unfollowed certain accounts, just because I'm not that interested in the topic to go down into the weeds the way some people are. But as I said, I find Twitter the easiest to get through, if that makes any sense. It also -- I think the only difficulty I've ever had with Twitter was not being able to -- the agency stopped allowing us to use hoot sweet (?) and Tweet Deck and that put a crimp in our -- we lost the federal terms of service. So we couldn't schedule our tweets.
But it's also very interesting to find more people about -- more research about how people use plain language. And that's one of the things I look for in that.
Writing For Busy People, that's very helpful. Thank you for sharing that.
Todd Rogers on the science of writing for busy people. That's wonderful, because that's really -- oh, scheduling the tweets? Scheduling the tweets itself was a problem; we lost the federal terms of service for that particular platform. And in fact, that became a problem for PLAIN because our volunteers, and Judy has just had to step off, which is a shame, but our social media team like traded -- every person took a month or a couple of weeks or whatever it was, and they'd just go in one day and they'd load the tweets and they'd be set. They would just come on out.
And we couldn't do that when we lost the terms of service, the federal terms of service. So it would be a question of could you go in live and put it in?
Federal terms of service are those things that allow a federal agency to use a piece of social media or any kind of software.
And that has been -- I mean, when I started with social media, it was -- we always say the wild West, and this is reasonably wild. But there wasn't any policy because we're -- maybe the government agencies weren't doing it, and they didn't know they needed policy.

And then what happens over the course of years is agencies say, oh, we can't have that, or the acquisition folks say, nope, that's not covered; or the lawyers say this is really dangerous, and the security people saying oops, no, that doesn't match our safety protocols.
So federal terms of service is a thing.
And one of the things is also judging -- if you're in charge of doing social media at your agency or just doing it for fun is you can schedule too much. And we found that maybe once or twice a week was actually having more of an impact than once or twice a day.
So I mean, you have to look at the analytics, you have to look at, are people following? Are we getting results from our tweets? Things like that.
No, that was federal government-wide. I believe GSA is the agency who handles that kind of negotiations with the tech community, but I'm not 100% sure about that.
Yes, IT, legal, policy, bureaucracy, what could go wrong? (Laughing).
Well, it just made things slower. But I'm also not a fan of people saying, oh, let's all use this thing and everybody jumps on it and a couple weeks later they find massive security holes because that's -- that's not fun, either.
So social media came under some sort of regulation just as websites did. Just as like the copyright rules did. Things like that.
There's probably some work flow.
So, do you have more questions about social media? Do you have new things to share? Do you have ideas or questions about plain language?
A couple years ago, that's really all I know. I haven't been following that lately.
I have one last blast of people to share. And these are just some of the people that I have found useful and have continued to look at.
Content Teatime sometimes hosts miniature summits, people talk for 20 or 30 minutes. It's interesting to see what's coming up. The Nielsen/Norman research group has fantastic information on eye tracking and how people read online. I really do depend on that when I'm working with people who are resisting plain language, because I can say, okay, this is not me just saying plain language guidelines comply with them, this is me saying this is how people read, and they are really not going to suspend these behaviors because of your content.
I'd like to think that I say this somewhat more gracely, but maybe not. You know, people sometimes say, well, my content is so valuable. And I'm like, well, they don't know that. I always assume, speaking of audience, I always assume that my reader is busy, is late for a meeting, lost a shoe on the way to work, and can't get her laptop up.
Right, to be absolutelier clear and requires little effort as possible. So, yes, clarity, the baseline of communication. Let people know what you want them to do. Don't make it a Henry James novel, much as I like helpry James, I don't want -- Henry James, I don't want my policy sections written in that.

So, if there aren't any questions or further suggestions, you can always send me@info@plainlanguage.gov. Let's see; I'll put that in. If you want to add anything to the language social media, I appreciate that; I can send it out. As I said, maybe tomorrow or the day after.
And thank you for joining us today.
Any last-minute questions? You can take yourself off of mute, or....
>> Thank you, Katherine.
>> Katherine Spivey: Thank you.
>> Thank you.
>> Katherine Spivey: A pleasure. Glad you enjoyed it.
>> Thanks.
>> Katherine Spivey: Oh, tremendous, that's very nice; thank you.
>> Thank you.
>> Katherine Spivey: Everyone, had a good day.
>> Mara G: Nice comments coming in. Thanks, everyone.
Great. All right. I'll end the meeting. Thanks, Katherine.
>> Katherine Spivey: Just make sure you grab the chat.
>> Mara G: Definitely, absolutely.
>> Katherine Spivey: Thank you so much.
>> Mara G: Definitely. Have a great day, everyone.
>> Katherine Spivey: You, too. Bye-bye.

Subject: SUMMARY: Plain Language Social Media
From: Katherine Spivey - ZC <katherine.spivey@GSA.GOV>
Reply To: Plain Language COP Main <PL-COP-MAIN@LISTSERV.GSA.GOV>, Katherine Spivey - ZC <katherine.spivey@GSA.GOV>
Date: Thu, 21 Apr 2022 10:55:36 -0400
Content-Type: multipart/alternative
Parts/Attachments: text/plain (3176 bytes) , text/html (4 kB)

Here's the writeup from last week's huddle: Plain language social media accounts to friend, follow, or share.

As always, your mileage may vary. There are many good reasons not to use social media. But if you do use social media, or are looking for a reason to start, here are some recommendations. Most of these are organizations; many are people. Friend, follow, or share for a few weeks; see if you like the account.

Also, if you have something to recommend and you didn't make it to the huddle, please share it with the list!

Organizations
PLAIN-Twitter- govplainlang
PLAIN-Facebook - https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100064419170476
PLAIN-LinkedIN - https://www.linkedin.com/showcase/plain-language-action-and-information-network-plain-/?viewAsMember=true
Center for Plain Language Twitter - plain_language
Clarity International Twitter - ClarityInterna
Plain International Twitter - PLAIN_Lang_Intl
Plain English Foundation Twitter - PlainEnglishAus

Leaders (Twi
Joe Kimble - [redacted]
Leslie Miller [redacted]
Deborah Bosley [redacted]
Ginny Redish - [redacted]
Karen Schriver - [redacted]
Katina Staple [redacted]
Neil James - [redacted]

Podcasts on Twitter
SpeakGood Podcast - SpeakGoodPod
Alan Alda podcast - Clear&Vivid

Meeting/Summit Speakers on Twitter
Amanda Costell [redacted]
Nicole Fenton - [redacted]
Jana Goldman - [redacted]

Speakers from Confab - Twitter
Becky Spurbeck [redacted]
Andy Welfle [redacted]
Michael Me [redacted]
Erika Hall - [redacted]
Scott Kubie [redacted]

Writing Resources on Twitter
Grammar Girl - GrammarGirl

UX Writing Hub - uxwritinghub
Dave Nelsen - The_GrammarGeek
WorkinginContent - wicontent
Content Teatime - @ContentTeatime
Jonathon Owen - ArrantPedantry
Content Design London - ContentDesignLN
Purdue Writing Lab - PurdueWLab
UX Writing Events - uxwritingevents
Nielsen Norman Group - NNgroup

Communicators Hub
https://communicatorshub.mn.co/feed

Clubhouse app
Plain Language Weekly, with @LeslieO and @deborahbosley

Recommendations from the huddle
chelsea Larsson is a good follow, also more UX but very PL-adjacent

Not specifically social media, but I must recommend Todd Rogers on the science of writing for busy people. He's especially good with improving our email correspondence. He wouldn't consider himself a PL specialist, but he nails it.
Harvard Kennedy School of Executive Education.
https://www.hks.harvard.edu/node/304048

Katherine Spivey
Co-Chair, Plain Language Action and Information Network (PLAIN)
plainlanguage.gov

This Community of Practice is managed by https://digital.gov, a service of the General Services Administration (GSA).

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Subject:	Invitation: PLAIN Huddle: Eden Savino and Melanie Fallow discuss GAO'... @ Wed May 11, 2022 2pm - 3pm (EDT) (pl-cop-main@listserv.gsa.gov)
From:	Katherine Spivey - QTDCB <katherine.spivey@GSA.GOV>
Reply To:	katherine.spivey@gsa.gov
Date:	Mon, 9 May 2022 17:20:29 +0000
Content-Type:	multipart/mixed
Parts/Attachments:	text/plain (3544 bytes) , text/html (14 kB) , text/calendar (14 kB) , invite.ics (14 kB)

You have been invited to the following event.

PLAIN Huddle: Eden Savino and Melanie Fallow discuss GAO's Fast Facts

When Wed May 11, 2022 2pm – 3pm Eastern Time - New York **more details »**

Joining info Join with Google Meet

(b) (6)

Calendar

Who equest)

You heard Eden Savino and Melanie Fallow discuss GAO's Fast Facts at last year's summit. Fast Facts are brief, visually appealing, online introductions to the agency's 700+ products issued each year.

But how did this 100-year-old sometimes risk-averse audit agency develop and implement this new, digitally focused, mobile-friendly, plain language product?

Learn from the team that taught this old watchdog new tricks!

We'll share project- and change-management strategies, including

- overcoming obstacles — institutional and technological
- identifying and marshalling resources
- evaluating results
- using the power of data
- developing institutional knowledge to continue to push for change

Join ZoomGov Meeting

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Going (pl-cop-main@listserv.gsa.gov)? **Yes** - **Maybe** - **No** more options »

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BIS - GSA - Getting to Plain: Designing, Launching, and Institutionalizing a Plain Language Program
5/11/2022 2:00 PM

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5945-BIS-GSA-Getting to Plain-Designing, Launching, and Institutionalizing a Plain Language Program
(BIS-General Services Administration (GSA))
5/11/2022 2 PM

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2899-BIS-GSA-GETTING TO PLAIN-DESIGNING, LAUNCHING, AND INSTITUTIONALIZING PLAIN LANGUAGE PROGRAM(BIS-GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATIO (GSA))
MAY 11, 2022

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>> KATHERINE SPIVEY: Hello, everyone. We're going to give a few more minutes because people don't necessarily join precisely on top of the hour.

In case you are wondering. This is the plain language huddle with the GAS packs duo team in case you are wondering.

Okay. We have just a few more people in the waiting room, and about 31 people, so I am going to go ahead and get us started. Let me see if I can easily pull down the thing, so I am not -- ugh. Crap. Sorry for my strong language.

Good afternoon, welcome to today's huddle, Getting to Plain: Designing, Launching, and Institutionalizing a Plain Language Program. My Namath Kathrine Spivey and you know I am the community league and plains launcher and program launcher for GSA Plain Language Program.

And I want to give you an idea of what we're talking about and the ground rules for all of this. My pronouns are she/her. I am older than I appear. I'm a white woman, brown hair and glasses, and a noble profile, in case anyone wanted to check practice some of the quick housekeeping items. As we do in your huddles, we're not recording this one. Please abide by the GSA code of conduct when you are doing the digit huddle meetings. It is been placed in the chat box now. Live captioning is available. If you are in the Zoom app, you can choose the button at the bottom of the screen and if you want to watch it available, you find the link in the chatted box.

Our presenters will answer questions and please use the Q&A button. It is difficult to monitor both. Please feel free to introduce yourselves in the chat box. Please, don't have silent conversations it is difficult to answer your questions if you asked it in the chat, rather than the Q&A box.

Also, if you are willing to volunteering taking notes. You can send it to me at info.language.gov.

Today I have the pleasure of reintroducing you or introducing you to Eden Savino and Melanie Fallow from the actability office. Eden is the Fast Facts air traffic control

and if you see her with the flags, you will know exactly what she's doing and Melanie is an editor in fast backs.

I will hand it over to the speakers in every anticipation of delight.

>> MELANIE FALLOW: Thank you.

>> EDEN SAVINO: I feel like that's a much harder bar it reach than most of what we do.

My name is Eden Savino as Katherine said, I helped launch of Fast Facts at GAO with Melanie, my partner in crime and editor in cleave. A little bit of Brown. I know you all love GAO and know exactly who GAO is. For those 23409 aware, the government accountability office we monitor Congress and we issue between 700 and 1000 projects www.GAO.gov, you see it on every single one of the products, more than 700 a year. There's a very short introduction for each restaurant, testimony, special publication, everything that says Fast Facts and they have only been around since 2016. We're going to talk about why this program came from and how we're able to implement it. Before I get more than that, Melanie can tell us her background.

>> I think we can enter any questions in the chat box.

>> EDEN SAVINO: If you can see in the chat right now, there's sort of an outline we will follow of how we sort of were able to launching this Plain Language Program at GAO. We both love GAO. Bleed GAO. Please don't say, GAO said blah, blah, blah. And also, I know Katherine as this Fast Facts duo, obviously, we're a team. And not all that Fast Facts is. But is just so you know.

How do we launch this and make it so this agency has for every single product as soon as it hits the website, there's a brief online introduction that can easily be read on a cell phone in plain language with impact and visual.

We're going to in the chat, we put in a bulleted list it the problem, pilot, data, roll out, professionalization, nominalization, we need the nominalization to drive us home and finally define and improve. Melanie, do you want to talk with about the problem?

>> MELANIE FALLOW: Yes, we have external review, and other agencies have looked at our work and processes and basically, they are required to make sure we're doing our auditing correctly. In the last two reviews we've done, we heard from them is some of our write something rather difficult to read and these are other auditors and they are finding it difficult. That's a problem.

Actually, even before that started, we went around and we asked people, how do you feel about the highlights page? We asked internal folks, and we did focus groups of all of the different kinds of people who worked at GAO, we had lawyers, methodologists, economists, librarians, all of the people who write the pages and read the pages. What

do you think about these? Most people said, they are really hard to read. We don't like writing them, using them, or anything about them.

We tried to figure out, how can we change this to really get to what we want, this communication product to be clear for our peer reviewers and easier for our analysts to write and easier for us at the public affairs office because we have to read this stuff and translate it from people, so how can we streamline the process and make it easier for us. It is sort of the external and internal impetuous problem we're trying to solve.

>> EDEN SAVINO: And this is one of these things we had a really defined problem as community leaders and people in the Public Affairs, and we could always say something more clearly, but what was good about this project, when we ran into this project 7 or 8 years ago. There was a very clear problem. And we made within the agency there is a problem that needs solving.

That helped us get to the stage heading to the second bullet, a pilot. It is agreed all levels of the agency, we have 3000 people work at GAO and almost all online auditory analysts and investigate on behalf of Congress and great auditors they can shift to communications and especially this summary of all of our products, the highlights page and there clear dream. If you are trying to figure out how to implement the Plain Language Program, wherever you are, getting everybody to agree on the problem and then the pilot. People think, oh. I have an idea how to fix this. First idea, next idea, let's go.

We didn't have a lot of resources, sort of begging and bore owing from resources and we started with a small pilot. We started in 2016. And the way it works in GAO, about 1300 mission teams, all of them doing analyst, online audit work broken up into 13 teams. Homeland Security and justice team, natural environment, international; anywhere federal dollars are spent GAO is there.

We started out with 5 of the 13 mission teams and had them say, okay. How do we go from this very nuance, insightful research, impactful report, that's an audit document to what is a quick, online overview. What's the report, what do I want to do with it?

As much as reviewers said they had a hard time communicating, no one had a problem with this. Bulletproof solid. How do we get somebody to read a 30, 50, 80 page audit document.

Do you want to talk about the character and where that came from?

>> MELANIE FALLOW: Sure. For the performance and accountability report, some of the federal agencies put out showing what they did every year and the results.

For our accountability report, we have a template, you can write in 650

characters what your accomplishments, what your audit team -- how much money they received or something like that. There were 650 characters. If we can justify million dollar savings in 650 characters why not summaries a GAO restaurant.

>> EDEN SAVINO: We started out 650 characters and also very visual. Everything is visual. Especially a phone, what grabs you first. 650 characters with spaces and punctuation and all visual. This was outside of the audit documentation. For those working in audit agencies, what does that mean? Every single word needs to be supported. If I say Massachusetts New England state and GAO report. Some document Massachusetts and how it is spelled correctly and this is in New England and you see it is one of the New England state.

And you can see a very direct picking of a summary report. We started making these things and during the pilot. We roll this out and technical aspects, writing aspects and [Indiscernible] aspects.

How do we get these on the website, where should we go. I learned more about online publishing than I wanted to know. He every agency does to different, and you are aware of legacy, and a bunch of reports you have already read. Dealing with technical publishing legacy reports. Putting something on the Web is not as easy as it sounds. There will be technical aspects to you.

The legacy publishing doesn't make sense, and since moved to HHML and it is part of the process. So relax. You will find all these weird things around tech.

And then the writing, especially since plain group and others are so valuable. We were learning about principles and if you look at Warren Buffet's training on the website or attend Katherine's, and we learn principles and oh, wait. Everybody goes through this.

Subject matter experts and communicators are working hand in glove. You can't give someone template guidance and say, now go be a communicator. It comes out other places as well. We have really smart people. They have a Ph.D. and why can't they write this.

We had to figure this out and the plain language aspect. I know we introduced Melanie as the editor in chief, but internally, we talk about running people through the Melanie machine. Okay. You think you get to play second to Melanie and that process. We learned to do an internal process, our team lives in the GAO Office of Affair and we have a very small team through Melanie and have to work with teams. They will look at those aspects and say, oh, they are just dumbing it down. No. Everybody gets annoyed by e-mail feedback. The biggest complaint we get is the back and forth. We want to cut down on the back and forth. There's no clear communication. We're not going to cram something down someone's throat and the accuracy. We have to talk

and do it that way.

And we have tech issues and have it developed our own internal systems and then there was the culture change. You know what? You are documenting internal findings and you put out the word and take the word handed down on high, and that's ongoing. I wouldn't say we solved that and we have gotten more comfortable with it. And that's the pilot aspect of it. What other things about the pilot, Melanie?

>> MELANIE FALLOW: Well, starting small. That was a really big piece because we basically found out what the problems were as we did it. When we started with just a small group of teams, we realized there will be a lot of e-mails and realized there will be a lot of scheduling meetings and making sure people get to talk and also rewriting and that sort of thing, and then figuring out how to scale that up.

In the beginning it was largely just me and Eden, and Dorothy with the role of training. We're getting there. [Laughing]. And starting small and figuring out what the problems are as you scale is up. That was a definite learning curve for us.

>> EDEN SAVINO: Sorry, something is lead loading on my computer. Dorothy goldsmith, these the English Department. And overseas all of the writing training. We did do training and that was part of the role out for the pilot. And found at the end of the day training doesn't replace greet can communicators, we have a great guide and template, coming to the stage we can start addressing, but the training, I thought early on. Great. We'll run three thousand auditors through Fast Facts training, a three-hour class with Dorothy, reporting, exercise training and all of those type of things, but at the end of the day, after three hours I can't train everyone to write like Melanie and other editors on this call.

The goal of training, get a sense of what we're trying to do, and the problem to solve and getting everybody in agreement --

>> MELANIE FALLOW: And also institutional support of solving the problem. The important role in training.

>> EDEN SAVINO: Strange, played a very important role in it, but the training alone, you are not going to be training people as plain language writers, but having them do it every day and feedback. It is a mental shift.

So the pilot. Getting together the IT. Figure out the specks, what do we look like. How many pixels wide on the website? There are a million things to work on with our IT and publishing team. The culture change, the training, the presentations. We went around as each team joined the pilot, chuck, Director of Public Affairs I report to. We took the show on the road, went to team meetings, internal newsletters really getting it out there.

At the part of the pilot, we track data. So we have the agreed upon problem, the pilot slowly rolling down from, building on and then we collected data. I keep referring to GAOers as watchdogs, that's who we are. A congressional watchdog, so if you want to convince a watchdog of something, bring receipts, show them the data. And you can't tell somebody, oh, our writing is unclear. No. Auditors had peer reviews and said that writing is sometimes unclear. And then we also have Google analytics on our website and I can't tell you the value of having those data. Making sure we track things like time on page. How many pages somebody saw. How often they shared some something. How they found our information.

I will show something real quick. It will be painful to look at it.

>> MELANIE FALLOW: We don't expect you to read it.

>> EDEN SAVINO: Do in the expect to be able to read it. It is an excerpt of a six page PDF, a lot of graphics data. That is GAOers, an internal document, several years old now. , This is the kind of thing we would take at other people of GAO to show them the value of Fast Facts. We had an agreed upon problem, and we think something might lead towards a solution, but we test it and have the data saying that people spend more time on page. Looking at desktop, we look specific likely at mobile. We spoke to staffers, journalists and user, we sat people in front of the computer and asked them to read a fast fact and asked them what it was about. I will take it down now. It is a busy screen and things that may not even make sense, like average procession. This is Google data analytics we were tracking very carefully so we could say, it ream really improves [Indiscernible] building we're writing for journalists, staffers and agencies to make sure they understand the writing programs.

>> MELANIE FALLOW: One of the other things tracking internal data. How long it took to do each one. How many people doing interviews with the Assistant Directors and say, how much of a burden was this for your team? Good timing, bad timing, what would you improve if you could.

Also did the feedback surveys and collected the data on what kind of a resource impact it would have on the whole agency to roll it out, and that data was also important to determine any changes to the program we wanted to make.

>> EDEN SAVINO: I'm sure if you are a federal agency, you have something 4 C or something similar, the agency used. The pop ups hey, do you want it fill out a survey? No. A lot of people don't fill them out, so they are not generalizable. Oh, yeah. Goodwill borrows borrow, bad writers steal. We can show a little bit more. We'll get into the Q&A perhaps.

>> MELANIE FALLOW: We can actually send the information on digital.gov to Sara's presentations because that has a lot of information.

>> EDEN SAVINO: We have Google analytics data; user feedback and user testing and I can't emphasize enough how valuable it is. Actually talking to your readers, sitting down, one-on-one. Oh, it looks like you are pausing now. What do you think here? And we got feedback we were not anticipating. That's valuable. If you haven't gotten feedback for the products you are creating, plan on doing it. It takes a little bit of effort, but it allows us to speak with more authority when going to the analysts and auditors, how do you know? A Washington reporter complained of having too many acronyms.

>> MELANIE FALLOW: Two.

>> EDEN SAVINO: Whoa. That's too many. Once you hear from a read e engaged read e oh, we have to mark that up a bit.

And also you are at an agency trying to find agencies 20 convince people either there's a problem or something you are doing to improve gives you access to the 4 C data. It is solely federal agencies use them. And you are oh. You are at 80th percentile there and you are 60th percentile.

Also, Google analytics we let anyone in our agency to look at our data to look at it. We're about data and transparency. And have several hundred people at the digital.gov analytics data. Gosh, we had this year on the report and this many people looked at it. That data is valuable.

We had this pilot, slowly adding to the time and how to propose to get to plain language. We have data and qualitative and quantitative data. We get the roll out. I think the roll out is just the roll out. [Laughing]

So we did -- once we got through the pilot and the data, we got agreement from our Executive Committee, up, up, up, saying yes. This is a good project. -- good point -- and roll it out agency-wide and scheduling it. And 13 teams each covering different aspects of the Federal Government. Add this and this, and incorporate that and go on to the next one. Including training the teams going to all of their meeting.

That was the roll out. I think I shared mostly.

Professionalization and institutionalization. Once we did there, we say, how many people do we need?

Tough lesson. Everything that has to happen every day you need three people to do because okay. One person is on vacation and one person sick, okay. Now you are down to one person. Those sorts of lessons and again, if I were a better person I would have read more on the topic, but all of this is the pilot roll out all of that.

Professional institutionalization making sure everything lines up and making sure every team understands what's happening and getting the deadlines and utilization and

hiring and giving people titles so everything happens all of the time regardless of Covid, the world on fire, God knows Apocalypse, whatever horse you are betting on now.

[Indiscernible] Melanie?

>> MELANIE FALLOW: One thing he with were doing at the beginning is tracking a spreadsheet and that wasn't going to work for 7500 products, so we ended up finding a commercial avenue the shelves solution, we were not technically allowed to use, about you we used it anyway.

>> EDEN SAVINO: We are allowed to use it now.

>> MELANIE FALLOW: We ended up with a little federal whatnot we had to get for it. It was figuring out, how are we going to keep track of where each of these is in the process at any given time. As we mentioned there's a lot of back and forth and views. We wanted a lot of cold reader eyes on them because we were addressing various concerns that might pop own. If we think something is clear it is because we knew something about it and hand it to someone else, he and they say I don't get it. Being able to track all of the interviews and able to do that. Spreadsheet wasn't working and problems like that we had to figure outweighs to solve.

>> EDEN SAVINO: I know a lot of people. I know a lot of programs start out this way. I was on the audit side many major programs -- you use the trails you have. And you track something and you quickly find e-mails and spread sheets are becomes unwieldly. And spreadsheets, I am haunted to the day I day, still a legacy spreadsheet. But to the extent you can move away from this, and have the correct tools. That, terms of service and making sure we're not stuck in some port in I don't know where. That took a while because of resources and shifting things around.

Now we're in the stage of refining and improving. This past March, I am the ghost of e-mails past, exactly.

Not the past March, but the March before. GAO.gov had a redesign. We had a mule website, so down the road, we'll have to think about redesigning the new website and fitting everything. Of course, nothing on line is set it and forget it. There's constant evolution, how people communicate and share, other platforms, all of that. .

Now we spend more timing reading Katherine's e-mails and spending time and go to events -- actually the partnership for public service did a really good in-depth book bay by chip and Dan evening, how to stick. And that book we shared all around in Public Affairs for folks to read. Keeping your skills up and making sure you are keeping in touch with other federal communicators. That's Dr. , Can we do that or this, but always keeping in mind, is this improving, what's the data, how can we improve this? We might have this around and fall into old patterns. It's a constant struggle that we're

still seeing and not doing what we did before.

>> MELANIE FALLOW: At the same time, we're still collecting performance data. When we see Fast Facts on a news show, we make sure you to communicate it with bosses and we say, hey, this fast fact was the entirety of the news report and finding those out in the wild is validating and keeping the program going.

>> EDEN SAVINO: So that in a nutshell it did take several years and did take a lot of work and still is a lot of work. I know there are questions here particularly about feedback sessions and elsewhere that we're happy to get to now. How would you like to do this, Katherine? Would you like to field common questions?

>> KATHERINE SPIVEY: Maybe if we start answering questions people become inspired, which is always a good thing. To give you a moment to drink your water, I will read this recent one. Would love to read more, perhaps online, how you set up your feedback sessions. They sound informal, which is nice. We have a usability lab that's very formal and I believe there's a cost associated with it. I know in my previous reincarnation at GSA, I ran usability studies which were not using a lab, and people kept wanting to go out and use a lab and pay a lot of money, and I said, can't we do this first and spend the money later? And this is apparently not the way, but I managed to convince them. What were your feedback sessions like.

>> MELANIE FALLOW: We were actually aware of the lab at that time and I'm pretty sure we were aware of what they are doing, and let's do that. That's how we did what we did, especially the [Indiscernible].

.

>> EDEN SAVINO: I know the Air Force track, and eyeballs making an F on each page and tracking and all of that. For Fast Facts [Cutting out]. We had methodologist and we met with them to ask them how we do this user testing.

For Fast Facts, we waited until we had a certain number of them published online and different ones. We set up one-on-one interviews with Hill staffers, journalists, think tank folks, people like that. They would last for about an hour. And this was back in the day in person.

We had one person, the journalist, Hill staffer, whatever, sitting at the computer and I sat next to them. Okay. Go to AO.gov. Ask them Fast Facts. Okay. Where did you pause, think about all of that. And we look at the highlights because the highlights page, the one page documentation a summary of all of our reports. The body of the report, highlight summary and brief outline for Fast Facts, and then have them read the highlights and have them give side-by-side comparison.

Other people taking notes, a lot of notetaking, prescriptions and thinking they are

being transcribed. Run through a couple of different highlights on desktop and mobile and have them pull it up on their phones and they were not talking about the whole time. I got them to talk.

Our methodologist said just keep talking to our key audience members until we don't hear anything new. Okay. Once you have done that, we say, okay. We collected enough. We were able to do them relatively inexpensive and easily. And we have something for a different project, virtually. We have this, and pull it up on the screen. And it works but we had to figure out work arounds, especially getting people on their mobile devices and all of that.

>> KATHERINE SPIVEY: Another question. Thank you for that. Did you find it helpful to always include an image in the Fast Facts box? Are users more likely-I think the question is, did you test with and without the image? And are users more likely to engage in the content with the image? I think you said the image is now part of your template.

>> MELANIE FALLOW: Yeah. One of the things we did before we started the pilot is to have an intern go through and check out all of our highlights pages maybe a couple of years' worth. And while an image at one point in the highlight process had been required and no longer required. We found that something like 28 percent of the highlight pages had an image, and the rest just didn't, so if we were sort of saying that our initial group the comparison group, like one characteristic of that group was that there was no image there. You pull it up on your known and it would be words. A solid block of words. I don't want that. No one wants that because it is just a big 'ol giant block of words. So we made sure when designing the Fast Facts, it was going to be designed specifically to have an image.

>> EDEN SAVINO: It is required on every Fast Facts and we expect it to look good on Twitter because that's the platform GAO is published it is Twitter. We wanted to make sure the preview image looks good. That's where journalists go for leads and breaking news. We did that to sort penalty flag prove that images were a good thing. I think there was enough research that visuals were a good thing. It wasn't like we were going to try Fast Facts without visuals. We need to have a visual and that was that's a definite to have there is to see the visuals.

One of the things when getting to professionalization and institutionalization. We were short on images early on and didn't have a accessible collection of stock photos. If you go back to really old Fast Facts. You see me dressed up as a hacker, office worker, therapist. We had to go to the GAO day care center because they will little, tiny graduation cap and gowns. And they said, they are very small. And because we didn't put a great emphasis as a requirement on our summary documents and other items. We didn't have all of those. And thankfully we have a stock photo collection we with can

access and use and I don't have to dress up anymore.

>> KATHERINE SPIVEY: Oh, come on. I am sure you loved it.

>> EDEN SAVINO: It wasn't a good use of my time [Laughing].

>> KATHERINE SPIVEY: In fact. I have a question about that. Have you ever considered adding short videos. I say that as a person -- I will give it away. I am a person who dislikes video. And I hear people say, videos, even the short ones, they are everywhere. Also having even Tik Tok streaming would be a lot of fun. I would definitely will have that.

>> MELANIE FALLOW: [Laughter]. One thing we have done sort of not that, and sort of related to that. We expanded our video team recently, and one of the projects is actually taking the Fast Facts and turning that into a video or some kind of video content. It might be the director, basically giving a small speech loosely based on its Fast Facts type. And that kind of work flow is working really well because we have gone through the level of digesting content, making sure it is accessible to people and the video team comes in and say, I will put this and this visuals on it and it is going to work.

And also, plotting the video into the Fast Facts timeframe might be a little bit tricky because again, when we're actually deciding on the text and the individuals, things might not be [Indiscernible] or about it might take us a while to be in agreement with the team, whatever it is. So that may be difficult to do it the other way around. And also, all sorts of technical things

A , And putting it on there might be a little bit tricky it is something we talk about a lot, but nothing concrete yet.

>> KATHERINE SPIVEY: We have a follow-up. Have you considered using motion graphics and data graphics and I was thinking animation.

>> MELANIE FALLOW: We have some. Yep.

>> KATHERINE SPIVEY: It will drive me to the Fast Facts page to look for it.

>> MELANIE FALLOW: If it goes in the report, it will appear on the Fast Facts page, so you will see it and it might not be directly related to the Fast Facts.

>> EDEN SAVINO: Again, there are the technical hurdles, the Fast Facts, text below the image. Our videos have to be clicked on and played. There's different functionality, mobile desktop, 50 A compliance, all of that. We definitely think about the video and want to do more video. It is more research intensive. Storing and sharing issues and things like that. We definitely want to do more video and something people engage on, and things I'm getting information on in these digestible bits.

And asking about the GOA enterprise stock solution. Anyone in the agency can search it and we have the designers and action can download in format the images when we need them.

Everyone can say to us -- something else we did a pilot on. We have teams and audit teams made up of others and they might spend six months to a year on a report and we'll ask them, look, would you want to do the first draft of the Fast Facts or the GAO to do? It is about 50/50. They have fabulous gate data graphics and Adobe. I am not promoting anything. How we antiup with certain vendors.

>> MELANIE FALLOW: Contracting.

>> EDEN SAVINO: Yes, because teams can do the first track, if they don't have not guilty in the report, an image it pull from, they can still browse images to suggest from us. And you can say, oh, this is about blah, blah, blah and this is about things related to defense, defense information database, and there's a bunch of rules there. And a lot of federal actions authorize their images in federal or government publications, so we end one a mix of visuals. Either stock images, data images or data graphics. Playing design, it's like a miracle occurs and complex and makes sense in these graphics.

>> MELANIE FALLOW: We have a great question about how we choose the visuals? We have a visual in chief and editor visual in chief and is they has an editor, how it is going online, how it speaks to the text, how -- if the messages are going to be appropriately shown in -- there's a lot of considerations and I know from your question that you understand that.

So yeah. I think we do go through an iterative process similar to the ones we do before the test. Have someone pick one, put it in, and have a everyone react to it, if it sticks it sticks.

>> And Dorothy, how to do Fast Facts, one of the teams, if you have visual. We're thinking mobile first with Fast Facts, you have to make mobile first, you have journalists, staffers and while doing reports and they are getting information on mobile.

Imagine if you were to put the visual up on the other side of the room and squint your eyes at it, does something get something out of it? I a shrine going up, down, and I see something about education, and adequately tells the person one thing.

In addition to all of that, we also ended up putting guidance about bias because after we had access to more and more individuals, it was like, oh. That's not the face to put with that topic, and that is also something that -- yeah. Less than ten seconds, rights? If you put something up. The graphics in our report are awesome. If you have time go into the PDF, our graphics are designed to exist in a context, and text and explaining the idea and then you look at it. That works beautifully in the restaurant.

Take that report out and put it somewhere. It raises a lot of a simulation and dedication.

If you read all of the notes and education around it, yes, it makes sense. But at a glance?

>> KATHERINE SPIVEY: Difficult. It is always seemed whether video and/or just images, it is always seemed to be a particular thought pursuit. I appreciate the effort your team has put into concise writing. I know how much harder it is to put it on the Web, and you are putting the user first and I would say, delighting the reader. Putting the reader first is where we want to go. What kind of feedback did you receive?

>> EDEN SAVINO: Very positive. If we didn't receive specific feedback, I don't know if the project would be underway, but anything to the project and hearing from our readers and all half that the it continues to pay dividends. Like Melanie says, we see it in the press. And clipping service, where you are in departments in your agency or whatever, we find journalists will often quote the Fast Facts. Like watching John Oliver and showing the Fast Facts on the screen. It is been synthesizes, digested and one thing you can show. That's what Melanie is saying when we see those we share with the team and valuable feedback. I always feel a little bit amused --

>> MELANIE FALLOW: And we're not also endorsing this group, either.

>> EDEN SAVINO: No. And that was something from a changed management perspective. We started submitting Fast Facts awards to help show the value for the agency as well. You will see the Fast Facts on a couple of awards. We got beaten by the colonoscopy those A-holes. For the plan, I encourage to you submit what you are doing with clear marks and submit it so you can show your agency data and things like that. We are all in a -- limited, there are not unlimited resources for everything. And are you going to invest in plain language? We need plain language. Nobody is reading what's on the shelf. We just showed our cost savings reported today and people can engage with that and the importance of it, what's the point of doing the work?

>> KATHERINE SPIVEY: Right. That's always the thing. How to quantify the benefits and how to in fact, say it is worth the work because there's always a great deal of work to be done. And it is hard to prioritize sometimes.

You know, is it a better use of time to look at an internal e-mail that is going to coworkers or do you want a press release? Does that get your time? Or is it a -- some other description, some new contract award? Something like that. It is difficult to figure out what to spend your time on when you are the other -- or one of the view plain language people.

>> EDEN SAVINO: And there's a lot of pressure and this is something I find I struggle with. There's always, ugh. I have so much to do. 70 at least products, get one of these. They all have to be approved by the appropriate people, formatted, Q&Aed all

of the images and all of that. And always I know what you are talking about. Let it go. Oh, five account names are okay. Oh. Something is going to show up at my house. And you have to constantly reminding yourself to have your own idea about it and fighting the plain fight.

>> KATHERINE SPIVEY: That's an excellent point and I see we're up for time. If anybody has questions, you better get them into the chat very quickly.

It is interesting because you would think I get in here to a certain amount of government usage. Never, never, never. Every time I see leverage, utilizing every time I see this sort of thing. It's like, why are you doing this?

An excellent question here about recruiting people for the testing?

>> EDEN SAVINO: Yeah. So what we did. We found them a couple of different ways, a snow ball methodology. We initially started testing a GAO detail he's and people with GAO can work on the Hill for an amount of time. And each person we spoke to, we asked them to identify other people. We also have an Office of Professional relations and we'll ask them, who should we contact about doing user testing.

Journalist, who regular I will cover our work and bring in people as we can. And when we do testing like this, it is not always recognizable like journalists all do this or that. It is a matter of voices and keep talking to people until are you not hearing anything new. Rabbit it is a struggle and we've been begging, boring and stealing things along the way. I will say once. I DTNed it. It is work and it is not just finding people and sort of figuring out the script and all of that. The notetaking, okay. This is what they said about the image, text, and making sure are you capturing all of the areas. Then you have note takers and get all of the notes so you can synthesize it and summary documents to get buy-in, but also improve with what we're doing. No. We really need less acronyms and have to keep it short.

>> KATHERINE SPIVEY: I would like to talk about you about doing testing on plain language documents and you would obviously be the right people. And I will be following up with you both about some of the training because I am very interested in that. Any last words, both of you, for the group about how to take it from an idea to a thing?

>> MELANIE FALLOW: It is hard, there are a lot of steps, but it is worth it, so go for it. [Laughing].

>> EDEN SAVINO: Obviously, what she said, she's the editor in chief. And Dorothy goldsmith in the chat as well. If you are interested in plain language reviews, training -- she's such a treasure to our agency and she lent us a lot of experience and wisdom. So using the resources you have internally. You probably don't have a

Dorothy goldsmith, but having ideas and incorporating them. And it is evolution, constantly evolving.

>> KATHERINE SPIVEY: Well, that was fantastic and I think we'll get you back in time for tea and releasing your cat into the wild as it were. Untrap them from wherever they are. Thank you so much. I feel like I was definitely typing every second, so we appreciate your time and energy as well. And I will even go to your website and read some of your Fast Facts and I can't say anything better than that. Because normally, I'm not about the paperwork. So -- I can see a hole couple of things, and give you a few seconds to absorb everything and glow of everything, but I think that's probably it. We appreciate your time so much, and it is always good to hear some of the energy and you know what I need to do and failed completely. I will end if I can find it, I will put this in the chat, and you can also find the slides from Eden and Melanie's presentation at last year's summit.

And I should also add we're going to be open for proposals to speak for this year's summit, and we'll be sending that out soon, we hope. So quick turnaround. Start thinking about your topics about speaking at a summit because it is always a good place to start, as part of the process of doing any kind of change management. Any kind of plain language and it is a good idea to have a case study as you so am my demonstrated today.

Thank you very much, and I hope you are going to a new cup of tea.

>> EDEN SAVINO: Thank you so much.

>> MELANIE FALLOW: Thank you.

>> KATHERINE SPIVEY: Thank you.

[End 2:58 p.m.]

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Use of Plain Language to Make an Impact

JULY 13, 2022

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>> Hello, everyone. I'm just doing a tech check per Joseph's request. Thanks so

much. We'll be getting started right around 2. Thank you, all, so much for joining.

>> Hello, folks. Thank you for, again, for joining. And that was my godson. Thank you.

>> GABBY: Hi, Jay. I'm just coming off mute. You should be able to see -- do you see on the left-hand side of your screen, it should say "blue background with Strategies for Instituting a Culture of Plain Language." And then Daniel Yi, our wonderful speaker will be coming off of face mute very shortly when we get started.

>> GABBY: Hi, Daniel.

>> DANIEL YI: Hi, everybody. Are folks able to see the screen? If not, I can stop screen sharing and reshare if that would help.

>> GABBY: Lacks like Skylar, Cindy, looks like folks are confirming they can see it, which is awesome. Jay Scotty, I see your note. If you're still having issues, feel free to chat me, Gabby F privately. Okay. All set. Awesome. (Recording in progress).

>> GABBY: And it looks like we have 175 attendees so far, Daniel. So we'll give folks couple of more minutes. And then have the wonderful Katherine the great plain language lead start around 2. And do some housekeeping introductions. So thanks, all. And thank you, Daniel.

>> KATHRINE SPIVEY: I think everyone is looking forward to it extremely. And I see you have your plain language eventuality, Katherine.

>> KATHRINE SPIVEY: I do. Today's tea is brought to you by the Stephen Smith tea maker of Portland, Oregon, and it is, gosh, it's something. It's an herbal blend with lemon Myrtle and some other kind of mint.

>> GABBY: I love it!

>> KATHRINE SPIVEY: Just keeping the vacation vibe going as long as I can.

>> GABBY: (Chuckles softly) Excellent. All right. It's about 2:00 p.m., do you want to give folks another minute? Or kick it off?

>> KATHRINE SPIVEY: I think that we're going to need every possible inch of time to deal with the questions and comments for Daniel's presentation. So I'm going to go on ahead and start the housekeeping. And then read his bio and hand it over to him.

So, good afternoon, everyone. Thank you for joining us. I'm Katherine Spivey. I'm co-Chair of the plain language community of practice. I'm moderating today's event

because Katina Stapleton is on leave this week. My pronouns are she/her. And I have short brown hair and I wear glasses. Couple of housekeeping items as we said. As a reminder this session is being recorded. Please abide by our TTS Code-of-Conduct when you're participating in Digital.gov hosted meetings. That link is in chat, I believe. There is live captioning for this event. If you're in the Zoom app, you can use integrated live captioning by selecting the CC button on the bottom of the screen. If you prefer live captioning in a separate window, the link is in the chat.

As a reminder, all attendees will be muted. Ask your questions, please, via Q&A, not the chat. There's a lot of introductions and well wishing going on and that's fantastic in the chat. But it makes it very difficult to find questions to answer. So we will be having a Q&A portion after Daniel's presentation. So please put that -- please put your question in the Q&A Box and not the chat box. You will be muted throughout the presentation.

But you can, of course, introduce yourself, name, and agency in the chat box. Please select everyone in the field, because the default is to chat to panelists and hosts only, which is probably not what you wanted. So I believe that's everything that I need to say. So I will go ahead and give you Daniel's bio and intro and sign over to him.

Gabby, am I correct that that's what I need to do? Or have I missed something?

>> GABBY: Nope. You covered it all. Thank you so much, Katherine. And thank you, Daniel.

>> KATHRINE SPIVEY: Fantastic. Daniel Yi is the Senior Counsel for Legal Innovation U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division. Dan leads the division effort to use the design process and entrepreneurial principles to test new solutions for sticky problems in legal practice in Civil Rights. And he graduated from the College of William & Mary and Yale Law School. And I have to tell you, Daniel, before you start talking, I did get from our chat earlier that plain language is now part of the Department of Justice's strategic plan. Plain language is a strategic imperative, and a key performance indicator. So that is so exciting, and I hope you're able to answer questions about that later on.

So thank you so much, Daniel. And I'm really looking forward to your presentation.

>> DANIEL YI: Well, thank you so much. And, everybody, my name is Daniel Yi. I have Black medium length hair and my pronouns are he/him. I have a white dress shirt and Black quarter zip on. And I'm a lawyer by background that possibly has the most fun job in the Department of Justice. And that's because I get to think all day

about how we can solve persistent problem that hold us back from making a bigger impact in the world. I also teacher practical problem-solving at Harvard Law School and I partner with this amazing designer to teach a class on Georgetown law school on Communication Design, which is a class I wish I could have taken as a law student. And it's a massive amount of fun. But I'm not a plain writing expert by any means. I think that's you all in the audience. And that's why I am so honored and so excited to be here with Plain. Because I really feel like I'm with, you know, the people I aspire to be, the people I wish I was. So, really excited to be here.

As someone who is responsible for increasing our capacity to make an impact in the world, I mean, really, I'm just someone who sees plain language as a hugely powerful strategy for making that happen. And in fact, it's one of the main bets, one of the main strategies that I focused on in terms of increasing our organizational capacity to achieve impact and drive change. So we're going to talk little bit about that today.

Okay. So, I wish today, I was going to be able to talk to you about how we cracked the nut on plain language, and how I'm going to share the secret sauce with you about all things plain language can happen and all things can be achieved. The truth is not that. The truth is we're still really very much figuring it out, and it's a work-in-progress. But what I am going to give you is a few observations we made so far based on experiments and efforts we've been running around plain language in DOJ and the Civil Rights Division. And to do this, I'm going to touch on 4 things. One is I'm going to talk about the Civil Rights Division, just give you a context about the organization I work for, the challenges that we're facing. Two, I'm going to talk to you about the challenge of plain language within our context.

I'm going to talk to you about our hypotheses that we formulated around plain language and our theory of change around it. And then finally, I'm going to give you little bit of an insight on some of the early observations we made, again, along few of these different efforts that we've been trying to do.

And, really, that's it. So I really want to make this, I think I'll get more out of the Q&A than anything else here. So I would love to sort of move through this quickly, and then really get into the Q&A, because I think I'm going to learn a lot from hearing what the folks in the audience have to add. So little bit about the Civil Rights Division though. Again, this is just to set the context. So we uphold the federal laws that protect you from discrimination based on race, color, national origin, disability status, sex, religion, familial status, or loss of other institutional rights. I should also point out that I'm on slide 4 of the slides. And we cover things like voting, housing, employment, education, policing, hate crimes, human trafficking, and lots, and lots of other things. The short

version of what I take this to all mean is that our mission is to make the vision embodied by the nation's federal Civil Rights laws a reality for everybody in the country.

And there are 30 plus such federal Civil Rights laws. So there are a lot of different laws that are within our purview to try to make a reality for people in the country. We are made up of 600 people roughly. About 375 lawyers and 225 allied professionals. And, really, I think of this as our greatest resources, just the people that we have. I know a lot of baseball fans are going to be mad at me for making this reference, but I always refer to this is a Yankee of Civil Rights. Folks who work here are best of the best when it comes to Civil Rights enforcement. And it also means we are very, very attorney-centric. You can see our organization is made up mostly of attorneys. If you think about it, if Google was an engineer centric organization or Apple, DOJ is attorney central. Attorneys are not only the drivers of decision-making, but we also tend to be alpha and omega of any action we take. If we produce a piece of written content, that means it was probably initiated by an attorney, conceptualized by an attorney, and final sort of like person who decides does it go out the door or not is also an attorney. So again, like from cradle to release of any given thing that's usually going to be an attorney in the driver's seat.

There are 3 key ways though that we kind of impact the world. I think this is really important and like a key consideration when we think about it. We have 3 levers that we use to make Civil Rights a reality for everyone in the country. One is through enforcement. Basically, if you break a Civil Rights law, we will either sue you or prosecute you, depending on the law. So that's a pretty straightforward way that we influence and impact change in the world. And that's the thing I think most people associate DOJ with. But we also have an element of outreach and education. So that's a pretty straightforward one too, where you know, if we inform the world about what the law requires, and of the behaviors that are associated with complying with the law, we hope that we can actually prevent or avoid a legal compliance issue before they even happen. And that's actually a win-win for everybody. That would be, obviously, like a massively and delightfully efficient way of achieving the vision of embodied by these Civil Rights law if people actually did the thing they're supposed to do. And, finally, we have a coordination function which is that we work cross government to get the entire Federal Government working on the same page living up to and making Civil Rights a reality. Okay. So that's a little bit of context about the division. I wanted to talk to you little bit about the challenge for us when it comes to plain language.

And I alluded to it before, but the challenge is basically, in my opinion, this. When you have incredible legal talent, which we do, you kind of have a problem, because an attorney centric organization, everything we're oriented towards, and I can

say this as someone who came up as an attorney. Everything that we as attorneys are oriented towards is to prioritize precision above all else. And when you hire the best of the best on this front, which we do, you created an organization made up of people who show they are the most precise, and they have the most physical aversion to any exactness or ambiguity. And this has certain consequences especially when it comes to effective communication outside the legal context, which we do quite a bit of obviously.

Here's an example. Just to make this a concrete thing. Public reporting of Civil Rights violation. This is really important. We view the public as a very valuable partner in our effort to make federal civil laws a reality. And by telling us about violations, in theory, they can help us launch new investigations, they can help us find the key witness in one of our cases, or they can help us learn about issues and trends that might not be reaching us through other channels about what's going on in Civil Rights.

But if the public is going to be a viable partner for us, they actually need to be able to reach us. We need to find a way for us to connect with the public effectively. And I'm just kind of curious. Maybe people can add to the chat. This used to be, maybe about circa 3 years ago, this was the lead page that was online that explained to people how to reach us and let us know about a civil violation. And I'm curious how people think we did as far as enabling people to reach us, like if there's issues people can identify or come to mind, I'm going to open up chat quickly to take a look. Yikes! Okay. A lot of text. A lot of text. Really loaded. Not very user-friendly. I can't see how to file a complaint. Overwhelming. Wow, wow! This is Fast and Furious. [Laughter]

Okay. Well, I mean, there are few wishes here. You can take a look and you can tell, I think one obvious thing if you really start trying to crank your way through the language is at a minimum, one thing you have to know is you have to know which section, which specific subdivision of a division of the Department of Justice we're in is actually the right section to go to. And I don't think, and these sections make a lot of sense to us. If you have anyone in the civil division, we would tell you exactly why we named them the way we did. And there's lots of other issues here.

But I'd say on top of that, so if you think this is problematic, well, hold on. So, this is actually when you blow out the screen what that looks like. Hold on. That's the actual full screen. So if you were someone in the public who wanted to reach the Civil Rights Division, this is actually the page you would be confronted with. I think we had over 100 unique pathways for someone to reach us. Different email boxes, phone numbers, et cetera, et cetera. And you had to unpack and unwind this entire page to figure out which, if any, path was a right one for you.

Now, how does something like this happen, right? This is what was on our

website for a long, long time. To be honest, long as I've been in the Justice Department. How does this happen? I think there's a lot of reasons why. But one of the -- one is the desire to get people all the possible information they could possibly need all upfront. And what happens when you give a bunch of extremely motivated lawyers who want to help. They want to help and they want people to know exactly how to connect with us. What happens when you put them at the helm of designing a webpage? Well, this is the emergent and end result of what I call really, really good intentions. Like every single person who worked on this back, you know, 15, or 10 or however many years ago when this was created, they all came into this I guarantee you with really, really good intentions. But end result of all those good intentions can fundamentally fail to achieve the entire functional reason that we're doing this to begin with. I mean, that's self-evident and I'm preaching to the choir here obviously. But I had a suspicion around this when I kind of started my role as Senior Counsel for Legal Innovation. And around the same time, Northeastern law school, they have a design lab there called new law lab. They're amazing and they're fantastic. I encourage you to keep them in mind. But they actually ran an independent analysis of exactly this process. They had students run 20 usability test on this, on our complaint process where they handed people various scenarios. Real life scenario about why they would contact the Civil Rights Division. And if I remember correctly, 167 out of the 20 usability test ended up failing with the right place or failing to file at all. And the person who is running this, the director of the new law lab, he said, I remember this is a pretty close quote., he said, "I've been doing this for a long time. And I would have told you if you had an 80% success rate on a usability test like this, very simple sort of binary usability test, I would have said there's a lot of room for improvement." But he said I've never seen an intentionally designed system have an 80% failure rate before. And that's what we have here.

So we knew this is, obviously, a major issue here. There's another way to look at this. So what I put up on-screen, and this is slide 11. I'm sorry I'm not calling these out the way I should. But slide 11 is a chart that is a series of bell curves, more or less, and what you're seeing at the top of this chart is a bell curve that's clustered where the peak of the curve is largely around 18.93 Flescher-Kincade level. And the curve is tightly clustered around 7th to 8th grade readability level. To bring you in the -- give you an explanation what this chart is about, we have amazing data guy here who is also in the Civil Rights Division named Anthony Poster who is passionate about this stuff and he did a very simple analysis. And he analyzed all the different public complaints that we receive. So those are what you're seeing reflected in those bottom bell curves. These are along all the different kinds of public reports we receive. These are what the readability level of those graded are. Right around tightly around 7th to 8th grade. And

he did an analysis of our public-facing webpages, things we put online really intended for the public, like that file a complaint page. And they pretty much reasonably tightly clustered around 9th grade readability level. And that gap from 7th to 8th grade, I really love this chart and I use this all the time to kind of exemplify the challenge for us. That gap between 7th to 8th grade and 19th grade reflects the difference between how people are talking to us and how we're talking back to those people. And that is really bridging this gap, closing this gap is in many ways what we're trying to do here, you know, in terms of the efforts we're playing around plain language.

Okay, and this is just another example. This can extend to our actual work product, too, I think, where things get so much tougher, I'll say. I mean, it's a much, much tougher question about how you go about addressing this.

But this is a consent decree with the City of Baltimore. This basically, one thing the folks in the Civil Rights Division do is they work on police reform and police misconduct cases. These are incredibly important cases. I can't, obviously, I don't need to go too far into just explaining why they're so important. But they matter a lot to the people who live in the communities where, you know, our reforms are happening. And whenever the Department of Justice works with the city to implement reforms, they're sort codified in this decree. And what is the city going to do unconventional city practices? And it matters a ton to the people in the city. So this is what document lacks like.

This is what it actually looks like. This is about one-third of it when you actually lay it all out. It's a pretty tough read. And this is just an example of, again, this sort of stuff we produce every day that people have a deep, deep interest in. It really, really matters to people. But it's going to be pretty difficult for people to connect directly to it.

And you know what's particularly notable and this is bit of a divergence, but what's typically notable to me, it's something I have a hypothesis that our sort of reliance on legalese or technical language or things like this, I think it's actually grown overtime, because I once read like the 1960 manual for the Civil Rights Division. And it was actually amazingly conversational. I had the chance to read this and this is one of the foundational documents of the Civil Rights Division. And it was surprisingly readable. It was surprisingly clear and direct, and almost conversational, I would say. And so for whatever reason overtime, I feel like we're sort of like Darwin spinaches and we evolved and optimized around this concept of precision. Okay.

So now, like just to talk about our hypotheses around plain language and our organization. So what is our hypothesis? It's pretty simple. And this is not going to come as a surprise to most of the folks on call. Communication is at the core of what

we do. We produce an overwhelming amount of writing every day, at great effort and great expense. Writing is really like what we do. That's ultimately like the widget that we make. It's tough to describe things as widgets, but when we influence the world we do it through writing. This helps them understand what we can and cannot do. One of the 3 main ways strategies we have for making Civil Rights a reality for everywhere in this country is through outreach and education.

So that is a huge, huge chunk of what we're trying to do. And then finally, we can achieve greater impact if our writing is clear and actionable for the intended reader and not for ourselves. So if we actually produce things that help people understand what they can and cannot do, and instructions on for example, how to reach us if they want to report a Civil Rights violation. All of those things, if we can do it in a way that's clear, understandable, and actionable for that intended audience, we will actually, we can potentially create much, much, much greater impact towards our end goal. And what all this boils down to, you can boil this entire sort of like theory of change, I suppose, down to one thing, which is that we're leaving value on table.

In the Federal Government, I mean, we think a lot about budget and head count. And because we think about it, because it ultimately impacts how much you -- how much difference you can make in world. But, I mean, this is just, in my view, sort of from the innovation lens, I sort of view plain language as essentially a low-hanging fruit opportunity for us to impact without so much impacting the budget side and that's been pillar to our transformation efforts in the Civil Rights Division.

So how have we gone about what are our strategies and tactics for doing this? These, again, were sort of initial hypotheses we had about how can we actually create a division where every single thing we put out into the public is well tailored for its audience so it's clear, it's actionable. And so these are just basically our initial thoughts and hypotheses on how we can make that happen.

I would call this more like lessons in change management than anything else. But one is starting with the uncontroversial stuff and then building out from there. Again, like in an organization where the Act of writing is so central to the identity, and the value of everybody who works here, every single person who works here, again, Yankees of Civil Rights, I go back to that concept. Every single person who works here beliefs and is a really, really good writer. You don't get hired in the Civil Rights Division unless you have shown yourself to be a terrific writer in the legal context.

So it's actually pretty difficult in an environment like that to suddenly start trying to change culture around that, because, again, just put yourself in the shoes of an attorney who's been told their entire career you're an outstanding writer. You're a terrific writer.

And then all of a sudden out of left field, no one can understand it and you have to write it a different way. I think that's a pretty tough direction to go in. And I don't think it's a very productive direction to go in. So instead, our hypothesis was starting with uncontroversial stuff and building out. And these are things like the intranet, policies, emails, and we did that because it's -- and right now, we engage in a massive, massive Internet overall hall. Folks on this call, folks who did a massive, we have a whole team who's doing an amazing job on intranet overall hall. And we did that because it's highly visible and it's a highly touch point thing that we thought would be low friction that knob would get up in arms we were rewriting the intranet. But it's something they were going to see and read every day and you can see a qualitative difference in the usability and utility of it within the organization.

And, again, like internal policy documents, like go buys, and standard operating procedures, those are ripe opportunities for starting to weave this in. Okay. So then hypotheses 2 on this front is while we're working on the uncontroversial stuff, use that as your chance to build an infrastructure to make this as easy as possible. So what I mean by that is while our theory was, while we're doing all this stuff that no one is going to get too up in arms that we're kind of like really getting involve in, and getting our mitts in, while we're doing that, let's go ahead and at the same time, just start building out resources and building out like the people process tool side of things that's going to enable us to then do this across the organization. So that's style guide, that's templates, that's community of practice, huge credit. If Angela Washington and Josh Douglas are on the call, they're right in the middle of really the heart of building out this amazing community of practice in the Civil Rights Division around this. Bringing in new roles and skills, Henry wiggle worth is someone I mentioned we brought in essentially as a plain writing expert who did an amazing job for us. And implementing things like usability testing on the uncontroversial stuff with the ability then to have the muscle memory to expand it out into some of the more controversial areas, things that are going to, you know, get people up in arms.

And then finally, all along the way, I think this has been amazingly important. We've leaned on outside validators. So around user testing, one of the best and most important steps we took as far as getting people onboard with the idea of changing our complaint process, which you'll see little bit of result of in a few slides. One of the most important things we did with that is that we actually, you know, had real people use, you know, we recorded usability test of people trying to file a complaint with us through the old process. And my only pitch that I needed to make within the organization after we did that was to hit play on the videos. And we did a little cut out. We edited and spliced together few usability tests. But when you have person, after person, after person struggle, and grow increasingly frustrated with even just figuring out how to contact the

Civil Rights Division, that was a really, really powerful driver that got very, very quick and very consistent alignment within the organization up and down the organization around the urgency and need to focus in and invest in this.

And also center for plain language, they've been another group we've partnered with in past. And they've done basically audits and audits of specific kinds of writing that we produced. And it's been super-helpful to have outside people telling folks in the department the same thing that many, many people within the department have been saying for a long time. But sometimes it's just better coming from an outside voice. So that's been really, really important.

And also what I didn't mention here, but I think this is lucky for us assumed is I think you really, really need credible leadership interest in this. We're lucky, because we have people in leadership roles in Civil Rights Division who are absolute believers and advocates for effective communication. Kristen Clark has been a huge believer and just a tireless champion for this. And I think that without that, it would make it much, much harder. It's just lucky, because I sort of always had that kind of there to lean on. But I think you generally need people from the top-down signaling the importance and value of this.

Okay. Well, so just to give you couple of examples of this. This here, you're looking at a picture of our intranet, circa, what was this? Well, circa about maybe two years ago. I would describe this what it looked like two years ago. And I think a lot of people thought this looked very angel firey, or tripody or whatever. But, yeah, there you go. Hello, 1996. That's right. But this is our intranet. And then, again, like I set, start with the uncontroversial stuff. We had a team really work on it. And they just sort of -- they used the tools at their disposal. We didn't use anything fancy. We used SharePoint. Simplest tool. But they made sure every single page and content on there was with an intended audience in mind and had a clear like action built attached to it. And everything flowed from what's the purpose with someone needs to read the page and what's the information they need to know to do the action they're trying to do. Simple. And they're relentlessly working on this. This is another thing we're working on now, and this goes back to the infrastructure point I made. While you're doing the uncontroversial stuff, build out the infrastructure. We have a whole team building out this style guide basically, this entire sort of set of resources. I wish I could dig into it more, but there's amazing templates people have created. Amazing, like, best practices, checklists, and all sorts of things like that that are available now for anybody who's working on a piece of public content to work through. And it's all drawing from all these lessons we've been picking up on uncontroversial stuff. It's kind of rolling backup into a resource like this, which the next step is to make this the thing that's used 100%

of the time for every single thing that goes out the door for Civil Rights Division. But this is a work-in-progress. This is version 1.0. And they're working on 1.1, and 1.2, and every couple of weeks, this gets a little better and little more refined.

And, yeah, I mentioned the templates, but, yeah, it's gotten even bigger since then. But they started building out like a collection of these templates, and examples for people to work off of, which is actually really huge. And this is honestly the reason why I suspect people come to this resource to begin with is to get their hands-on a ready-made template to work off of when they're producing material for the public.

So, this, going back to the whole original complaint filing page, the original sort of thing that prompted so many gasps and, you know, shock. Well, we are moving on to the external stuff too. And this is what that page looks like today. So they went from this to this. And this is a much more involved project that took a lot of pieces. But plain language is a really deep core part of the redevelopment and launch of Civil Rights justice.gov. So feel free, if you're ever looking to report a Civil Rights violation, Civil Rights justice.gov, that's the place to go.

And we're doing even more external work. So this was the ADA.gov. Really important critical resource out there that is fundamentally like it's really critical to put out this information that helps people complain with the A.D.A., important Civil Rights law, critical Civil Rights law and this is what ADA.gov was. And we have a team working on this plain language being the core of their redesign concept. But they launched beta ADA.gov. And I encourage everyone to look at that. That's a major revamp that puts audience at the forefront of everything they're pushing out and this is one example of that where it's taken a massive, massive leap forward. And this is just one example, screenshot of a page on ADA.gov covering service animals. Moving on to slide 27.

Public comment. So when you do all this work, I think that the best part is you start seeing some of the quantitative feedback come in. That's really, really encouraging. So these are some of the public comments we've gotten around, I think this is Civil Rights justice.gov. But you know, it says this is the best government website interface page I've ever seen. It was very easy to understand and well-designed. Thank you for everyone involved with producing and managing it and everyone to DOJ for their sustained commitment to truth and justice. I promise I didn't put that in myself. That's obviously very encouraging to see. I have another comment. Best government created site I ever used, clean, sharp, clear, well done. Thank you for your service. And Katherine mentioned this at the beginning, but something that's super-exciting around this is that the latest department strategic plan for the first time, I think, actually makes plain language a strategic imperative. And this is what you'll see in our strategic

plan, the department will emphasize user-centered design practices in plain language to ensure that its public-facing technology tools provide clear, concise, and usable information to the public. It would be great if it was more than just technology tools, it should apply to everything. But I'll take technology tools, because our websites and our online presence is obviously a huge chunk of the way that we're communicating with the public.

And a key performance indicator now for the department is this. Which is percentage of department website reflecting U.S. web design system requirements p meeting best practices for plain language. So, really, I think that with this, it's an example of how the department is putting their money where their mouth is as far as kind of living up to and really embracing plain language as a mission imperative, and as a strategy. So that's really, really great to see. Final, we're coming around the bend. Final part, we're moving to kind of what we're seeing so far. And so this is what I would call what we've learned... and what we're wondering. Like I said at the top, I wish we could say we have all of this figured out. We definitely don't. We're still figuring out how to keep moving along this journey.

And one is, I'm just going to run through a few observations. One is the story of Hub U. So you saw our intranet redesign. Our intranet is the hub. And it's our real exemplar of plain language and effective communication. And our theory of change, again, behind that was uncontroversial thing we could do that would show everybody this is what you is useful, understandable information looks like. And then it would not be less of a shock as we moved towards implementing this on the external facing stuff.

Well, so the original story behind Hub U was team who worked on it had this amazing and like really, really, I think admirable vision. Their idea was to create essentially a training program where every single part of our division who put information on the hub, the intranet, they were going to put them through a crash course on plain language. They were going to teach them how to write in an audience-centered actionable way. And they created this and it's amazing. I was amazed by it. I thought it was absolutely really an impressive 4 week curriculum. It was a 4 week course around teaching people how to reorient themselves in the way they wrote. And to give them these tools around plain language.

I would say that, like, after they worked with about 3 or 4 different groups internally, I would say the hit rate to be honest was about 50%. 50% of the folks really, really embraced it and ran with it. And 50% of the folks, once they ran to you through the program, they continued to produce contents that most of us agree, you or me would agree is not sort of where we wanted it to be as far as clear actionable

user-centered content.

And I think that, like, what we learned from that is a little bit about being realistic about how much you can achieve, how much behavior change you can achieve through just a pretty even intensive training. Again, some people might say 50% is really pretty good. The problem for us with that being the primary modality for our intranet was that we wanted the intranet to be this flagship, particularly of every time somebody logged into our intranet, everything single thing they saw there was actionable, user to use and user-centered so it would start seeping into their consciousness. And if it was going to be 50% that and 50% not, I think that created a product problem for us. So the team that worked on that had to really rethink the concept of just teach a person to fish and let them fish forever. Okay.

I think we have some open questions around what is the long-term support model around this? And this is probably something that a lot of agencies are asking themselves. I said at the outset we have 600 people who work here. 600, it may seem like a lot. In fact, the world of Civil Rights, that's quite a formidable force of people to work on Civil Rights, except we're covering 35 Civil Rights statute. We cover heck of a lot of ground with those 600 people. It's not, and it's pretty tough in that organization, in our organization to make -- to create head count for different roles, especially, new kinds of roles. And I think that it's an open question for us about is the right model sort of a coaching and training model in order to achieve this change and again, looking at Hub U as an lesson. And hiring and bringing in people with specific skill set around it. And we experimented with both and we're still in the approach of figuring out what the right approach and model is.

Another question is, what is the right way to change workflow if fall? Anybody who works in government agency knows how hard it is to get anything out of the door. There's a lot of, a lot of layers of review already as it is. And I think it would be really unfortunate if plain language just became one more level of review within an already very, very long process and exacting process. And so for us, we're thinking about, as pieces get produced, what is the process by which they need to go through us. Again, to achieve that overall goal to produce user-centered content that's actionable and clear for everybody in the world. But what is the right way to do it that doesn't adjust a layer of bureaucracy on to a very, very exacting process that we already have today. And I think another, you know, -- I do think for what it's worth, we have a few ideas here. I mean, some of the things I've been really thinking about, and again, I want to dive into Q&A and I'm curious to engage in this more as a conversation. But some of the things I've been thinking about is, like the role of, hmm... the challenge of subjectivity, which is I think one thing that we've been grappling with is people in the organization, as they're

sort of moving and orienting themselves towards plain language saying, oh, this is readable. This is really readable. And somebody else saying no, I don't think the intended audience will understand this. When you're in the battle of one person saying person X is going to think Y. No, person X is going to think Z. That's battle of opinion and that's not a productive place to be in terms of moving forward because it's two subjective opinions about what someone else thinks. So one big thing we've been thinking about, how do you breakout of that subjectivity cycle where it's just a battle of subjective opinions? And I think that comes down to, right now, theories, usability testing is really promising as a pathway out of that. Why not just ask your intended audience what they think as opposed to opining about what potential audiences might think? So that's certainly a possible avenue that we're exploring.

But it gets a little tricky to do that on sensitive deliverable documents. But another area is whether we should lean into Flesch-Kincade scores. And folks know pros and cons of leaning on this. But I'm certainly conscious of the fact there's pros and cons to using an objective brute rough justice measure like readability scores. But I also wonder whether that's a way of breaking out of this subjectivity cycle and just saying, look, it's got a grade out of 8th 9th grade lower. And that's just math. We're doing math at that point. So it's not matter of subjectivity. I don't know, those are things we're asking ourselves right now and grappling with.

But, really, I mean, that's about it. I've been talking for a long time. But I certainly want to leave time for questions and really appreciate, you know, the chance to share this with you.

>> KATHRINE SPIVEY: Well, Daniel, I think we're all struck dumb by your lofty goals of achievement and how far you've already come. I know that I was just being amazed I hope I get all of this as I was frantically taking notes and we captured in the transcript because there's really great ideas. But you're interested in the questions, so let's go ahead and get to that.

Someone would like to know about your training. Did you mandate training? Length and who teaches it? Did you get pushback and does your style guide promote plain language?

>> DANIEL YI: Yeah, our style guide is all about plain language. Maybe the real goal of the style guide is to give people the tools and checklist and resources and principles that underlie plain language in our context. And, again, our team working on it is doing just, I can't praise them enough for the work they've been doing to make that happen.

In terms of training, for the hub, that was like a mandated training. If you wanted to be someone who used the intranet to disseminate information, to share information in our organization, the original model was you had to go through this, like, bootcamp. Basically, again, we call it Hub U and it was this bootcamp that had the return we saw.

Otherwise, though, we have optional trainings we offered. And the folks who are working on the style guide, you know, I think they're certainly cooking some stuff up. I think there's another pathway here too, who knows? Maybe it's just part of onboarding? Maybe the first thing, if we really believe it's an organizational imperative and part of our culture, maybe that's like, you know, just part of like day 1, day 2 onboarding stuff. You're going to learn how to write the way the Civil Rights Division writes and here's how we write. And boom! Style guide. Maybe that's the direction we'll go in. Who knows?

>> KATHRINE SPIVEY: Interesting. Thank you. Also do you think the federal pine language report card and feedback the judges give help the Department of Justice to emphasize plain language?

>> DANIEL YI: I don't think it hurts. We produce so much stuff though that it's easy for people to say, oh, the report card didn't capture our stuff. So I think that's a little bit -- it's easier for people to psychologically protect themselves here a little bit. But I don't think it hurts to have a tool like that out there that you can point to and you can say, hey, we're falling behind, even our agency peers. Like we don't want to be -- no agency wants to fall behind their peer group.

>> KATHRINE SPIVEY: Right. Yes. It's an excellent goal, speaking as the co-Chair of Plain. How do you deal with addressing complex subject matter so the readability statistics gets closer to that 8th grade level? The author says, as a writer editor, I still find we miss the mark when writing audit reports.

>> DANIEL YI: Yeah, I think it's really actually, this is going to be -- I don't know what the end state is going to look like here. Because I mentioned how lawyers are wired towards precision. And I think, I don't mean to say that to denigrate precision. Precision is really important. Precision is kind of like our brand, as an agency. When you think about the Justice Department, you think about trust, liability, and credibility. And a lot of it boils down to precision. I think the rub comes in where precision, and usability and usefulness at all are creating like a gap. Where basically, and we need to figure out creative ways to bridge in a gap. The reality is that in legal writing where I spend most of my time thinking, there's just some terms that are really clunky complex materials, but they're actually important, and important terms you cannot use. You've got to use them. For example, the word "discrimination" again, if you're going to a

Flesch-Kincade approach, that's going to tank your Flesch-Kincade score. But discrimination is not something you cannot get around in a lot of use cases. And so there's a lot actually what seems like a critical important term to maybe most lay people, it's not actually a, like anything we have to say or we have to use. It's not like a magic word that if we don't say it, it's going to have some consequences for us. So that's where I think like lawyers, you know, this is where the creative hat lawyers need to come in who can actually say, look, I understand legal ramifications of all of these things, but I also embrace and appreciate like the need for things to be useful. And those are people that need to step into that breach of precision and usability and help us bridge that gap. And, hopefully, I'm not saying it can happen every time, but I'm hoping in most cases at least, we can successfully bridge that gap so we can achieve both. I certainly wouldn't ever, like, I just think it would be foolhardy for us to abandon precision and only use usability. That would be, obviously, besides the point.

>> KATHRINE SPIVEY: On the other hand, precise language fails of its own. Yes. The study you spoke about, about the usability of the webpage and the motivation for the lawyers to become more self-aware of their language, did that work any bit on how their communication was received as opposed to how their language was intended? Speaking of gaps, as we just were.

>> DANIEL YI: Hmm, I'm not sure I quite understand the question.

>> KATHRINE SPIVEY: Let me see if I can rephrase it. The webpage usability, the study you did on that with the, I'm assuming it was the people trying to figure out, testing the page on how people can file a complaint. And I believe that you said that motivated the lawyers?

>> DANIEL YI: Yeah.

>> KATHRINE SPIVEY: Okay. Just checking on that.

>> DANIEL YI: That's exactly right.

>> KATHRINE SPIVEY: It was not working as intended.

>> DANIEL YI: Again, that was, to me, that is like the archetypical example of how usability testing can help us breakthrough some of these conundrum. Because the lawyers who worked on this again, paved with good intention, let's be Uber transparent, ultimate transparency and put out all the possible information anybody can possibly use and need. Needless to say the concept of progressive disclosure is a relatively new one in the legal for folks in legal.

But then when folks suddenly started seeing oh, end result of this is very people are able to do the things we all agree we're trying to do. That cut through so much of the -- any kind of defensiveness or any concerns about we need to keep status quo. Nobody thinks we need to keep the status quo at that point because we're self-evident and we're struggling to accomplish things we set out to begin with.

>> KATHRINE SPIVEY: I'm exaggerating a little bit, but I sat in usability test on different pages, like travel.gov, and some of the VA pages and things like that. And I honestly thought some of the teams whose websites were being tested were going to either run out of the room or hide under their desks. Yeah. It's absolutely powerful. A number of requests for the CRT comp guide and style guide, if you can share those if you want to get back to me that's fine. I just want to let you know people are extraordinarily curious.

>> DANIEL YI: Can I flag couple of resources that are available on this front. 18F. All credit to them. They're great partners and they've been a huge partner with us. 18F has amazing publically available, it's their internal style guide, but they just kind of Open Sourced it. Amazing. Because they have done amazing work there. And then the other one that is random, and this is not a plug at all for this particular company. But Intuit has a publically valuable guide. Surprisingly, it's an interesting thing to look at. So if you look up Intuit content guide or something like that, you'll find it.

>> KATHRINE SPIVEY: Okay. We're hoping to get the link to the Civil Rights page. But question is what was the process for getting plain language into the Department of Justice strategic plan? Was it top-down or bottom-up? Or as I suspect, both?

>> DANIEL YI: Little of both. Right? You know, like I said, and I shouted out bunch of them, but we have so many people here in the Civil Rights Division who are right there with me on this that they have been championing and they've been pushing for this for years. They've been really, really ones out there saying, hey, what can we do to make this more readable and useful, et cetera, et cetera? And then we've got leadership at the top. I can tell you, department leadership has been terrific around this. And it's not a hard case to make, right? Any time I talk to folks about it, I haven't run into a single person yet who disagrees with the basic premise. Like the thing I laid out in the beginning around those 3 questions, right? Nobody disagrees with those basic fundamental points. So, yeah, I would describe it as little bit of both.

>> KATHRINE SPIVEY: Great. How do you build in accessibility and adherence to Section 508? Does it parallel your plain language success?

>> DANIEL YI: I think for us in the Civil Rights Division, it's obviously like little bit of a, I mean, we have a Disability Rights section that enforces the A.D.A. And, really, is one of the -- well, needless to say for us, it's an organizational imperative to live up to that sort of stuff. So we have a 508, you know, long before we really even were, as invested as we are in plain language, we had people who, you know, a 508 lead who would review and make sure everything that we're putting out publically was where it should be.

So that's been extremely important and helpful. And I'll add one more thing, language access is a major thing and it's a major thing for department and civil division. And my plug around this has always been, whether you translate something into Spanish or any number languages, if it's not understandable in English, it's not understandable in other languages too. So, really, I just think that there's a real synergy between language access world which is a really, really vibrant and strong community of folks pushing to expand language access in the United States. If then there's, I think the plain language community, similarly, I think that we're all actually trying to achieve the same thing at the end of the day.

>> KATHRINE SPIVEY: It's good to have these synergies and people working together. And as a final question, what got you started in plain language that led you to this in your career?

>> DANIEL YI: For me, it was mainly because when I first took on this role of Senior Counsel for Legal Innovation, to be perfectly honest, I had a lot to learn about how to actually solve problems. You know, and one of the first areas that I really became deeply invested in was this concept of applying human-centered design and design thinking to legal, the legal context. And I think from there, it's a very, very short jump to embracing and realizing the importance of plain language, because when you're thinking about audience centered ways of connecting and audience centered ways of communicating, well, guess what? A pretty good pathway to get there is to actually, you know, figure out more understandable and readable ways of writing. So, yeah, that was the evolution for me.

>> KATHRINE SPIVEY: This has been fantastic. Gabby, I'm pretty sure we're coming up on time, am I correct?

>> GABBY: You sure are. We're right at the top of the hour.

>> KATHRINE SPIVEY: Okay.

>> GABBY: Thank you, all, so much.

>> KATHRINE SPIVEY: Thank you, Daniel. This was fantastic.

>> DANIEL YI: Yes.

>> KATHRINE SPIVEY: Just huge numbers of people interested in, and the questions just keep coming unfortunately. We all turn into pumpkins at 3 o'clock, so there's not much of that. But thank you, again, Daniel. We appreciate it. And you might have a lot of people looking at your open jobs pages on Department of Justice and Civil Rights Division. Just saying.

>> DANIEL YI: Great.

>> KATHRINE SPIVEY: From what I've mentioned. So thank you so much. We really appreciate it. Gabby, can you make sure you grab the transcript and the questions?

>> GABBY: Absolutely.

>> KATHRINE SPIVEY: You know how much valuable stuff comes in. And thank you so much. We'll be just -- just a note to everyone, we'll be getting a registration page up for our plain language Summit on August 24th soon. That's all I'm going to say. But we're hoping that we'll see you there. So we have a jam-packed list of presenters with variety of excellent topics. So, Dan, Daniel, I hope you're able to join us as well.

>> DANIEL YI: Sure, I love to.

>> KATHRINE SPIVEY: Great. We'll make sure everyone gets that. So thank you, all, for attending. This was a fantastic presentation. You're equivalent of at least 3 shots of espresso. As far as I'm concerned, take the rest of the day off. [Laughter] This was really good. Thank you so much, Daniel.

>> DANIEL YI: Thanks so much. And thanks to everyone for joining. And for the great questions. I look forward to reading through all of them.

>> KATHRINE SPIVEY: Great. Thank you so much.