U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY
Energy.gov Article Guidance

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Energy.gov is managed by a team of digital communications specialists in the Office of Digital Strategy and Communications, part of the Energy Department's Office of Public Affairs. Our goal is to educate the general public about the Department's work -- who we are, what we do and -- most important -- **why it matters**. We achieve this goal by creating engaging, informative content that's accessible and exciting to regular people.

Our ethos is that the future of energy is now, today, all around us -- and the people and programs of the Energy Department are where it's happening. We work with staff across the agency to produce original blog posts, social media content, videos, infographics, interactive maps, data visualizations and other digital content for publication on Energy.gov, the Department's top-level outward-facing website. The following guidance for program and staff offices will help you participate in that process. Below, learn how to contact a Digital Communications specialist, pitch blogs and stories for Energy.gov and its associated social media channels, and write effectively for an online audience.

What makes something a good fit for Energy.gov?

The Office of Digital Strategy and Communications takes a data-driven approach to content creation. We use analytics data to understand our broad, general public audience -- who they are (energy consumers, homeowners, students, parents and educators, members of Congress, high-level industry stakeholders), what topics they most like to read about (primarily science and technology, energy efficiency, renewable energy and climate change, among other topics), and with which content they are most likely to engage (maps, videos, slideshows, data visualizations and other interactive media). This information informs our editorial decisions.

In many cases, topics are better suited to a smaller, stakeholder-focused audience. The Digital Communications staff encourages program and staff offices to use their own individual websites and blogs to develop an audience and publish content that speaks directly to their own stakeholders. For guidance on creating a data-driven content strategy for your office's website or blog, contact your Digital Communications specialist.

Process for Submissions

Principals and program offices are enthusiastically encouraged to submit content for consideration for Energy.gov's blog and our official social media channels.

On Energy.gov, "blog post" refers to a timely posted article that is listed under the blog feed on the homepage upon publication. Generally, blog posts fall into two categories: (1) announcements of immediate interest, like an event or report release, relevant only for a short period of time; or (2) "evergreen" information that will be relevant for long periods of time and useful in future instances -- such as how to save money on energy bills, or facts about renewable energy sources. All blog posts have permanent web addresses (URLs) and are archived for perpetuity on Energy.gov, although they only appear on the homepage within a day or two of when they are first posted.

The process to submit a blog post is simple, but rewards careful planning -- both before and during the actual submission itself:

1. **PLAN.** Before drafting an article, contact your office's Digital Communications representative (see "Who should receive my submission?" below) to discuss your idea and determine if it's a good fit for Energy.gov.

2. **DRAFT.** If your contact approves your story pitch, use the tips and narrative guidance provided below to develop the article. Think carefully about tone, voice, audience and core messaging and themes.

3. **CHECKLIST.** Before submitting, cross-check your post with the checklist below to ensure quality and consistency with other Energy.gov content. Be sure that your office's internal communications team has approved the post before final submission to the Digital Communications staff.

4. **SUBMIT.** Submit final, fact-checked and internally approved posts to your Digital Communications representative for evaluation. In addition to sending the final blog post, also include author byline, accompanying multimedia content (high-resolution photo or video) and complete video/photo credit(s). Failure to send everything at once could delay the article's posting date. Once your submission is complete, Digital Communications staff will work with your office to develop future follow-up posts, if appropriate.

Additional things to keep in mind:

- After final blog posts are submitted, there is limited opportunity to make additional edits.
- All content submissions are subject to approval of HQ Public Affairs for final clearance.
- All articles must be incorporated into the Office of Digital Communications' editorial calendar. Your contact will work with you to schedule an optimal publication date for your blog post.

Who should receive my submission?

The following Digital Communications specialists manage the topic areas listed below. Reach out early and often to discuss your pitch with one of the following contacts:

- **Marissa Newhall:** Climate change, science education
- **Allison Lantero**: Transmission, smart grid, fossil energy sources, CCS/CCUS, Environmental Management
- **Ben Dotson:** Science (research, technology, basic and applied science, commercialization), technology transfer, National Labs
- **Rebecca Matulka:** Energy efficiency, vehicles, Energy Saver features
- **Erin Pierce:** Renewable energy sources, loan program, policy & international affairs, nuclear energy and security
- **Dan Wood**: Maps and graphs, data visualization

If you aren't sure who covers your topic area, contact Marissa Newhall.

Meanwhile, be sure to loop in your office's internal communications representatives. You will need to get your post cleared through them -- and any other official office-specific channels -- before submitting it for publication.

Tips for Online Writing

The following tips will help you write a clear, effective blog post.

- ***Be strategic.*** What's the main goal of your blog post? To inform and educate, to respond or comment on a timely current issue, or to make an announcement? And how can you incorporate broader messages that drive the mission of the Department? Below are two message points that can help situate your post within the broader context of the Department's work:

  1. We are pursuing an all-of-the-above strategy that develops every source of American energy -- a strategy that reduces costs for consumers, better protects our air and water and provides for true energy independence for the United States.

  2. The clean energy industry generates hundreds of billions in economic activity, and is expected to continue to grow rapidly in the coming years. There is tremendous economic opportunity for the countries that invent, manufacture and export clean energy technologies. The U.S. can and should win the global race for clean energy technologies.

  Direct other questions about messaging to your Digital Communications contact.

- ***Stay organized.*** Plan your post before you write. Posts should have an engaging beginning, an informative middle and a solid finish. Be sure to cover **who**, **what**, **when**, **where**, **why** and **how** in the article. Conclusions are often left out of blog posts, especially by writers who come into the business from writing press releases. But they're essential, too -- you want the reader to

remember your point, and come back for more.

- ***Choose the best voice.*** Who's the best messenger for the main point you'd like to get across? Usually, this is your principal, but there will certainly be times when it is not. Once you have made a choice about authorship, make sure that whomever you are writing for -- whether it is yourself or someone else -- you do your best to speak with that person's voice.

- ***Find a news hook.*** How does your topic relate to something else that happened today or the day before, or that will be happening in the future? This is a good strategy for maximizing interest in your post. A quick Google search is an easy way to investigate news hooks.

- ***Tell your story.*** Blog posts are an opportunity for your principals and your programs to share themselves with the general public. Anecdotes, personal stories and other human elements of the Department's work can -- and should -- be included, as appropriate. Keep in mind that unlike writing to a press list for traditional media, you're writing directly to the people who read our website: energy consumers, homeowners, students and educators chief among them.

- ***Engage your readers.*** With today's information overload, your lede -- the first sentence of your post -- is more important than ever. Your opening sentence is your best chance to grab your reader's attention and encourage them to read more. Make sure your first line acts as a hook that grabs (and holds) your readers' attention.

- ***Clarity and simplicity.*** Keep your article clear, easy to understand and free of acronyms and technical jargon. It can be easy to get bogged down in internal shoptalk, but we can't assume that our main audience – the general public – understands technical terms. Always verify the accuracy of scientific statements. Avoid using empty "hype" words (leading, best, extraordinary, innovative, etc.) in articles. Instead rely on facts or statistics to support your statements. And remember that sometimes a little explanation, or a link to a video or more information, goes a long way. Learn more about Energy.gov's linking policy on our Web Policies page.

- ***Word count matters.*** Blog posts should be short: roughly 350-500 words on average. But don't let word counts stand in the way of telling your story effectively. A post could be slightly longer to explain a technology or policy. If you think your story could be told more effectively through visuals, think beyond a typical blog post. Energy.gov was built to showcase slideshows, infographics and videos, and a paragraph may be all you need to provide context for a standalone piece of multimedia content.

- ***Good keywords.*** Supplying the Office of Digital Communications with targeted key words that describe the content and the nature of your post will help us be

able to (1) better categorize Energy.gov content; (2) shape how we think about future messaging efforts around your topic; and (3) make your post as "search engine optimized" (SEO) as possible. Use as many relevant keywords in the title and body text of your post as possible.

Pre-Submission Checklist

- Post flows sensibly. I understand all words, as does a peer reviewer.
- All sentences are grammatically correct and the post has been spellchecked.
- All em-dashes are double dashes (--).
- All numbers, statistics and technical information has been verified.
- The title and body text are SEO-friendly.
- Make sure all links work and direct readers to the appropriate pages.
- Ensure the post truly reflects the author's voice.
- Identify the role or title of the author, and be sure the Digital Communications team has an up-to-date bio and headshot for the author's contributor page.
- Ensure that your office's communications team has signed off on the draft.
- An appropriate image, video or other multimedia content is included. Please note that Digital Communications will not accept an article without some accompanying form of multimedia.
    - Photos
        - Do you have permission from the owner to publish this photo?
        - Did you include a caption and a photo credit?
        - Is your photo is the highest resolution available?
    - Video
        - Do you have permission from the owner to publish this video?
        - Did you include a caption and a production credit?
        - Is the video captioned? Is there a transcript available?

The Energy Department on Social Media

In addition to Energy.gov, the Office of Digital Communications uses several social media platforms to communicate with the public. These channels are primarily used to promote Energy.gov content and Department messages to platform-specific audiences and amplify our reach beyond our own sets of followers.

If your office has a blog post or other piece of content that you'd like amplified via the Department's social media accounts, we encourage you to pitch it to your Digital Communications contact for consideration. Staff will evaluate submitted content on a case-by-case basis and make a determination about its audience appropriateness before deciding to approve and schedule a social media post.

The Department has a presence on the following social media platforms (this is an evolving list):

Platform	Web Address	DOE Best Practices

Facebook	facebook.com/energygov	energy.gov/facebook
Twitter - @ENERGY	twitter.com/#!/ENERGY	energy.gov/flickr
Flickr	flickr.com/photos/departmentofenergy	energy.gov/twitter
YouTube	youtube.com/energygov	energy.gov/youtube
Instagram	instagram.com/energy	
SlideShare	slideshare.net/energy	
Storify	storify.com/energy	

Different types of content may be better suited for our Twitter audience than our SlideShare audience, or for our Facebook followers rather than regular readers of the Energy.gov blog. The Digital Communications team will work with you to promote your content via the most appropriate platform available, which may include your own office website or blog.

For more social media guidance, visit energy.gov/about-us/web-policies/social-media.

Examples of Good Articles

The post below by Charles Rousseaux, a Senior Writer in the Office of Science, has a human-interest first line for a good hook, there are numerous well placed links for additional information, and uses quotes and examples to mark the importance of the research.

Dark Energy Cam: Fermilab Expands Understanding of Expanding Universe

Breaking down is often an essential part of building up. Athletes break down their muscles during hard workouts to build stronger ones for better performances. Construction workers tear down ruins to build skyscrapers. And scientists find flaws in accepted theories and use them to build even better models of how nature actually works.

"Creative destruction," is the term that Joseph Schumpeter coined for the process, which he applied to economics. But scientists at Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory (Fermilab) are applying it in a rather more literal way through their work in leading the Dark Energy Survey (DES).

The Dark Energy Survey is "designed to probe the origin of the accelerating universe and help uncover the nature of dark energy by measuring the 14-billion-year history of cosmic expansion with high precision."

Let's back up and break that down. About 80 years ago, an astronomer named Edwin Hubble discovered that the universe was expanding. And for the next 50 years or so, scientists figured – based on well-founded evidence – that gravity would gradually slow the expansion down.

However, in 1998, two independent teams of scientists, one of which was led by Dr. Saul Perlmutter of Berkeley National Laboratory, announced that instead of slowing, the universe was actually expanding at an accelerating rate. That made precisely no sense – the equivalent of seeing a shot basketball slowly rise to the top of its arc . . . and then shoot rapidly into the sky – but it seems to be the way the universe began working some five billion years ago.

Dr. Perlmutter and two others won the 2011 Nobel Prize in Physics for this discovery of the accelerating expansion of the universe, which scientists believe is being driven by a mysterious force called dark energy. And that's what the Dark Energy Camera (DECam) is designed to examine.

The DECam is the largest digital camera ever built, with 570 megapixels, mirrors about three feet across, and a weight of between four and five tons, which puts it in the range of an elephant. DES researchers – yes, Dr. Perlmutter is on the team – recently began shutting down the high-powered Blanco telescope at the Cerro Tololo Inter-American Observatory in Chile, so they can install it.

When it sees first light later this year, the camera won't examine dark energy itself. Rather, it will look at dark energy's effects on large scales, on the galaxies racing away from one another across space and time. That will allow the members of the Dark Energy Survey team to make their most accurate picture of the universe yet, and perhaps poke a few holes in today's popular theories along the way.

That's the exuberant and sometimes painful process of creative destruction at work. And that's an essential element of the efforts of the Energy Department's Office of Science: Providing world-class tools to researchers peering deeply into the darkness, breaking down incomplete theories and building a better understanding of our world and universe.

This post by White House Deputy Director of Digital Content Megan Slack does well to immediately reference a hot-button issue, and her points are laid out clearly and concisely in three distinct pieces.

Our Dependence on Foreign Oil Is Declining

America's dependence on foreign oil has gone down every single year since President Obama took office. In 2010, we imported less than 50 percent of the oil our nation consumed—the first time that's happened in 13 years—and the trend continued in 2011.

We're relying less on imported oil for a number of reasons, not least that production is up here in the United States. In fact, America is producing more oil today than at any time in the last eight years. As part of his strategy to increase safe, responsible oil production in the United States, President Obama has opened millions of new acres for oil and gas exploration and we now have more working oil and gas rigs than the rest of the world—combined.

Despite all this, Americans are still paying more at the pump when we fill up. That's because drilling for more oil here at home won't affect the price of gas on its own. Oil is bought and sold on a world market. In the short term, it's subject to price spikes when there's instability or uncertainty along the global supply chain. And growing demand in countries like India, Brazil, and China, which tripled the number of cars on the road in the last five years, will drive prices even higher over the long term.

So we have to do more than drill now to bring down prices for the future. Relying on the fossil fuels of the last century won't be enough, especially as demand keeps increasing. We need an all-out, all-of-the-above strategy that develops every available source of American energy. This includes everything from tapping our offshore oil supplies and vast natural gas reserves, to doubling down on clean energy resources like wind and solar power, and developing new technologies that help us use less energy altogether.

This is the strategy President Obama has been pursuing since he took office, but there's still more to be done. We need to put in place the right incentives to encourage a clean energy future, and repeal the $4 billion in annual taxpayer subsidies paid to oil and gas companies. Today in New Hampshire, the President will reiterate his call on Congress to do just that.
Want to learn more about President Obama's Blueprint for American-made energy? Here's everything you need to know.

This document is available online at http://energy.gov/about-us/web-policies/energygov-article-guidance.