

Social Media Policy and Guidelines

Last reviewed: [August 2022]
Next review: [August 2023]

Digital Citizen Services, Ministry of SaskBuilds and Procurement

This policy governs the publication of, and commentary on, social media by employees of the Government of Saskatchewan and its ministries.

What is Social Media?

For the purpose of these guidelines and policy, social media means any web-based or mobile technology that turns communication into interactive dialogue, including without limitation, blogs, forums and social networking sites. Social media is a rapidly changing world, and this document will be reviewed regularly to keep pace with those changes. Always check with Digital Citizen Experience social media team if there is any doubt in any task you are performing on social media.

Social Media Policy

This policy governs the publication of, and commentary on, social media by employees of the Government of Saskatchewan (GoS) and its ministries (and/or Crowns and agencies unless other policies or guidelines are present) to empower our employees to participate in social media as fully as possible, while portraying the GoS brand and representing its core values.

Applicability

This policy applies to employees of the GoS and any contractors contributing to the GoS social media presence.

Policy Requirements

The GoS Digital Citizen Experience team in coordination with Executive Council will create all new approved official GoS social media accounts and assign posting permission accordingly.

Participating as an Official GoS Spokesperson

- Any social media account that is affiliated with GoS must not conflict with the mission, values and objectives of GoS; must not contain or link to libelous, defamatory or harassing content; must not reveal proprietary information about GoS business; must not reveal confidential or personal information about anyone; and must not utilize pseudonyms or false screen names.
- Information (including images, video, etc.) posted on GoS channels must abide by copyright laws and must be used only with permission or appropriate citing of the source.
- Those responsible for establishing or participating in social media activities as part of official duties shall adhere to processes and procedures that apply to other types of communications for GoS. For example, speaking or writing on behalf of GoS through social media may require similar notifications and approvals as speaking or writing on behalf of GoS in traditional media interviews or in offline communications.
- GoS reserves the right to shut down, without prior notice, any official social media channel for any reason.

Account Security and Posting

- The GoS Digital Citizen Experience (DCE) team will set up all accounts and assign appropriate permissions including assigning themselves as admin for each account for backup purposes only.
- Government of Saskatchewan social media passwords should be changed quarterly, in accordance with similar password intervals across government.
- All social media accounts must be managed, and posts made, through Emplifi (Socialbakers). This allows multiple contributors to access the accounts without having to share the password and tracks which authors posted to each account.

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Measurable Goals and Objectives

All social media accounts must have measurable goals and objectives that can be used to evaluate the success of each account. Evaluation options can include, but are not limited to, measuring changes in awareness, opinion, and behaviour. The Government of Saskatchewan accounts should seek to move beyond simple followers and number of posts made by the communication branch. Measurement should instead focus on evaluating the engagement achieved such as responses (negative or positive), shares or retweets, time spent on a page, etc.

Evaluation is expected to happen twice a year with a report generated back to the Director, Digital Channels and Insights on the Digital Citizen Experience team. The six-month review will determine if a new strategy is needed to better meet the goals and objectives. Failure to achieve engagement on the social media channel after 12 months can and should result in the termination of the account at the discretion of the Director, Digital Channels and Insights and the communication branch. In the event of disagreement, Executive Council will have final say on the status of the account.

New measurable goals and objectives should be set every 12 months to ensure continued growth and reach of all social media accounts. The goals and objectives will be reviewed by the Director, Digital Channels and Insights and Executive Council prior to being finalized.

Participating Personally

What you publish may reflect on the GoS brand, even if you are participating on social media in a personal capacity.

- Remember that your position as an employee of government may result in things you say being attributed to the government.
- Be careful to identify your views and opinions as your own, and do not disclose information that you have obtained as an employee and that is not otherwise available to the public.
- Social media identities, login IDs and usernames for social media accounts used in a personal capacity should not include the GoS name without prior approval from Executive Council and the GoS Digital Citizen Experience team.
- Proprietary information about GoS business or sensitive job-related information shall not be revealed on social media channels. Confidential or personal information about GoS employees, contractors, customers, or anyone else, must not be shared publicly.
- Your work time is to be used for GoS business. Blogging and social networking activities are personal and should be done on your own time, such as during lunch or breaks. Refer to the PSC's IT acceptable usage policy in the HR manual.
- Do not take part in any political or public activity which compromises, or might be seen to compromise, your impartial service to the Government of the day or any future government.

Use your best judgment and remember that there are ramifications to what you publish personally. If you're unsure about publishing something, please discuss it with your supervisor or manager. Ultimately, however, you have sole responsibility for what you publish in any form of online social media.

The GoS may discipline personnel who violate the rules of conduct described in this policy up to and including termination of employment.

International Social Media Accounts

International social media accounts, such as WECHAT may be used, however they must follow the same account and content approval rules as outlined in this document.

Special considerations may be made for local language and cultural norms regarding international accounts.

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Related Policies

The Government of Saskatchewan's existing policies apply to online activities as fully as they do to activities in any other circumstance or venue. Before venturing into social media, employees and managers must review the following:

1. Access and Privacy: <https://www.saskatchewan.ca/government/training-and-workshops/access-and-privacy-training-course-for-saskatchewan-executive-government>
2. Security: <https://taskroom.sp.saskatchewan.ca/how-do-i/get-it-support/it-security>

Guidelines for Using Social Media

Getting Started

There is no one-size-fits-all rule for the use of social media in the public sector. Each group will have to evaluate social networking tools to determine the best fit for their particular needs. The decision to adopt social media is a business decision, not a technology decision.

When considering launching an initiative you must be clear about the purpose and the resource implications that maintaining and monitoring the effort will entail.

Account Approvals

Involve your Communications Branch. The Executive Director and Director of Communications is responsible for ensuring that appropriate corporate and senior executive agreement are in place for all communications initiatives.

All new social media accounts must be approved by senior Executive Council staff prior to launch. A business case should be developed, and all ministries are asked to involve the GoS Digital Citizen Experience team in the early stages to help ensure their proposal aligns with the Digital Program as well as help prepare the business case for approval.

Once aligned with the Digital Program, the GoS Digital Citizen Experience team will then submit the business case to senior Executive Council for final approval.

Key Considerations

Social media presents exciting opportunities, but at the same time it is essential that staff are aware of the risks.

Interactions with Citizens

- Social media is about conversation. You'll be expected to respond to citizens in some cases, but not everything has to be responded to.
- Understand when a conversation should be taken offline.
- Remember that you are a public servant of the people of Saskatchewan, and as such that you should seek to serve them to the best of your ability.

Protecting Yourself

- Ensure that anyone involved with your social media presence understands that when they are posting information to a public social media site, they are posting it on the internet, and it is public.
- Once information is on the internet, it is in the public domain and can never be completely amended or deleted.
- Assume that information posted on a social media site is insecure, even if you have restricted it to certain users (cyber criminals have been able to work around some of these settings).
- With the adoption of social media, it is even more important that employees know and follow the guidelines of the Information Technology Acceptable Usage Policy in the Human Resource Manual. While employees are trusted to use social media appropriately, they can inadvertently use them in a manner that violates the guidelines and find themselves as part of a security investigation.

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- The laws and policies in place to protect privacy and information access apply to social media. Ensure that your employees have reviewed the related policies section.

Keep in mind there are several important categories of information that cannot be discussed with members of the public in any forum unless you have statutory authorization to do so:

- matters before the courts;
- draft legislation;
- materials prepared for Cabinet; and
- materials that include personal information about identifiable individuals.

How to Conduct Yourself

Social media is casual and informal so, by all means, be casual and informal online. But if you are participating as a government employee, exercise professionalism and please keep the following guidelines in mind.

Employees who engage in social media must:

- respect privacy;
- respect copyright (special attention to photographs used);
- stick to your area of expertise and provide unique, individual perspectives;
- stick to the facts and refrain from debates over matters of opinion;
- avoid responding to every negative comment;
- if you make a mistake, admit it, be upfront and quick with your correction; and
- never make partisan, political comments while speaking as a government employee.

Being personable will help you build productive relationships, manage your own and your ministry's reputation, and help you become a valued and proactive contributor to online conversations and communities. Draw on your experience to tell stories and anecdotes that illuminate your ideas and use an authentic voice to help people connect to the person behind the title.

Resist the temptation to react, if you come across comments that are disparaging of the government or see third parties trying to spark negative conversations. Pass the link along to your Communications Branch for consideration of an appropriate response, if any.

If you are about to post something that makes you even the slightest bit uncomfortable, first discuss your concerns with your colleagues, your supervisor and your head of Communications before proceeding.

Using Third Party Sites

- You may be using a site (example: Facebook, Twitter) that is not controlled or managed by government. Can you live without the information if the data, or the site, is unavailable for a short period of time, or lost forever? What security controls exist for access to data on the system? Can you ensure data provided by one person cannot be altered by another? Will you have the privileges you need to edit (remove or change) your postings, and will you be able to retrieve old postings if needed later?
- When information is shared or advice is provided online, government must ensure that all necessary records are being captured, retained, filed and managed appropriately.
- Be aware of (the ever changing) rules and terms of conditions of the social media site you are using.

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Government of Saskatchewan General Accounts (@SkGov)

Ministries or program areas may have content to share on social media, but do not need their own account. The Government of Saskatchewan has a central account on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn and YouTube (@SKGov) that can be used by all ministries to share information that would be relevant or helpful to the citizens of Saskatchewan.

About the Accounts

- @SKGov is a government-wide initiative helping citizens connect with government through interactive portals.
- The accounts are a collective voice, as content is provided from all ministries on various topics.
- Questions are monitored out of Digital Citizen Experience and routed to the appropriate ministry for a response.
- Comments/questions that are offensive, rhetorical, or spam-like in nature will be hidden or deleted and will not receive a response.

Guidelines for Answering Comments

1. Since the portal is 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday to Friday, (except holidays) reply to questions within an hour, even if it is a note acknowledging work on providing a response. The goal is to have the question answered that same day or the following day, i.e., within 48 hours.
2. Determine the appropriate contact for an answer to the question from key contacts in each ministry. Alternatively, find the appropriate web link, phone number or resource.
3. Reply to comments through one of these methods, depending on the circumstance:
 - a. Provide a direct answer publicly on Facebook or Twitter.
 - b. Reply with a web link to a form or information.
 - c. Provide a phone number for the individual to call.
 - d. Ask them to direct message you with contact information and have someone follow-up with them.
4. Always track the status of questions on the social media monitoring platform so nothing falls through the cracks.

High Volume Activity on Issues

- When responding to emerging high-volume issues, work with Ministry communications officials to determine if a valid response can be issued to the public through social media channels, whether it be a statement, Q&A document, infographic, or other method.
- If individuals require further assistance, connect them with the appropriate government resource.
- If specific questions and comments become too numerous to reply to, attempt to direct people to a phone number or email address where they can be helped.

Third Party Access

Third party agencies and advertisers will be required to register for a Facebook Business ID and obtain access as a Twitter advertiser to proceed with advertising campaigns on Government of Saskatchewan Facebook, Instagram and Twitter accounts.

These business tools enable proper controls, access, and analytics for third parties during the campaigns to ensure a smooth process from start to finish.

Once a Facebook Business ID or Twitter advertiser access is established, the third party may gain authorized access to the central Government of Saskatchewan social media accounts for the duration of the advertising campaign.

No longer than two weeks after the campaign concludes, access to the page will be revoked (provided they are on a long-term contract) to ensure that only third-party advertisers whose current campaigns have been approved will have access to publish to the central Government of Saskatchewan social media accounts. Ministries have to notify DCE about the start and end date of the contract with the third-party agencies on record.

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Third Party Content Approval

Ministry communications personnel will send content prepared for third party advertising campaigns, as well as proposed tentative timelines for said campaigns, to be approved by the Ministry Director of Communications, the Minister's Office, and Digital Citizen Experience.

Monitoring and responding to comments and inquiries will be the shared responsibility of the Ministry communications staff, the Minister's Office, and Digital Citizen Experience.

This is also currently the process used for content that does not get managed through third party advertising campaigns.

Although these processes and policies are intended for the central Government of Saskatchewan social media accounts, all other Government of Saskatchewan social media accounts are strongly encouraged to adhere to their own set of processes and policies that are similar in nature to these.

Emergency Protocols

1. In the event of an emergency, the 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (Monday to Friday) rule does not apply. A resource from the ministry affected by the emergency, as well as someone from the Digital Citizen Experience team is required to help monitor and respond to comments after hours.
2. Call the ministry communications branch to determine the resource that will provide content and answer questions.
3. In an emergency, there may be many individuals asking questions. Attempt to provide group updates rather than numerous individual updates and provide phone numbers or links where people can go to provide more information.
4. Examples of an emergency include but are not limited to community threats, forest fires, floods, significant power outages (also addressed via @SaskPower), severe weather, health scares, amber alerts and other catastrophes or natural disasters.

Responding to Questions from High-Profile Members of the Community

Questions received from high profile members of the community or media should be directed to the appropriate government contact.

A response would be: "We recommend you reach out directly to the Minister's office at (phone number) or (email) for the latest information on this issue."

Abuse and inappropriate conduct

Any abusive conduct or inappropriate language used by a member of the public on the Government of Saskatchewan social media accounts is unacceptable and will not be tolerated.

Comments and questions of an inappropriate nature may be removed at the administrator's discretion, in accordance with the Government of Saskatchewan participation guidelines.

A "3 strikes" policy will be followed, whereby after 3 instances of abuse, an individual may be temporarily banned or blocked from social media portals for their conduct.

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The Government of Saskatchewan's social media policy for public conduct is:

- Citizens are encouraged to participate if they have a question about government or concerns, they would like to share. Efforts will be made to answer each question.
- Posts that contain the following will be removed at the discretion of the administrator: spam, bullying, intimidation, harassment, hateful content, threats, discrimination, pornography, graphic violence, defamatory or derogatory comments, content infringing or violating someone's rights or otherwise violates the law, personal, sensitive, or financial information, product/service promotions and other advertisements.
- Individuals who repeatedly violate these guidelines may be permanently removed from the portal.
- Participants are fully responsible for the comments posted on any GoS social media channels.
- Review participation guidelines for citizens here www.saskatchewan.ca/social-media.