

## KITSAP COUNTY SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS USE POLICY

### I. Purpose

To establish Kitsap County policy for the proper business use of County social media accounts. Social media accounts offer Kitsap County the opportunity to interact with the public in ways that facilitate transparency, collaboration, and participation in support of the County's mission. Kitsap County endorses the secure use of social media accounts to enhance and support County program goals and objectives.

### II. Definitions

- A. Commenter: A person who submits a response to a County social media post.
- B. Confidential Information: Information that has been created or obtained under County governmental and proprietary authority and that, at the time this policy is applied, the County is prohibited by law from disclosing to the public or has a legal privilege not to disclose. Confidential information includes, but is not limited to, unpublished details about projects, private data, protected health information, unreleased bid or financial information, personnel information, and other sensitive or classified information
- C. Content: Text, images, audio, video, or links posted or shared on a social media website or application.
- D. Information Services (IS) Department: The County department responsible for technology information management and governance, system maintenance, and security.
- E. Public Comment: A response to a County social media post submitted by a member of the public or a workforce member acting in a non-workforce capacity. A public comment includes text, images, audio, video, and links.
- F. Public Communications Manager: The Board of County Commissioners' designee responsible for overseeing the use of the County's communication technology including social media accounts.
- G. Social Media Account: An account, or other method of private access, which allows the account owner to post content to a social media site.
- H. Social Media Content Editor: Individual designated by a department director or elected official who is responsible for posting, editing, and monitoring department, office, or program-specific social media account content.
- I. Social Media Post: Content shared on social media through a social media account user's profile.
- J. Social Media Site: Websites and applications that enable users to create and share content to facilitate social interaction. These websites and applications are typically third-party hosted online technologies that include social networks, media sharing networks, discussion forums, and blogging and publishing networks.

- K. Workforce Member: Full-time and part-time elected or appointed officials, members of boards and commissions, employees, affiliates, associates, interns, volunteers, and staff from third-party entities who provide service to Kitsap County.

### III. Policy

- A. Workforce members may use County approved social media accounts on the condition that the use conforms to this policy. Social media accounts are a communication channel for distributing information from the County to the public. They are used in addition to existing communication channels such as County newsletters, website, press releases, official documents, etc. The County's use of social media accounts should be to further the goals of the County and the missions of its departments and offices, where appropriate; use of social media accounts are optional and not required.
- B. The County authorizes the use of social media accounts for business purposes only. Appropriate uses of County social media accounts are: (1) to provide time-sensitive and emergency information; (2) as a communication tool for citizen engagement, promotions, and marketing; and (3) as a tool to direct citizens and social media users to the County's official website.
- C. County social media accounts may not be used to share, promote, or link to content of non-County departments or offices; except that County social media accounts may be used to share, promote, or link to content for programs or events that the County sponsors, cosponsors, participates in, or provides funding for.
- D. **Public Records and Retention.** All information posted, and other activity conducted, on County social media accounts is subject to the Public Records Act, chapter 42.56 RCW and the Washington Secretary of State Records Management Guidelines and Retention Schedules.
- E. **Responsibilities.**
  - 1. The Public Communications Manager or designee is responsible for overseeing all County social media use as outlined in this policy. All questions relating to this policy should be directed to the Public Communications Manager.
  - 2. Directors or Elected Officials: Department Directors or Elected Officials are responsible for the oversight and appropriate use of social media accounts by their departments or offices. Each Department Director or Elected Official is responsible for enforcing this policy in consultation with the Public Communications Manager, Human Resources Director, Prosecutor's Office, and the Board of County Commissioners.
  - 3. Employees: Employees are responsible for understanding and complying with this policy and may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination depending on the nature of the violation. Employee's use of social media must comply with all other County policies. Any employee who observes or has knowledge of prohibited use of County social media accounts should report it to a supervisor, the Human Resources Department, or another appropriate supervisor/manager. Employees

reporting such actions will be protected from retaliation.<sup>1</sup>

4. County employees and officials should not use County social media account private messaging/chat functions to have ongoing communication with the public. If a member of the public sends a message to the County via a chat function the County should respond by directing the party to the County website, information phone line, or appropriate department contact.
- F. The County will establish and maintain primary County social media accounts for disseminating County information under the direction of the Public Communications Manager. Content for County social media accounts can be provided by the Board of County Commissioners, departments, offices, and programs as necessary and must comply with this policy.
  - G. Unless expressly authorized to use County social media accounts, employees acting in their official capacity, are prohibited from publishing or commenting on County social media accounts. Employees may use personal social media accounts to comment on County social media accounts but may not represent that they are speaking for or on behalf of the County and may not identify themselves as County employees. All employee uses of social media will follow ethical standards applicable to County officers and employees.<sup>2</sup>
  - H. Employees are free to express themselves as private citizens on social media sites, but an employee's exercise of expression is balanced against the County's interest in the effective and efficient fulfillment of its responsibilities to the public. Thus, employees must not engage in off-duty conduct which harms the County's reputation, mission, or functions, renders the employee unable to perform their duties, results in other employees being unwilling or unable to work with the employee, or undermines the County's ability to direct the workforce.
  - I. Use of social media presents certain risks and carries with it certain responsibilities. Kitsap County employees are solely responsible for what they post online. Posting of statements, comments, and pictures of the work place, co-workers, and/or customers, with or without their permission, that could be viewed as offensive or potentially offensive; that disparages customers, members, associates, or suppliers; or that might constitute harassment or bullying to anyone viewing the content regardless of the intent of the original post, could be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.
  - J. Employees are prohibited from misusing County social media account access privileges in any way. This may include, but is not limited to:
    1. Using social media accounts for unlawful activities, including violations of copyright law, or for activities that are malicious or have the effect of harassing other users;
    2. Any use that is inconsistent with Section II (H) or III (I) above.
    3. Sharing County social media account login credentials and passwords with non-authorized workforce members.
    4. Responsible for identifying and immediately forwarding public record requests received through public comment to the County Public Records Officer.

---

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter 3.05 Kitsap County Code and Kitsap County Personnel Manual, Appendix P.

<sup>2</sup> See, e.g., chapters 42.20 and 42.23 RCW; RCW 42.17A.555 through .575; and Kitsap County Personnel Manual.