
GOVERNMENT of YUKON

GUIDING PRINCIPLES for the USE of SOCIAL MEDIA

Produced by Communications Branch of the Executive Council Office

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INTRODUCTION

These high-level guiding principles cover the use of social media as an external communications tool by the Government of Yukon.

This guide applies to all Government of Yukon departments. Departments may create their own guidelines, policies and standards which must meet the guiding principles outlined in this document. As departments are the best judge of the appropriate social media tools to use in their communications planning this guide does not specify social media tools and sites as the social media landscape changes often and quickly.

The guiding principles are an attachment to the government's *Communications Policy* (GAM Policy 1.3) and *Policy on Speaking in Public and Writing for Publication* (GAM Policy 1.4) and were approved by the Deputy Ministers' Review Committee on January 24, 2012.

It is the policy of the Government of Yukon to encourage clear and effective communication to the public using a variety of accepted tools, including social media. Government use of social media must, like all other forms of communication, meet tests of accuracy, transparency, timeliness, authority and accountability.

Social media initiatives, like other communications practices, protocols and initiatives within departments come under the direction of the Deputy Minister. Prior to implementing new social media accounts it is recommended that communications staff present a written social media strategy at Communications Review Committee for discussion.

The objectives of this guideline are to assist government employees, under their Deputy Minister's direction, to make appropriate and effective use of social media for work-related projects.

Government of Yukon can use social media for official public communications in the following three ways.

1. Through official Government of Yukon accounts on existing third-party social media platforms, like Facebook or YouTube;
2. Through discussion forums or other social media elements on Government of Yukon websites; or,
3. By contributing to existing non-government social media platforms.

The principles are intended to provide overarching direction to help steer online communications so they:

- make a positive contribution to our government's reputation;
- provide meaningful service to the public;
- further the communications goals and objectives of branches, departments and the government as a whole; and

- comply with all applicable policies and procedures, including those related to access and protection of privacy, capture and retention of records, security, respectful workplaces, employee conflict of interest policy and computer use guidelines.

DEFINITIONS:

Social media is any online media that allows for communication between the publisher and the audience, e.g. the audience is able to comment on, rate, or share information. It can involve a variety of formats, including text, pictures, video, audio and “live,” real-time dialogues. It includes Government of Yukon content on third-party websites or social elements incorporated into Government of Yukon websites. Examples of third-party social media websites include: Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, wikis, podcasts and blogs.

Public communications is the planned and strategic use of tools to inform members of the public about government business, including policies, programs and services; international, national and regional interests; threats and safety and health risks; emergency situations, and individuals’ rights. Any medium or forum that is currently, or has the potential to be, available or open to an audience beyond Government of Yukon employees and partners working directly with the Government of Yukon is considered public.

Guiding Principles for Employee Use of Social Media

Guiding Principle 1

Social media initiatives should be undertaken in a thoughtful and professional manner. Departments should carefully consider and plan for the resources and time to manage social media projects professionally.

Expectations	Details
Planning for social media use should occur before undertaking social media initiatives. Employees must follow approval processes established in their departments and should develop their social media strategy with the support of communications staff.	A social media initiative can be part of a larger Communications Strategy that follows the Yukon government communications strategy template. Even when it is part of a larger initiative, a separate social media strategy should be written to identify how the department will monitor, contribute and assess social media effectiveness. A social strategy may take many forms.
A written social media strategy should be completed before launching new social media accounts.	Some elements to consider for a social media strategy include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Level of public participation• Clearly defined communications goals and objectives• Key messages (tone is important)• Calls to action• Current communications context• Key audiences and their concerns• Other existing content to be linked and leveraged• Editorial calendar for content• Responsibility for content management (timely, factual)• Expiry date for the social media account• Branding elements and assets• Responsibility for monitoring user-generated content and how the department will respond to comments or requests in a timely manner• Responsibility for monitoring comments to clarify inaccurate information or remove inappropriate comments in a timely manner• Evaluation

Although the strategy may not be going to Cabinet for approval, it is recommended that communications staff present social media strategies at **Communications Review Committee** for discussion prior to implementation.

Guiding Principle 2

Employees responsible for generating content on official social media sites represent the Government of Yukon.

Expectations	Details
Employees must ensure content they create is respectful and appropriate for government communications.	<p>Public servants contributing to social media as part of their job and for the purpose of public communications are expected to exercise good judgement at all times.</p> <p>They must not publish any content that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• compromises the privacy of citizens;• is confidential government information and not authorized for release;• supports or opposes political campaigns or ballot measures;• discriminates against or is disrespectful of anyone based on their gender, race, culture, age, beliefs, sexual orientation and abilities
Employees who contribute to social media sites must clearly identify themselves and their role in the government.	Employees bear a responsibility to the Government of Yukon when participating in social media for official purposes. Transparency and accountability are important goals.
Employees must follow general employee conduct expectations and the responsibilities identified in the <i>Communications Policy</i> (GAM 1.3) and the <i>Speaking in Public and Writing in Publication Policy</i> (GAM 1.4).	

Guiding Principle 3

Social media initiatives should be transparent, accessible and should strive to engage citizens in new ways. Social media should promote interaction with the public and stakeholders.

Requirements	Details
Maximize communications benefits of social media from engagement and two-way conversations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Interactive features should be enabled where possible.• Comment features should be enabled where possible.• Other interactive features of social media, including ranking, tagging or sharing features, should be used where possible.
Post clear guidelines and terms of use for interactive features.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Whenever comments and other interactive features are enabled, post clear guidelines, including estimated response times and criteria for removing comments or blocking users.
Moderate comments and remove comments or block users if needed.	<p>Comments must be removed or blocked if they are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• abusive, profane or discriminatory;• in violation of citizen's rights to privacy;• soliciting commerce; or• otherwise inappropriate. <p><i>NOTE:</i> It is not appropriate to remove comments simply because they are critical of the government. It would only be appropriate if those comments are libellous, untrue or abusive.</p>
Respond to questions or comments from users.	<p>Make every effort to respond to direct questions in a timely manner.</p> <p>When responding to comments, Government of Yukon employees must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• clearly identify their role and position;• remain courteous and professional;• employ the principles of plain language; and• respond in a timely manner.

The written social media strategy referred to in Guiding Principle 1 should identify who is responsible for monitoring and responding to comments and identify expected response times. It should also identify expected issues or criticism that might arise through user-generated comments and supply responders with Q&As or draft messages so they can quickly address or clarify issues.

Guiding Principle 4

Official public social media initiatives from the Government of Yukon are ultimately the responsibility of communications areas, although staff from all areas of business may be responsible for the day-to-day operation including moderation, updates and posts.

Requirements	Details
Approval protocols for social media initiatives are at the discretion of department Deputy Ministers and communications branches.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Accounts may be managed in many ways with various people carrying out tasks and adding content, but communications staff should be involved in the creation, access, maintenance and destruction of social media accounts.
The social media strategy must be written and/ or approved by communications staff with Deputy Minister oversight.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Government of Yukon staff have a responsibility to inform and engage communications staff in any official social media activity or initiative.

Guiding Principle 5

Official public social media initiatives from the Government of Yukon are to follow all corporate requirements.

Requirements	Details
ATIPP	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act
French language translation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Follow <i>French Language Guidelines</i>.
Information management, retention	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Thinking Information Management working group is developing guidelines that will be referenced here.
Communications principles	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• GAM 1.3 and 1.4
Use of computer at work	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Employee use of social media for personal interest at work. For guidance on personal use of the government's electronic equipment while at work, refer to the Computer Use Guidelines.
Employee use of Social Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Conflict of Interest Policy</i> (GAM 3.39) 2.3.27: <i>Public servants are free to comment on public issues; however they may not publicly criticize policies, programs or decisions which they have had the opportunity to influence or formulate.</i> 2.3.28: <i>In making public statements, public servants must not release information that is not generally available to the public.</i>
Employee use of social media for personal interest at work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• For guidance on personal use of the government's electronic equipment while at work, refer to the Computer Use Guidelines.