

PROCEDURE

Social Media Procedure

PIC 1-1f

Category: Public Involvement and Communications

Business Unit Responsible: RA: Communications

Procedure Owner: Director of Communications

Procedure Contact: Michelle Fure, Manager of Public Involvement

Synopsis: Establishing the Office of Communications role in managing the Metropolitan Council's social media channels and clarifying staff expectations related to social media activity.

GOVERNING POLICY

- [PIC 1-1 Communications Policy](#)

PROCEDURE

Social media and networking websites (broadly referred to as platforms) are accepted and expected communications tools in the public and private sectors. The Council's communications strategies will include social media to support Council goals, objectives and activities.

The Council uses social media platforms for the following purposes:

1. Increase awareness of its role
2. Engage with the local governments, businesses and residents it serves
3. Encourage attendance at Council-organized and Council-related events
4. Seek feedback related to current and future projects
5. Amplify messages from partner organizations
6. Facilitate two-way participation in Council decision-making
7. Provide opportunities for education and collaboration about Council activities

The social media procedure does not supersede any procedures related to the overall Communications Policy (PIC 1-1). It is intended to work with other Communications procedures to establish the staff roles and responsibilities related to social media activities.

Specifically, this procedure establishes the following:

- Appropriate protocols for Council use of social media platforms by authorized employees (Authorized Posting Staff).
- The process for expanding, updating, and maintaining the Council's presence on social media platforms.
- The responsibility of Council employees who use social media platforms for official Council business.
- Obligations of Council employees who use personal social media accounts to discuss Council business or share content related to the Council's work or employees.

The Office of Communications and/or designees will oversee the implementation of any social media strategy used by the Council. The Director of Communications is the responsible authority for any

Council-sponsored social media strategies and activities. When appropriate, the Office of Communications will coordinate with marketing staff at Metro Transit and additional outreach and communications staff throughout the Council.

Any social media account or presence created on behalf of the Council is the property of the Council and can only be created by authorized staff. An official, Council-issued email address must be used to open social media accounts. All usernames and passwords must be registered and stored with the Office of Communications, and cannot be shared with any unauthorized persons. The Office of Communications will coordinate enterprise-wide management of all Council social media channels, including appropriate software for managing those channels. To request a Council account on a social media platform or receive authorization to post on behalf of the Council, contact the Office of Communications.

[Authorization process](#)

DEFINITIONS

Social Media Platform: an external, third-party website or application that focuses on building online communities of people and organizations, based on shared interests, activities, and other personal and business relationships. (For more information on the current list of active [Council social media accounts](#), visit the Communications page on MetNet.)

Authorized Posting Staff: Council staff authorized by the Office of Communications to communicate public information on social media platforms on behalf of the Council. They are the only Council staff who may communicate on official Council social media platforms. [Authorization process](#)

Council's Social Media Statement: The [Council's Social Media Statement](#) is posted on the external website to give the public an understanding of how the Council utilizes social media. For example, it details when a user's post may be removed from a Council social media account (e.g. profane language, threats, etc.) This statement is NOT an internal Council policy, but guides appropriate ways to engage on public forums managed by the Council.

ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

Office of Communications

- Approving the creation of any official Metropolitan Council presence that represents the Council or is being used for Council business on any third-party social media platform.
- Procuring and administering an enterprise-wide tool to coordinate and manage social media platforms.
- Consulting with the Council's Office of General Counsel prior to updating procedures related to the Council's social media presences or accepting new or updated terms of use on an existing social media platform.
- Maintaining content and responding to content via Council pages or accounts on social media platforms.
- Monitoring Council accounts or pages and Council-related activity on social media platforms and responding in a timely manner, in accordance with the Council's Social Media Statement.
- Designating and maintaining the Authorized Posting Staff list.
- Mentoring and training Authorized Posting Staff in other Council departments.
- Monitoring trends in the communications industry related to social media and adjusting this procedure and posting guidelines accordingly.

- Archiving content from social media platforms for specific content (e.g. direct messages, or interactions that contain content of a sensitive nature or involve the application of legal requirements or policy provisions), on an as-needed basis and in accordance with the Council's records retention policies.
- Deactivating or terminating Council accounts no longer in use or when the Director of Communications determines they are no longer in the best interests of the Council. These reasons may include, but are not limited to, accounts that lack current content, violate the procedures established in this document, or that otherwise undermine the Council's public image. Any account opened to conduct Council business, including those opened by employees without authorization, may be terminated at the discretion of the Director of Communications.
- Maintaining and updating this Social Media Procedure and Social Media Statement as necessary.
- Coordinating content among Authorized Posting Staff.
- Coordinating and scheduling social media content related to Council initiatives on behalf of staff not designated as Authorized Posting Staff.
- Providing resources and guidance for Council staff regarding social media use for Council work

Authorized Posting Staff

- Constructing and maintaining approved social media accounts and pages that represent the Council and are consistent with this procedure.
- Posting information in accordance with Council policies and state and federal laws and regulations.
- Council staff managing and using social media should not interact with members of the media in a way that may be misconstrued as an official public comment or contradicts the Council's Media Relations Procedure (Policy 2-4 and subsections), or other related Council policies and procedures. This Social Media Procedure does not supercede the Media Relations Procedure.
- Consulting internal communications procedures before reposting content from non-Council sources to ensure content meets Council objectives and standards, and does not violate copyright or other intellectual property rights.
- Managing the Council's external brand and assuring content does not undermine the Council's brand, but support the Council's overall communications goals.
- Documenting, removing (if possible and appropriate) and elevating to managers when issues arise related to employee behavior on social media channels.

Other Council Staff

Managers and Project Managers

Council staff who are managing projects and need content posted on the Council's social media channels should:

- Request additional clarification or assistance from the Office of Communications for program communications efforts that may benefit from a communications plan or social media strategy.
- Work with the Office of Communications to create a social media strategy or broader communications strategy for any Council-related projects.
- Request permission and authorization to open any social media accounts related to Council business.
- Coordinate with the Communications Director, and Human Resources and Office of General Counsel as necessary, when addressing employee behavior on social media channels.

Information Services Department

- Facilitating access for Authorized Posting Staff to social media platforms on their Council-issued computers and Council-issued mobile devices.
- Providing feedback related to security concerns with social media platforms and offering solutions when possible.

Council Employees

Council Employees are responsible for their individual conduct and participation on social media platforms. The Council respects the right of its employees to maintain personal social media accounts. In addition, the Council's expectations related to personal social media use are as follows:

- When choosing to engage with Council accounts or share content related to the Council via personal social media accounts, Council employees must adhere to the [Council's Social Media Statement](#). (i.e. no foul language, threats, etc.).
- Council employees should adhere to all applicable Metropolitan Council policies, including Communications policies and policies related to interacting with the media.
- Council employees should adhere to all Council policies related to Employees in the Workplace (e.g. Discrimination, Harassment and Inappropriate Behavior; Employee Conduct, Workplace Violence Prevention, Respectful Workplace) when participating in social media forums via personal accounts when the content is related in any manner to the Council. Council employees should adhere to all Council policies related to Employees in the Workplace (e.g. Discrimination, Harassment and Inappropriate Behavior; Employee Conduct, Workplace Violence Prevention, Respectful Workplace) when engaging in conversations on social media channels with co-workers.
- Employees may not use a Council brand, logo or information that purports to be a position of the Council without prior authorization. Information available internally to Council employees, but not intended for an external audience, should not be posted via personal social media accounts.
- Employees should understand that whether or not their identity as a Council employee is apparent on their public or private social media account, the employee is a representative of the organization when engaging in or posting content related to the Council and its divisions.
- Council employees should avoid engaging in individual discussions on social media about their work that could be construed as divulging official Council information.
- In any actions on social media, Council employees should comply with the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act.
- Personal social media platforms should not be used to engage in Council business with co-workers that are more appropriate for offline conversations, either in person, over email, or on the phone.

Council employees are encouraged to share information from the Council's social media channels and information that supports the Council's mission, when and if they choose. Employees may identify themselves on social media accounts as working for the Council, but should also include information in their profiles to clarify they are not spokespeople for the Council and content is personal. (For guidance regarding disclaimer or profile language, visit the [Social Media Resources](#) page on MetNet.)

Violations

Violations of this procedure and related Council policies may result in discipline up to and including termination. Violations will be determined in accordance with the Council's investigations procedure and related policies and the Office of Communications will initiate or consult on investigations of procedure violations.

RESOURCES

Related Policies

- [PIC 2-1 Customer Relations and Outreach Policy](#)

- [TECH 3-2 Data Practices Policy](#)
- [RF 7-2 Use of Council Property Policy](#)
- [HR 5-1 Employee Conduct Policy](#)
- [OEO 4-1 Discrimination, Harassment and Inappropriate Behavior Policy](#)

Related Procedures

- [TECH 3-2a Data Practices Procedure](#)
- [HR 5-1b Respectful Workplace Procedure](#)
- [RF 7-2a Expectations of Privacy in the Workplace Procedure](#)
- [HR 5-1d Investigations General Procedure](#)

Other Resources

- [Council's Social Media Statement](#)
- [Authorization for Posting to Social Media Channels](#)
- [Social Media Resources](#)

HISTORY

Version 3 – Template Update

10/12/2020 - Updated content into new template.

Version 2 – Approval Date

03/01/2019 – Included guidance for employees and related workplace policies, updated best practices information.

Version 1 – Approval Date

04/01/2012

Last Reviewed Date

03/01/2019

Next Content Review Date

03/16/2021

Former Reference #

2-4f

Version

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