



**STATE OF HAWAII
OFFICE OF ENTERPRISE TECHNOLOGY SERVICES
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SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES

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INTRODUCTION

ETS prepared these guidelines to assist departments and agencies with use of social media as an official channel to communicate with the public.

Social media services can provide agencies with an opportunity to communicate with the public and to promote transparency and open government.

Social media must not be used in lieu of official state .gov websites. The .gov extension lets users know that the information is accurate and authoritative. Social media may be used to emphasize, clarify, or highlight information on the state's official websites at Hawaii.gov or on the state portal at ehawaii.gov. Linking between state.gov websites and social media is encouraged.

Heads of departments and agencies should issue social media plans describing use and resourcing of social media. The plan should be reviewed annually and updated periodically as technologies or laws develop.

SCOPE

This document provides the main framework for the Social Media use for official communication in the Executive Branch.

Specific Social Media plans should be developed and approved by the director or head of each department/agency.

This guidance applies to all agencies in the Executive Branch of the State of Hawaii, and personnel in such state agencies who are or will be acting in an official capacity on behalf of an agency with respect to the use of social media services.

This guidance also applies to any persons or contractors retained by an agency to assist the state agency on the use of social media services.

This guidance does not apply to state employees or contractors using social media services in their personal capacity for personal purposes.

TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

As used this guidance, "social media services" means the services offered by "social media sites" maintained mostly by third parties. Generally, "social media sites" are websites that can be used by the state to provide information, and facilitating public participation, networking and collaboration through the submission of public-generated content.

Popular examples of social media sites include social networking sites, such as Facebook™ and LinkedIn™; microblogging sites, such as Twitter™; blogs; wikis; video sharing sites, such as YouTube and Zoom. Other social media sites and services include (but are not limited to) Instagram, Reddit, Discord, Microsoft Teams, Snapchat, WhatsApp, Pinterest, Vimeo, Flickr, Blogger, and WordPress. This list will continue to evolve as more technologies and platforms are developed.

GUIDANCE

1) OFFICIAL STATE WEBSITES AND SOCIAL MEDIA.

The state's official websites at Hawaii.gov and the state's official portal at ehawaii.gov are the state's main internet presence. Agencies may use social media to emphasize, clarify or highlight information on the state's official websites. However social media must not be used in place of official state websites. In some cases, you may decide that responses to questions on social media sites should be added to your official .gov website. Linking between social media and the state.gov websites is encouraged.

2) SOCIAL MEDIA SERVICES PERMITTED FOR OFFICIAL USE

Social media services can provide agencies with an opportunity to communicate with the public and to promote open government.

Accordingly, agencies are permitted to use social media services for official agency business in a manner that supports the agency's mission. The following are examples of appropriate uses of social media services:

- Deliver public information and customer value
- Communicate directly to the public without a filter, especially during crises and emergencies
- Increase government transparency and efficiency

This document is meant to help departments/agencies understand the risk(s) and value and outline some best practices for social media usage.

3) HEAD OF AGENCY OR DEPARTMENT REVIEW AND APPROVAL.

Policies and guidance specific to use of a particular social media service should be reviewed and approved by the head of the agency or department. This includes review and approval of any subordinate unit's social media usage. Attached agencies should consult with their department on social media plans.

4) PUBLIC COMMENTS AND MODERATION

a) Public Comments are a Part of Social Media

Social media platforms are designed to allow open discussion between their users, in this case between the state agency and members of the public. Social media platforms are especially useful when you monitor comments, answer questions and respond to incorrect information.

b) Social Media and Free Speech

If you allow public comments, you should presume that your social media site is an open forum and therefore all speech is allowed. Various options to turn-off

comments, respond to public comments and take down public comments are discussed below.

c) Deciding to Turn Off the Comments Feature

Most platforms allow you to turn off comments. If you decide to turn off comments, you lose the benefit of public discourse, but you still have access to the social media platforms features and user base without the inherent risk that comes with comments. This may be the best practice if:

- i) You do not have the resources to monitor the comments and participate in the discussion,
- ii) You find the comments are not helpful in adding to public information or discussion or are not enhancing customer service,
- iii) Too many commenters are abusing the system,
- iv) It is possible to turn comments on selectively when you can monitor the platform.
- v) You are using a social media platform to broadcast rulemaking, contested cases, or other administrative proceedings governed by HRS chapter 91. If the administrative proceeding is broadcast on a social media platform, you can accept live testimony in accordance with state policies, but the public comment feature should be turned off so that it does not become part of the record.

d) Monitoring Public Comments

- i) Practice pointer: Before activating the comments feature for a social media service, gain experience with the use of the social media service. This experience can provide insight into the staffing requirements needed to moderate the comments.
- ii) Review the social media providers rules for comments on its site. Most sites have an authorized use policy that includes rules and procedures for reporting unauthorized use to the platform (which may result in the platform removing the unauthorized comments).
- iii) Implement a comment policy, if needed, to supplement the provider's policy—this policy is sometimes referred to as a takedown policy. Consult with your legal counsel on the type of forum to be created and the take-down policy for the removal of inappropriate comments. Your comment policy needs to be consistent with the resources available to monitor the comments.
- iv) Establish the internal protocol for administering the public comment policy;
- v) Train the personnel who will be interacting with the public and administering the public comment policy;

- vi) If you can turn the comments feature on and off, determine the circumstances that are right for accepting or not accepting comments.

e) Responding to Public Comments

- i) Questions as Comments: Be prepared to answer questions about the agency and its policies and practices or to refer the user to a helpful website or email address. The response should indicate it is from an official account.
- ii) Incorrect or Misleading Information: If comments contain incorrect information, consider responding with correct information, again backed by a website or email address. Incorrect or misleading information should be responded to and not taken down. The response should indicate it is from an official account.
- iii) Personal or Privacy Protected Information: Personally identifiable information such as social security numbers, phone numbers, addresses, credit card or bank account information, birth dates, etc. should be taken down immediately, even if it appears the information was posted voluntarily by the owner of the information.
- iv) Commercial, Non-profit, Product or Event Endorsement or Information: This type of comment should not be taken down, but you should respond that the appearance of the information on the agency's social media page is from a third party and not a state endorsement of the item listed in the comment. The response should indicate it is from an official account.
- v) Off-topic comments: Generally, off-topic comments should be ignored and not taken down.
- vi) Offensive speech, threatening comments, incitement to violence or criminal behavior: Offensive speech includes speech that is graphic, vulgar, obscene, profane, sexually explicit, racial comments or submissions, abusive, hateful, or intended to defame anyone or any organization. These types of comments usually violate the social media providers comment policy and should be reported to the provider. You could respond that the appearance of the information on the agency's social media page is from a third party and that the state does not agree with the information listed in the comment. The response should indicate it is from an official account. In some cases, such as a threat against a government official, it may also be appropriate to report the comments to law enforcement. Threats, adverse or slanderous comments, or allegations made against the state, its employees, or contractors shall be promptly reported by the agency to the Hawaii Department of Attorney General.
- vii) Any comments that are removed or not posted due to comment policy violations must be documented by the agency along with reason for the removal or non-posting of the comment.

f) Pre-Moderation

If the agency decides to moderate comments by the public, the agency should comply with the following:

- i) Moderate all comments before they are public if the tool allows pre-moderation.
- ii) If comments cannot be moderated before posting, comments must be reviewed as soon as possible during business hours after they become accessible by the public.
- iii) Follow the guidance in paragraph e) Responding to Public Comments and your social media comment policy and plan in pre-moderation.
- iv) Any comments that are removed or not posted due to comment policy violations must be documented by the agency along with reason for the removal or non-posting of the comment.

5) USE FOR ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEEDINGS

If you are using a social media platform to broadcast rulemaking, contested cases, or other administrative proceedings governed by HRS chapter 91, you can accept live testimony in accordance with state policies, but the public comment feature should be turned off so that it does not become part of the record.

6) PLANNING FOR THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA TO COMMUNICATE WITH THE PUBLIC, AGENCY PLAN CONTENTS.

BEFORE starting to use social media services, agencies should carefully consider the following:

a) Audience

Consider the target audience that you are intending to reach with the social media services. Each service is different in terms of engagement, content, and community norms. Market research, metrics, and other data can help in defining your audience and the particular social media services to use. It is very important to recognize that in addition to your intended audience, you will be communicating to others who monitor your account, such as your employees, vendors, taxpayers, legislators, and the media. Your messaging must consider the impact on all of these audiences.

b) Understand The Social Media Services

Social media services can foster information-sharing with the citizens and the public, keep pace with fast-moving events in real time (e.g., crisis, disasters, emergencies, etc.), and harness the collective ingenuity of the public to support the mission of the agency. Take the time to become familiar with the array of social media services in terms of how they work and what they can offer to government agencies. [Practice

pointer: Consider consulting with other agencies using social media to learn from their experiences.] Note that Social Media providers do not offer any level of service agreements or assurances for delivery of content and should not be depended on for life-safety communications.

c) Purpose

Identify the purpose(s) for using the social media services, and how the social media services will foster or fit into the communication strategy and mission of the agency. Bear in mind that the purpose(s) for using social media services will evolve over time as the agency garners experience, feedback, and comfort with the use of the services.

d) Type of Content

Consider the type of content you intend to communicate using social media services. Identification of the content will assist in determining other aspects such as the target audience, the frequency of use of social media services, the required resources, and retention requirements. Remember that your state website should be your primary verified source of information for the public.

e) State and Agency Logos and Links

State-operated social media sites should include the State of Hawaii logo and department or agency logos.

f) Frequency

Consider how often you anticipate the need or opportunity to post and moderate content. Personnel resources will vary with the frequency of the posting of content and monitoring and responding to public posts. Keep in mind that failure to post content that is active, timely and current can negatively affect the effectiveness of social media services.

g) Scale

If the agency does not already possess experience and a level of comfort with the use of social media services for the agency's business, the agency may want to initially limit the use of social media services to static one-way communications. Starting on a small scale will also assist the agency in gauging the type and number of personnel and other resources needed, including the willingness of the agency to assign personnel to monitor and act upon public comments/feedback.

h) Agency Resources

Identify the internal resources needed to use the social media services. Social media requires an investment in resources to make it work. Identify the personnel who will be authorized to post and monitor content on the social media services, and the

approval(s) that personnel will be required to obtain before content is posted.

i) Content Protocol

The agency should provide clear internal guidelines on the content permitted to be posted via the use of social media services.

j) Retention Protocol

Content of historical value or part of public relations files (i.e. news releases, announcements of events such as adoption of new programs, termination of old programs, major shifts in policy, etc.) posted via the use of social media services must be recorded and stored. It is the responsibility of the director/head of the agency to ensure that the content is recorded and stored. Please refer to Department of Accounting and General Services Archives Division General Records rules.

k) Metrics For Gauging Effectiveness

Before implementing your social media plan, learn what metrics are available from each provider. Define what success should look like and how you are going to measure it. Examples of measurements include subscribers, positive or negative feedback, page and blog views, and click-throughs. Establish a regular reporting schedule.

l) Service Continuity

Generally, social media services are provided by third parties at no cost and without a specific contract. Given how these services are offered, the agency should be aware that features, access, terms of service, and other facets of the social media service may change over time. Consider the extent to which the agency will exclusively rely on a particular service. The agency should consider its contingency plan in the event of unacceptable changes in the service, or termination of the service. The state's official websites at hawaii.gov and ehawaii.gov should always be the primary source of verified information for the public.

m) Accounts Below Department Level

The head of the department should determine which, if any, of its subordinate units should have their own social media accounts. Attached agencies should consult with the department on social media plans.

n) Presence of Advertising

Social media sites used by the state should not contain advertising. Your agency's site should not appear to lobby, advertise, nor provide preferential treatment to private individuals, firms, corporations or other organizations. However, some social media sites contain advertising selected based on the public user's profile or history

because the content is displayed in their environment wrapped around your content. Log in to your agency site as an outside user to see how ads and other content may appear on the user's screen. Provide a disclaimer if necessary to clarify that the content is not provided by or endorsed by the state of Hawaii or your agency.

7) REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF THE SOCIAL MEDIA SERVICES PLAN

a) Approval and Annual Review

After identifying the matters above, the department/agency should prepare a Social Media Services plan for review and approval by its director, with annual reviews thereafter.

b) Send Plans to ets.itg@hawaii.gov

Send your approved department/agency Social Media Services plans (initial and subsequent updates) to the Office of Enterprise Technology Services, via the established IT Governance process to ets.itg@hawaii.gov.

c) Add Agency Social Media Sites

Once specific social media platforms have been identified, departments and agencies must update the state's information technology portfolio management system with the links to the specific pages. Also, submit the social media sites for inclusion on the State's ehawaii.gov portal website: <https://portal.ehawaii.gov/page/social-media/>

8) GUIDELINES ON THE OFFICIAL USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA BY STATE EMPLOYEES.

a) Authorization

- i) State employees acting on behalf of an agency shall connect to and exchange information with only those social media service sites that have been identified in the agency's Social Media Services Plan.
- ii) The director/head of the agency or his or her designee must authorize the participation of identified state personnel in social media services for official purposes, and the posting of agency information.
- iii) State personnel authorized to speak on behalf of the agency or the State shall identify themselves when posting or exchanging information via social media services or use the official agency account, and shall address issues only within the scope of their specific authorization.
- iv) The posting of information or events which are not under the sole authority or responsibility of the agency is prohibited unless written specific coordination has been granted to that agency in advance.

- v) When registering for social media services, state personnel shall use their official state email address or use the agency account.
- vi) If the application requires a USERNAME, the words Hlgov should be included in the addresses to provide the public with a consistent method of searching for and finding official State identities, for example:
 - (1) <http://twitter.com/agencynameHlgov>
 - (2) <http://facebook.com/agencyname.Hlgov>
- vii) The agency should develop and maintain an up-to-date social networking matrix that identifies state personnel participating in social networking activities. The matrix shall include:
 - (1) The social networking application name (i.e., Twitter, Facebook, etc.),
 - (2) The first and last name of the individual,
 - (3) The username (if applicable),
 - (4) The email address and phone number.
- viii) Upon termination or departure of personnel (or authorized contractors), the director/head of the agency or designee shall be responsible for removing/deleting social networking registrations of such state personnel and contractors. Agencies should add removal of social media privileged access to out-processing checklists.

b) Terms of Service

Social media sites not owned or operated by the State are subject to the terms of service agreement of the provider. Since some of the terms may not be acceptable or appropriate to the State or to your agency, the terms should be vetted by legal staff before the site is used.

c) Copyright Protection

The director/head of the agency must approve the posting of content not created or owned by the government before the content is posted. The department/agency should do the following when posting such content:

- i) Credit appropriately. Identify all copyrighted or borrowed material with citations and links. When publishing any material online that includes another's direct or paraphrased quotes, thoughts, ideas, photos, or videos, always give credit to the original material or author, where applicable.
- ii) Obtain copyright releases for all such material from the creators or indemnification from the entity for which the material is to be posted.
- iii) Logos, seals, URLs and trademarks, other than those of the State or agency, may not be used without written consent of the owner or an authorized

representative.

- iv) Obtain personality right releases for each image of a person who may have a potential claim to such a right or indemnification from the entity for which the material is to be posted.

d) Disclaimers and Disclosures

Determine if a disclaimer or a disclosure is needed for your social media page.

- i) A disclosure is a statement of information or risks associated with the social media. For example, an office must disclose that comments are or are not moderated.
- ii) A disclaimer makes a statement that limits or specifies rights or obligations. An often-used disclaimer is the standard exit disclaimer when you include a link to an outside website.

e) Posting and Comment Guideline for State Personnel; Ethical Conduct

- i) State personnel should be mindful that they represent the agency and the State when working in their official capacity while online. As such, state personnel are subject to all agency and State requirements addressing prohibited or inappropriate behavior in the workplace, including acceptable use policies, user agreements, sexual harassment policies, etc. Remember that you are “speaking” for the Agency when you are working in your official capacity.
- ii) Content shall be clear, direct, positive, honest, ethical, and written in the first person.
- iii) Content shall be relevant and timely:
 - (1) Relevant: Information that helps citizens or other viewers; and
 - (2) Timely: Information about deadlines, upcoming events, news or current events.
 - (3) Remove content that is no longer relevant and timely.
- iv) Provide facts, not opinions.
- v) Do not disclose, use or comment on the following:
 - (1) Matters in litigation;
 - (2) Claims that could be brought or asserted against the agency, its personnel, or the State.
 - (3) Anything that would be construed as providing legal advice.
 - (4) Nonpublic information, including any information designated as confidential,

privileged, or any other type of information that may not be disclosed, even if someone else asks you for it.

- (5) Personnel, sensitive or confidential information of any kind.
- (6) Medical information that violates a person's Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) protections.
- vi) Maintain ethical conduct when using social media services:
 - (1) Do not post content that you would not say in a speech given in your official capacity.
 - (2) Do not post content that is graphic, vulgar, obscene, explicit, profane, sexually explicit, racial comments or submissions, abusive, hateful, or intended to defame anyone or any organization.
 - (3) Do not post content that contains threatening or harassing language, personal attacks of any kind, or offensive terms that target specific individuals or groups.
 - (4) Do not post content that is invasive of a person's privacy.
 - (5) Do not post content that violates a law, or suggests or encourages illegal activity.
 - (6) Do not misuse your position for your own gain or to help others inappropriately.
 - (7) Do not endorse any product, service, company, non-profit organization or any other enterprise.
 - (8) Do not engage in any partisan political activity.
 - (9) Do not fundraise for any charitable or political organization.
 - (10) Do not attempt to directly or indirectly lobby.
- vii) Before you post any content via social media services, pause, read the content again, and make sure that you want to send the content. If you have any doubts, do not post the content until you have discussed the matter with the agency's director or public information officer.

f) Security and Privacy

- i) State personnel shall not provide home addresses, local addresses, personal phone number(s), birth date, as well as personal location or personal plans on a weblog or other social network system, or any other personal identifying information including information defined in HRS chapters 487N, 487R, and Acts 135 and 136, Session Laws of Hawaii 2006.

- ii) Threats, adverse or slanderous comments, or allegations made against the state, its employees, or contractors shall be promptly reported by the agency to the Hawaii Department of Attorney General.

g) Accessibility

- i) Content posted via social media services must be accessible to all persons, including persons with disabilities, unless it would impose an undue burden on the agency. Review the accessibility information on each social media services site to ensure accessibility of government information on the site.
- ii) If making the content accessible would impose an undue burden on the agency, or would otherwise fall under an exception, you should provide alternative access.
- iii) Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) is a globally recognized voluntary consensus standard for web content and information communication technology created by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C). The WCAG 2.0 Level AA standard and the Web Accessibility Initiative Accessible Rich Internet Applications Suite (WAI-ARIA) 1.0 techniques for web content is the state standard to measure accessibility and functionality of on-line content. You should ensure your social media provider complies with recognized accessibility standards

9) ENFORCEMENT

This guidance does not establish enforceable rules or policy. Enforcement will be governed by the policies of the agency, and applicable laws and regulations. All employees must comply with the State of Hawaii, Department of Human Resources Development's Policy No. 103.001, "Acceptable Usage of IT Resources."

RESOURCES

A listing of existing Hawaii government related social media accounts can be found at Hawaii.gov | [Social Media \(ehawaii.gov\)](http://Social Media (ehawaii.gov))

REVISION HISTORY

Date:	Action taken
March 22, 2023	Complete Rewrite

CONTACT INFORMATION

For questions, comments or suggestions about these guidelines, please contact ETS IT Governance at ets.itg@hawaii.gov

APPROVING AUTHORITY


Douglas Murdock (Mar 28, 2023 13:38 HST)

Date: March, 28, 2023

Douglas Murdock
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