

4-101. Social media guidelines.

The purpose of this section is to provide guidelines for the use of social media by state agencies, boards, and commissions. Agencies may also utilize these guidelines as a component of agency-specific policies. State employees or staff using social media for state business, both on and off the Nebraska.gov domain, should be made aware of these guidelines or, if applicable, agency-specific policies.

(1) Definition. “Social media” is a general term that encompass various online activities that facilitate social interaction and collaborative content creation. Social media includes Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Flickr, blogs, wikis, photo and video sharing, podcasts, social networking, and multiuser virtual environments.

(2) Business Decision. The decision to utilize social media is a business decision, not a technology-based decision. It must be made at the appropriate management level for each agency, considering the agency’s mission, objectives, capabilities, and the potential benefits.

(3) State Portal Link. Agencies should notify the network manager of the state portal to have their social media pages linked on the state website (<http://www.nebraska.gov/social/>).

(4) Profile Information. Agency social media accounts should include the following information in the profile or information section: (a) “Official Nebraska Government Page,” (b) the agency’s name, and (c) a link to the agency’s website.

(5) Records Retention. Agencies should follow applicable records retention policies for social media accounts. (See Schedule 124, Item 124-125, <http://www.sos.ne.gov/records-management/pdf/general-records-for-state-agencies-124.pdf>.)

(6) Agency Access. Agencies should ensure that more than one staff member has access to the agency’s social media sites.

(7) Alternative Contact Information. If the social media site it intended for pushing information only, the agency should provide alternative ways to contact the agency.

(8) Disclaimer. This subsection contains recommended items to address on a social media disclaimer or disclosure page. The page should include a general statement of purpose and notice of the following:

(a) The social media site is not hosted by the state and is subject to policies within the control of the third-party host of the site;

(b) Communication of a personal or private nature in relation to agency business, as well as official state business interactions, should be made via the traditional agency communications channels and not via the public comment areas of the social media site;

(c) The agency is not responsible for any web page author's personal content outside the work place;

(d) The agency is not responsible for any third-party content of any kind;

(e) All communications are subject to the state's public records laws;

(f) If comments are allowed on a social media site, it is a limited forum and comments must be related to the subject matter of the social media posting. Comments may be monitored. If content is removed, a copy will be maintained in accordance with applicable records retention requirements. The following forms of content will not be allowed: (i) comments not related to the subject matter of the particular social media article being commented upon; (ii) comments campaigning for or against the nomination or election of a candidate or the qualification, passage, or defeat of a ballot question; (iii) profane language or content; (iv) content that promotes, fosters, or perpetuates discrimination on the basis of race, creed, color, age, religion, gender, marital status, national origin, physical or mental disability, or sexual orientation; (v) sexual content or links to sexual content; (vi) solicitations of commerce; (vii) conduct or encouragement of illegal activity; (viii) information that may tend to compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems; or (ix) content that violates a legal ownership interest of any other party.

(9) Best Practices. The following are suggestions on how best to use and maintain social media sites:

(a) Ensure that your agency sanctions official participation and representation on social media sites. Stick to your area of expertise and provide unique, individual perspectives on what is going on at the state and in other larger contexts. All statements must be true and not misleading, and all claims must be substantiated and approved;

(b) Post meaningful, respectful comments, no spam, and no remarks that are off-topic or offensive. When disagreeing with others' opinions, keep it appropriate and polite;

(c) Pause and think before posting. Reply to comments in a timely manner when a response is appropriate unless you have posted a disclaimer that this is not official two-way communication;

(d) Be smart about protecting yourself, your privacy, your agency, and any restricted, confidential, or sensitive information. What is published is widely accessible, not easily retractable, and will be around for a long time (even if you remove it), so consider the content carefully. Respect proprietary information, content, and confidentiality;

(e) If you are under a generic name, consider using some form of tagging to identify the person posting content; and

(f) Email or login names should lead the user back to a "state id," such as an official state email address, or make a user name that indicates you are a state employee.

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History: Adopted on November 9, 2010. Amended on June 30, 2011 and July 12, 2018.

URL: <http://nitc.nebraska.gov/standards/4-101.pdf>