

GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION
Washington, DC 20405

OSC 2106.2A
March 20, 2023

GSA ORDER

SUBJECT: GSA Social Media Policy

1. **Purpose.** This Order provides requirements for the use of the General Services Administration's (GSA) social media accounts, which are only to be used for official purposes.
2. **Background.** Various Federal laws and regulations govern the use of social media by Federal employees in both official and personal capacities.
3. **Scope and applicability.** This Order applies to all GSA employees with authority to use a GSA social media account, and it includes reminders for employees to follow when using a social media account in their personal capacity.
 - a. This Order also applies to the Office of Inspector General (OIG) to the extent that the OIG determines it is consistent with the OIG's independent authority under the Inspector General Act of 1978 (5 U.S.C. App. 3) and does not conflict with other OIG policies or the OIG mission.
 - b. This Order applies to the Civilian Board of Contract Appeals (CBCA) only to the extent that it is consistent with the CBCA's requisite independence as defined by the Contract Disputes Act (CDA) and its legislative history. 41 U.S.C. §§ 7101-7109 (2012) and S. Rep. No. 95-1118 (1978).
 - c. The scope of this Order includes social media technologies hosted on internal Federal Government servers such as Chatter, as well as external Federal Government servers such as Facebook and Twitter.
4. **Cancellation.** This Order supersedes OSC 2106.2, GSA Social Media Policy.
5. **Revision.**
 - a. Added Soliciting Official Public Comment(s) section. GSA will not seek consensus advice from the public through social media platforms due to the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA), which prohibits such actions.

- b. Added Content Considerations, guidelines for adhering to the Hatch Act and respecting intellectual property rights, and procedures for seeking approval for external links and posting government-authored messages on social media.
 - c. Added an Accessibility section outlining the requirement for all information and communication technology (ICT) used by the Federal Government, including content distributed on external social media platforms.
 - d. Added a Nonpublic Information section outlining the various laws and regulations prohibiting the disclosure of certain nonpublic information through social media activities.
 - e. Expanded the Records Management section outlining the proper controls that must be established to capture Federal records created through social media.
 - f. Added a section on Establishing New Social Media Accounts required for any new social media site representing GSA or a GSA program, as well as the requirement to comply with Federal laws and regulations and to grant administrative rights to OSC staff for program-specific accounts.
 - g. Added a section on Registering Social Media Accounts on the U.S. Digital Registry.
 - h. Added a section on Transferring Ownership, Administrative Rights, and/or Responsibility for a Social Media Account, outlining the process for notification, training, and revoking of administrator rights for program-specific accounts within GSA.
6. **Policy.** GSA encourages an official, strategic presence on social media for GSA's agency operations and programs in support of its mission of delivering the best customer experience and value in real estate, acquisition, and technology services to the Federal Government and the American people. Requests for the creation of a GSA official social media account must be submitted to the GSA Office of Strategic Communication (OSC) in accordance with the directions provided in the [Social Media Navigator](#). GSA official social media accounts must abide by the requirements contained in this Order and the [Social Media Navigator](#).
7. **OSC responsibilities.** OSC is responsible for the internal social media policies that govern the creation, management, use of and removal of GSA's official social media accounts. OSC will:
- a. Establish, review, freeze (discontinue use temporarily), or terminate GSA official social media accounts. All existing GSA social media accounts will be reviewed by OSC to determine if they are in compliance with this Order.

- b. Create and manage content across GSA's entire digital presence to share on GSA's official social media accounts;
 - c. Administer the GSA branding policy;
 - d. Conduct periodic assessments of content on GSA's social media sites for compliance with GSA policy, standards, and guidelines; and
 - e. Provide policy guidance for GSA's official social media accounts.
- 8. Social media use in an official agency capacity.**
- a. An employee is communicating in their official agency capacity through social media platforms when their supervisor assigns this activity as part of the employee's official duties. When an employee communicates in an official capacity via social media, they are communicating on behalf of GSA and can only do what is authorized by GSA, as outlined in this Order and the Social Media Navigator. Any content an employee publishes on social media in an official capacity is done on behalf of GSA.
 - b. A GSA employee authorized to use a GSA social media account:
 - Manages a GSA official social media account; creates, shares, or discusses content regarding GSA and GSA-related matters in a manner consistent with the instructions provided in the Social Media Navigator, and any additional instructions from their supervisor or the Associate Administrator for OSC;
 - Coordinates to obtain review and approval from OSC before implementing any new social media accounts on behalf of GSA or a GSA program;
 - Only adds approved accounts/or channels to agency- approved social media management platforms;
 - Coordinates with OSC and the Office of the General Counsel (OGC) when creating, sharing, or discussing content regarding GSA or GSA-related matters;
 - Maintains membership in GSA's [Social Media Community of Practice](#);
 - Provides administrative rights and access to OSC staff for every official social media account /or channel by adding the account to approved agency social media management platforms;
 - Refrains from communicating with members of the press about GSA in their official capacity without express written permission from OSC;

- Must use official, approved branding on GSA official social media accounts;
- Must void any actions endorsing or appearing to endorse any commercial products, services, enterprises, political parties, candidates or groups, private interests, or non-Federal groups ;
- Follow the statutes and regulations that govern the behavior of Federal employees, including, but not limited to, Titles VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended, Sections 504 and 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, the Hatch Act and the Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees of the Executive Branch, that extend to an employee's personal/private use of social media;
- Keeps up to date with applicable agency policies, including any changes to the [Social Media Navigator](#);
- Writes content in plain language, meets information quality standards, and ensures that individuals who are limited English proficient and individuals with disabilities have equitable access to the web-based content provided using non-Federal social media services;
- Must act impartially and not participate in decisions or actions in which they have a disqualifying financial interest without first consulting with OGC;
- Verifies content to ensure the information is accurate, timely, relevant, and complete;
- Provides data in an open, machine readable, industry-standard format;
- Respects and protects intellectual property, to include copyrights and trademarks, through the use of clear disclaimers and guidance;
- Protects nonpublic information (including work products and conversations that are meant to be pre-decisional or internal to GSA), such as financial disclosure information, protected acquisition and personally identifiable information, by ensuring it is not disclosed through social media activities; complies with the laws related to the prohibition on the dissemination of nonpublic information;
- Adheres to record management requirements and archives social media records in compliance with Federal records management laws, regulations, and policies;

- Adheres to the laws for Federal Government information collection;
- Not request other social media users to post a government-authored message to their social media networks, unless the message expressly states the name of the Federal agency that was the source of the message;
- Comply with the Copyright Law of the United States of America and related laws contained in Title 17 of the United States Code and other Federal policies and directives when posting images, text, video, and audio files protected by copyright on official GSA social media accounts;
- Refrains from engaging in vulgar or abusive language, personal attacks of any kind, or using language that can reasonably be perceived as offensive or discriminatory;
- Refrains from posting any visual or audiovisual media that is vulgar, abusive, offensive or that could be perceived as discriminatory;
- Prevent unauthorized access and use of official accounts by non-authorized persons;
- Prohibit former employees from using the official social media accounts of the agency.

9. Social media user in a personal capacity.

- a. An employee is communicating in their personal capacity when they are representing themselves and not the agency or the U.S. Government. When using social media tools personally, it should not appear to others as though an employee is speaking for GSA.
- b. GSA employees using social media in their personal capacity must :
 - Follow the laws related to the prohibition on the dissemination of nonpublic information. Nonpublic information, *for purposes of this policy*, is information that a GSA employee gains by reason of federal employment and knows or reasonably should know has not been made available to the general public;
 - Follow the laws related to the prohibition of discrimination in federally conducted and federally assisted programs;
 - Not provide their GSA position/title as a personal descriptor unless additional biographical details are included (if permissible on the social media vehicle used) and the employee's title/ position is given no more prominence than the other biographical details;

- Not use official agency branding on their personal social media accounts; and
 - Not create or modify the social media account in such a way that could be construed as implying government sanction or endorsement.
- c. GSA employees communicating in their personal capacity are encouraged to use a disclaimer clarifying that their social media communications reflect only their personal views and do not necessarily represent the views of GSA or the United States. A clear and conspicuous disclaimer will usually be sufficient to dispel any confusion that arises; however, in some cases, a disclaimer may not necessarily eliminate the potential that a reasonable person could construe that the employee's social media account is sanctioned or endorsed by GSA.

10. **Engagement.** The agency can monitor and remove comments on GSA's social media accounts that are political, target specific individuals or groups, are commercial in nature, are perceived to be discriminatory, are abusive or are similarly unacceptable. GSA employees are required to contact OSC as situations arise that may require the monitoring or removal of comments posted on or to a GSA social media site. GSA reserves the right to remove or hide comments that contain:

- Vulgar or abusive language;
- Personal or obscene attacks of any kind;
- Offensive terms targeting individuals or groups;
- Perceived discriminatory language;
- Threats or defamatory statements;
- Links to any sites or accounts that are not affiliated with GSA;
- Suggestions or encouragement of illegal activity;
- Multiple successive off-topic posts by a single user or repetitive posts copied and pasted by multiple users, or spam;
- Unsolicited proposals or other business ideas or inquiries; or
- Promotion or endorsement of commercial services, products, or entities. (Note that non-commercial links that are relevant to the topic or another comment are acceptable.)

11. **Soliciting Official Public Comment**

- a. GSA social media account users cannot use an agency social media account to solicit consensus advice from the public in order to provide recommendations to the agency. The Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA), 5 U.S.C. app., prohibits agencies from soliciting consensus advice from de facto committees or groups that arise outside of the structure and public scrutiny of a formally established advisory committee.. Account users are permitted to request general feedback or conduct

surveys and polls, etc., that seek to obtain general information or the individual viewpoints of members of the public.

12. Ethical and Endorsement Compliance Requirements

- a. GSA social media account users limit engagement to official business matters and remain politically neutral. Thus, an agency's social media account cannot "friend," "like," "follow," "tweet," or "retweet" about a partisan group or candidate in a partisan race or link to the social media accounts of such entities. Any information or links to information about a Federal agency official's attendance or speech at a political event for a candidate in a partisan race should not be posted on an official GSA social media account. However, a Federal agency may continue to "friend," "like," or "follow" the official government social media account of the President or Member of Congress, even after the President or Member begins their reelection campaign.
 - b. Official GSA social media accounts may not post content that suggests that GSA endorses a non-Federal enterprise (including a nonprofit organization), product, service, or person. Therefore, GSA programs should generally avoid linking to external links without prior OSC and OGC approval. Links to non-Federal, non-military, non-state, or local government websites are considered "external" links. While there are some known quasi-governmental, educational (.edu), not-for-profit, and other types of acceptable sources for linking that are not purely Federal Government, each program office is responsible for analyzing the merits and making a proposal to OSC and OGC as to whether or not such links are acceptable for use on official GSA social media accounts.
 - c. GSA social media account users may wish to use an official account to share, "like," repost, link, or otherwise reference content created by external organizations. Likewise, such users may occasionally wish to share information on an official account concerning work that the agency is conducting in concert with external organizations. While engaging in these activities, users should take into consideration whether the content could reasonably be construed as an endorsement. Where references to non-Governmental products, services, and enterprises are contemplated, GSA social media account users should reach out to OSC and OGC for review to ensure that the references do not constitute impermissible endorsements under the Standards of Conduct.
- 13. Accessibility.** Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Rehabilitation Act), as amended, requires Federal agencies to ensure that individuals with disabilities are able to participate in their public programs and activities. Additionally, Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act requires that the Federal Government's electronic and information and communication technologies purchased, maintained, or used meet specific accessibility standards. All content distributed to external

social media platforms must adhere to the requirements of Sections 504 and 508, including Section 508 standards regardless of whether the content is created and hosted by GSA. Content created and hosted by a third party and displayed on GSA's website via a widget is subject to Section 508 compliance standards.

14. **Records Management.** The maintenance of official GSA social media account records is the responsibility of the program office originating the content. Please contact the Records Management program at records@gsa.gov with any questions regarding this matter.
15. **Registering Social Media Accounts on the U.S. Digital Registry.** Each GSA Social Media Account must be registered with the U.S. Digital Registry, which serves as the official status of social media and public-facing collaboration accounts, mobile apps and mobile websites. Personal accounts of GSA employees should not be registered.
16. **Transferring Ownership, Administrative Rights, and/or Responsibility for a Social Media Account.** When a GSA program office needs to make a change to the administrators responsible for the program specific social media account, the following actions must occur:
 - a. Notify OSC before the change needs to occur. Include whether the change in ownership is simply to a different social media account administrator or to an entirely different organization within GSA.
 - b. The new social media account administrator must consult with OSC to receive any required social media training receiving the administrative rights for the social media account.
 - c. Once all training has been completed, the administrative rights for the GSA program-specific account should be given to the new social media contact and the new media contact must join the Social Media Community of Practice.
 - d. Administrator rights for the departing social media account administrator should be revoked immediately when the social media account administrator separates from service with GSA or is transferred to a different role.
17. **References.**
 - [Social Media Navigator](#)
 - [GSA's Office of General Counsel](#)
 - GSA Order [2104.1B CIO, GSA Information Technology \(IT\) General Rules of Behavior](#)
 - [Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees of the Executive Branch](#)
 - [Hatch Act – Office of Special Counsel](#)

- [Application of Publicity or Propaganda and Anti-Lobbying Provisions](#)
- [Copyright Law of the United States \(Title 17\)](#)
- [U.S. Trademark and Patent Office](#)
- [Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act](#)
- [Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act](#)
- [OMB Memo M-06-02](#)
- [Section 508 Standards](#)
- [Federal Acquisition Regulations](#)
- [Section 508 Coordinator](#)
- [GSA Records Management](#)
- [Records Management Training](#)
- [The Privacy Act](#)
- [Freedom of Information Act](#)
- [National Defense Authorization Act of 2016](#)
- [Executive Order 13556 Controlled Unclassified Information](#)
- [GSA Order PBS P 3490.2](#)
- [Federal Advisory Committee Act \(FACA\)](#)
- [U.S. Digital Registry](#)

18. Signature.

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