

Social Media Policy and Guidelines



Social Media Use Policy

Communications Branch, Executive Council

Policy Statement

The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador supports the use of social media to provide information on, and to promote awareness of, its programs and services. Social media sites may help provide additional client service; enhance the profile of government programs in the public domain; increase traffic to a website; invite collaboration; obtain feedback; or, network.

The Social Media Use Policy outlines requirements to be followed as Government of Newfoundland and Labrador employees participate in social media, both as employees and as private citizens.

Application

This policy applies to all departments within the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, including all employees and others acting on behalf of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, such as contractors hired for a specific project or timeframe.

Definitions

Social media refers to publicly-accessible Government of Newfoundland and Labrador and third-party-hosted social media sites. This includes social networks, video and photo file sharing, social bookmarking, blogs, micro-blogs, podcasting, wikis and other similar tools. It refers to freely accessible online social media tools used to produce, post and interact using text, images, video, and audio to communicate, share, collaborate, or network.

Department refers to all core departments within the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Employee refers to any employees, contractors or others acting on behalf of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Authorized content provider is an employee designated by departmental executive to contribute to the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador presence on social media sites.

Responsibilities

Departments - Responsible departmental executive and/or communications directors are responsible for:

- Ensuring employees are advised of the Policy and Guidelines for Social Media Use;
- Ensuring requirements of the policy have been met;
- Designating authorized content providers;
- Ensuring Information Management (IM), Information Technology (IT), and Access to Information and Protection of Privacy (ATIPP) implications are considered in the development of social media channels; and,
- Consulting with the Communications Branch of Executive Council in development and implementation of social media channels.

Communications Branch - The Communications Branch of Executive Council is responsible for granting approval for all new external Provincial Government social media initiatives, and for maintaining and updating this policy.

Employees - Employees are responsible for following all Provincial Government policies, including the Guidelines for Social Media Use, human resource policies, and all Government of Newfoundland and Labrador policies and procedures affecting conflict of interest, protection of information and privacy, records management and website/Internet use.

Policy Statements

Departmental Use of Social Media

Departments are permitted to have an official presence on social media sites if:

- The use of social media supports the department's overall communications activity and has been approved by the departmental executive and Communications Director, and the Communications Branch of Executive Council;
- Authorized content providers post, monitor, respond, and contribute to social media in a manner that is identifiable as being made by, or on behalf of, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador and by authorized content providers;
- The use of social media complies with all applicable laws, and all Government of Newfoundland and Labrador policies and procedures, including those related to protection of privacy, records management, security, respectful workplaces, discipline, political activity, conflict of interest and Internet/e-mail use; and,
- Social media sites are supported with technical and monitoring measures which prevent or ensure the timely removal of abusive, hateful, or defamatory submissions, including information that jeopardizes the privacy of others.

Employee Use of Social Media – as an authorized content provider

- Only official Government of Newfoundland and Labrador information, not an individual's personal views, are to be communicated by any employee, contractor or others designated as an authorized content provider.
- An authorized content provider must ensure all content posted on Government of Newfoundland and Labrador social media sites is consistent with an overall communications plan/strategy approved by the departmental executive and Communications Director.
- Authorized content providers must monitor the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador social media sites.

Employee Use of Social Media – as a private citizen

- As private citizens, many employees participate in social media; employees must not represent the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador on their personal social media sites or on other social media.
- As a private citizen, a Government of Newfoundland and Labrador employee must make every reasonable effort to make it clear that they are contributing to social media sites as a private individual, and not as a representative of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador.
- As a private citizen, employees must not disclose any Government of Newfoundland and Labrador information or content that they are not specifically authorized to disclose.
- As a private citizen using social media, employees should be aware of their responsibilities under public service policies and procedures including the Oath/Affirmation of Office, E-mail Policy, Political Activity Policy, Acceptable Use of Government Network and Information Technology Assets, Harassment-Free Workplace Policy, and Discipline Policy (off duty conduct).
- As a private citizen, when engaging in social media activities, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador employees must use a private e-mail address rather than their Provincial Government e-mail address.
- Personal use of social media must never interfere with work duties.

Relevant documents

- [Government of Newfoundland and Labrador Social Media Use Guidelines](#)
- [Oath/Affirmation of Office](#)
- [Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act](#)
- [Personal Health Information Act \(PIHA\)](#)
- [Information Management and Protection Policy](#)
- [Management of Information Act](#)
- [E-mail Policy](#)
- [Political Activity Policy](#)
- [Discipline Policy](#)
- [Conflict of Interest Act, 1995](#)
- [Harassment Free Workplace Policy](#)
- [Acceptable Use of Government Network and Information Technology Assets](#)

Social Media Use Guidelines

The Social Media Use Guidelines summarize communications and operational requirements to be followed as Government of Newfoundland and Labrador employees participate in, or contribute to, social media. They apply to all departments, including all employees and others acting on behalf of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, such as contractors hired for a specific project or timeframe.

Social media refers to publicly-accessible Government of Newfoundland and Labrador and third-party-hosted sites. This includes social networks, video and photo file sharing, social bookmarking, blogs, podcasting, wikis and other similar social media.

Benefits of the use of social media by the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador may include timely dissemination of information to the public; increased public awareness of government programs; increased traffic to a website; enhanced collaboration and networking; and additional avenues to obtain feedback.

Communications and Operational Considerations

Social media use must directly support communications and departmental objectives in a positive, measurable way. The use of social media should address a need; social media use is not suitable in all situations. It is also important to consider the resource implications of monitoring and maintaining social media sites.

Communications and Marketing Objectives

- The program's communications plan or marketing objectives should align with Government of Newfoundland and Labrador's overall communications planning.
- As with other Government of Newfoundland and Labrador produced media, social media sites must use the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador brand in accordance with the graphic standards, which outline the proper usage of the brand signature in regards to colour, font style, size, and placement.
- Consideration should include the ability of the social media channel site(s) to reach the target audience.

Content

- The date or criteria (i.e., after a certain period of inactivity) upon which the content and use of the site will be reviewed or discontinued/removed should be established.
- Ensure there is enough content of interest to provide a steady flow of information.
- Information should be timely and relevant; stale information can be more problematic than no information.

Support

- Most social media technologies are currently in the public domain and do not belong to government, therefore a review of any support arrangement, privacy statements and any pertinent documentation, such as Terms of Service, must be done prior to the use of social media.

Resources

- Consider resources required to create content and monitor social media tools. Regular monitoring and updating are crucial to successful social media use.
- While the use of most social media tools, with the exception of in-house applications, does not have an associated cost, it cannot be considered “free.” The cost will be the time and resources required to monitor and administer the tools being used.

Monitoring

- A process to deal with feedback, both positive and negative, is required, as well as an approval process established prior to posting responses.
- It is important to measure and track audience use to determine whether particular social media channels are a productive use of time and resources.

Maintaining social media sites:

- Content posted should be either information that is appropriate for routine public dissemination or information that has been approved for publication or dissemination by the applicable information controller or departmental executive.
- Authorized content providers responsible for posting and monitoring information should:
 - Review all user-created content before it is posted to the public-facing social media channel site, if the social media tool allows, or as soon as possible after it is posted;
 - Where possible, modify display settings so that user-created content is off the primary landing page; and,
 - Remove abusive, hateful, or defamatory comments or content, including information that jeopardizes the privacy of others.

Re-use of Provincial Government Content

- Government of Newfoundland and Labrador images, video and other content posted to social media sites can, and likely will, be downloaded and re-used in other ways on other sites, altered or re-posted to the same or other sites. This should be considered when posting all content.

Accessibility of Information

- Users of the social media site should be able to readily and easily access necessary and important information regarding Government of Newfoundland and Labrador programs, sites, facilities, services and policies, without having to register. For example, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador information should be directly accessible to unregistered users of a social media site and/or this information should also be available on a Provincial Government website, or via other channels.

Information Management and Information Technology (including records management and security risks)

- It is important to note that content posted by the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, or a member of the public, to a third party social media site is managed entirely by the site operator according to its established terms of use.
- Departments should ensure that their Information Management Director is involved in developing their approach to posting social media content.
- It is important for departments to determine how social media postings considered to be official government records will be retained.

Access to Information and Protection of Privacy

The collection of identifiable personal information from a social media site and the subsequent use, disclosure and management of that information by Government of Newfoundland and Labrador employees is subject to the privacy protection provisions of the **Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (ATIPPA)** or, if applicable, the **Personal Health Information Act**.

While Government of Newfoundland and Labrador entities may scan or monitor published information available on social media sites, they will not attempt to identify the specific author or contributor of information or content unless authorized or permitted by law to do so.

Available web tools or services may be used to obtain non-identifying anonymous, aggregate or statistical information concerning Government of Newfoundland and Labrador programs, services or marketing efforts from social media sites.

Legal liability, copyright, and intellectual property

Any content placed upon social media sites by Government of Newfoundland and Labrador employees should be owned by the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador or if licensed to the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, should contain provisions which would allow the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to provide worldwide, fee-free, non-exclusive licences to third parties in perpetuity.

Individuals or groups whose works may be posted to social media sites must be informed of this possibility so that they may waive their rights.

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