



STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
DEPT OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
WEB SUPPORT DIVISION

WORK RELATED SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

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1. PURPOSE

This document formalizes the policy for executive branch agencies of the State of New Hampshire that seek to use social media sites in accordance with the business goals of said agency. (See RSA 21-R:4, IV, and XVIII.) It is the responsibility of all agency heads or their designee to enforce this policy. Employees who do not comply with this policy shall be subject to disciplinary action as outlined in the Administrative Rules of the Division of Personnel.

“Social media sites” refers to websites that facilitate user participation, networking, and collaboration through the submission of user generated content. A “social media identity” is a specific user identity or account that has been registered on a third party social media site.

Social media in general includes tools such as: blogs, wikis, microblogging sites (Twitter, etc.), social networking sites (Facebook, LinkedIn, etc.), video sharing sites (YouTube, Snapchat, Vine, etc.), photo sharing (Flickr, etc.), free online survey and scheduling tools (Survey Monkey, Doodle, etc.), and social bookmarking sites.

This document addresses the work-related use of social media, including the use of social media that is sanctioned as part of an employee’s job function (e.g. the Public Information Officer tweeting on the Agency’s official Twitter account).

This policy is intended to provide guidelines for state agencies to use social media to safely and effectively communicate with the public while simultaneously promulgating and adhering to the stated mission of the agency. As such, adherence to these policies is mandatory for any agency that intends to establish a social media identity.

Any agency currently using work-related social media sites must review its sites and make any changes necessary to bring the sites into compliance with this policy by July 1, 2017. An agency must contact the State’s Department of Information and Technology if more time is necessary to bring the agency’s current social media sites into compliance.

2. POLICY

1. Work-Related User Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of any agency or employee that uses social media to read, understand, and follow this policy. In addition, users are expected to exercise reasonable judgment in interpreting this policy and in making decisions about the use of social media identities. Any person with questions regarding the application or meaning of this policy should seek clarification from appropriate management or DoIT at Social.Media@doit.nh.gov. Failure to observe this policy may subject individuals to disciplinary action, including termination of employment in accordance with the Administrative Rules of the Division of Personnel.

2. Required Work-Related Use of Social Media

Prior to establishing a social media identity, an agency commissioner or designee shall

1. Develop their “Rules of Engagement” that govern how social media tools and/or services are used on behalf of the agency’s mission. These rules must include direction to the public regarding the following:
 - a. that the use of obscene, threatening or harassing language is prohibited on the State’s social media sites;
 - b. personal attacks of any kind or offensive comments that target or disparage any ethnic, racial, age, or religious group, gender, sexual orientation or disability is prohibited; and
 - c. comments should be related to the posted topic on the State’s social media site and comments that do not directly relate to the purpose or topic will be removed by the agency
2. Establish publishing standards that includes a process that prohibits the posting of any confidential or department information that has not been approved for external dissemination;
3. Identify specific employees who will be responsible for establishing, reviewing and posting content to the agency’s social media sites;
4. Implement a process for monitoring the content on the agency’s social media sites;
5. Establish a methodology on how permission is obtained related to posting of any photo or intellectual property not owned by the agency or photographs of recognizable people taken by state employees during official events;
6. Implement a procedures that identifies how the agency manages any comments removed as inappropriate; and
7. Enforce the agency’s Rules of Engagement with the public.

All social media accounts must be created by a social media designee who is an official State of New Hampshire employee. All accounts must also be created using an official State of New Hampshire email address obtained through DoIT.

All social media designees must clearly identify themselves and their agency in all communications. This includes clearly identifying the State of New Hampshire with the use of the State Seal as well as your agency with the use of an agency logo or text on all pages.

Each social media account must be protected by a unique (not used anywhere else) password that follows the State’s standard for creating a password. At a minimum, if permitted by the social media site, the password must contain at least one (1) upper case letter, one (1) number and one (1) special character such as !, &, and @.

An agency should consider turning off or disabling the ability for the public to post comments to its social media sites if the agency cannot devote resources to monitoring public comments and enforcing the agency's Rules of Engagement.

Social media designees must devote an appropriate amount of work hours to monitoring and updating the content of social media sites. Therefore, management may need to adjust a designees work responsibilities accordingly.

Social media designees shall receive adequate direction from DoIT regarding the State's social media policy to allow the designees to maintain compliance therewith. Said designees shall be responsible to maintain adequate knowledge and expertise in the ever changing world of social media to ensure that all such standards and policies shall be enforced.

Copyright, fair use and disclosure laws must be respected on all State social media sites. Permission must be received in order to post any photo or intellectual property that the agency does not own and did not create. Care must be taken when linking to existing public facing photos and intellectual property. No photographs including recognizable individuals may be posted unless permission from those depicted therein is received.

All social media designees are required to protect confidentiality. State employees and state agencies must protect all State of New Hampshire information which is considered to be non-public in nature. No agency shall post legally protected personal information. Social media designees shall seek permission from their supervisor before publishing or reporting on conversations that occur within the agency. Information about policies or plans that have not been finalized by the agency may not be posted without explicit permission from the appropriate supervisor. If questionable, seek guidance from management.

All social media designees are required to respect State of New Hampshire time and property. State of New Hampshire information technology ("IT") resources, computers and time on the job are reserved for State related business as approved by supervisors. Users must abide by all applicable policies and work rules regarding the internet when using social media tools and/or services.

Social media designees must follow the Terms of Service that were agreed upon when the account was created. Copies are available from the social media platform.

3. Best Practices for Social Media Designees:

Business Strategy: Prior to establishing a social media identity, an agency shall develop written business strategies or goals for using social media sites that are in accordance with the mission of the particular state agency.

Consider the Risk: Prior to establishing a social media identity, the agency should weigh the benefits against the risks of such use. For example, when agreeing to use many, if not all, social media sites, the user may have to agree to indemnify and hold harmless the social media platform in the event of a lawsuit filed by a public user of the site.

Think Twice Before Posting: Privacy does not exist in the world of social media. Posted content is immediately disseminated throughout the Internet and cannot be retrieved or rescinded. Published content is persistent in the public domain.

Be Accurate: Get the facts straight before posting them to social media. Review content for grammar and spelling errors. Typos, misspellings and poor grammar reflect badly on the State of New Hampshire.

Be Respectful: Understand that content contributed to the social media world is available to the public. Consider how posted content will reflect on the state, the agency and State employees. Ensure that posted content will not alienate, harm or provoke.

Remain Neutral: Remember, because posted content will be seen – rightly or wrongly – as the official word of the State agency, it is important to maintain a position of neutrality. No agency should use social media to promote a business, a personal opinion, or political point of view.

Follow the Rules of Engagement: Know and follow your agency's Rules of Engagement and the statewide policy as set forth by DoIT.

Be Aware: The State has a Code of Ethics which may apply to social media postings. Accordingly, all social media designees should be familiar with RSA 21-G:21, *et. al.*

Consider Content: As informal as social media sites are meant to be, if they are on a government domain or a government identity, they will be perceived as disseminating official government communications. Social media sites will be sought out by mainstream media – so a great deal of thought needs to go into how to use the social media in a way that benefits both the agency and the public.

Considerations When Speaking on Behalf of an Agency: Social media designees must be extremely careful when responding to questions from the public. No designee may give legal advice to the public. Legal advice includes, among other things, the interpretation of statutes or regulations, explanations of the legal role of the agency or any officer thereof. Designees shall take extreme care to avoid making any statement that could be interpreted as the official position of the agency or of the State without prior clearance from a supervisor. Designees shall avoid expressing personal opinions or biases. Designees shall always refer to members of the public with respect and shall make no statement that could offend the dignity of a citizen.

Understand Users' First Amendment Rights: A state agency may moderate the social media sites that accept comments from the public, but moderators must be aware that the First Amendment more strictly limits the government's ability to restrict speech than it does private entities. The agency may remove comments that are obscene, threatening, discriminatory, harassing, or off topic. However, an agency may not use the moderation function to restrict speech with which the agency merely disagrees.

Handling Negative Comments: Because the purpose of many social media sites, particularly agency blogs and wikis, is to get feedback from the public it should be expected that some of the postings will be negative. Some effective ways to respond to negative comments include:

1. Respect the audience and the public - ethnic slurs, personal insults, obscenity, or any conduct that would not be acceptable in the agency's workplace are forbidden.
2. Do not engage the public in controversial topics such as race, ethnic origin, party politics and religion.
3. Do not air differences with your fellow State employees on the agency's social media's presence.
4. Maintain a respect for people's privacy.
5. Be transparent, admit to your mistakes, and differ respectfully. Do not pick fights, be the first to correct your own mistakes, and don't alter previous posts without indicating that you have done so.

6. When you see misrepresentations made about your agency by media or by other users, you may use the agency's social media site to point that out. However, you must do so with respect, and stick to the facts.

4. ACCOUNTABILITY

This policy applies to all employees authorized to establish and/or maintain a social media presence on behalf of an agency.

It is the responsibility of all agency heads or their designee to enforce this policy in conjunction with the DoIT. Employees who do not comply with this policy shall be subject to disciplinary action as outlined in the Administrative Rules of the Division of Personnel

5. DESCRIPTION

This policy provides guidelines for conduct by state employees who use social media tools or services to engage with customers on behalf of the State of New Hampshire. Social media includes, but is not limited to:

- Forums
- Weblogs (blogs, microblogs, etc.)
- Wikis
- Social Communication Sites
- Podcasts
- Photo Sharing Sites
- Video Sharing Sites
- Online survey and scheduling tools
- Real-Time Web Communications (chat, instant messaging)

6. REFERENCE

User Account and Password Policy
State of New Hampshire Website Standards
State of New Hampshire Website Best Practices

National Association of Chief Information Officers, [Friends, Followers, and Feeds: A National Survey of Social Media Use in State Government](#)