Social Media Handbook

King County

Introduction

In our digital society, social media is a rapidly evolving means of communication and engagement. Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter allow King County government agencies and elected officials to communicate directly with the communities we serve, exchanging news and information in real-time.

Through social media, people and groups can create, organize, edit, discuss, combine and share content. It is critical for King County to engage with people in the ways used by the communities we serve.

By engaging on the same social media platforms as King County's constituents, government agencies and elected officials can make sure they hear constituents' feedback, guide the conversation, and help shape the public perception of official County activities, policies and priorities.

1. **Purpose**

    For King County (herein referred to as the County) to continue to provide accurate, timely information to residents, visitors, partners, journalists and other stakeholders, it is imperative that social media be integrated into the County's overarching communications strategy.

    The County's official website, kingcounty.gov, will remain the County's primary means of digital communication. County-sponsored social media accounts will complement and enhance the County's long-established web presence.

    This handbook, which will be updated to reflect current conditions and best practices, establishes guidelines for the creation, oversight, maintenance and documentation of social media accounts used by the County.

2. **Applicability and Scope**

    The standards outlined in this handbook apply to all offices and employees in the Executive Branch of County government, as well as County Boards and Commissions, which create or contribute to social media on behalf of the County.

    This handbook also applies to non-Executive Branch agencies adopting the policies therein, and is intended to serve as a model for independently elected officials and their organizations.

    All other County policies, provisions and ordinances, as well as state and federal laws, apply to social media, even if not specifically mentioned in this handbook.

3. **Definitions**

    Authorized agent: Refers to any County employee or stakeholder who has been authorized to post social media content on behalf of a County department, including but not limited to public information officers (PIOs), communications managers and program leads.

    Brand standards: Refers to the Graphic Standards & Guidelines that govern use of the County logo, nameplate, color scheme and visual identity.

Consultant: Refers to individual contractors and employees who work for organizations other than the County, including agencies, partners, stakeholders and other government entities.

Content: Refers to any posts, writings, material, documents, photographs, graphics, videos, links or other information that is created, posted, distributed or transmitted via social media.

Departments: Refers to all Executive Branch departments under the authority of the King County Executive as defined by the King County Charter, Section 310, as well as non-Executive Branch agencies adopting the policies in this handbook.

Desktop applications: Refers to third-party applications used by authorized agents assist with managing social media accounts, often in a dashboard format, by providing scheduling and other features.

Digital engagement manager: Refers to the designated employee within King County Information Technology (KCIT) who is responsible for social media governance, implementation and strategy; works directly with authorized agents and departments to leads social media initiatives County government.

Executive Office: Refers to the Executive Branch leadership representing the King County Executive.

King County Information Technology (KCIT): Refers to the Executive Branch department responsible for information management and governance, system maintenance and security, as outlined in KCC 2A.380.

Mobile apps: Refers to technologies that can be downloaded and accessed via smartphones and tablets, in order to provide mobile publishing and account management abilities to authorized agents.

Records management: Refers to operations staff that assists departments in maintaining accountable and responsible public records management as outlined in RCW 40.14 and KCC 2.12.

Social Media Action Plan (SMAP): Refers to the official document that departments are required to complete when proposing a new County-sponsored social media account.

Social media: Refers to digital platforms and tools used to engage with residents and other stakeholders, share timely information, gather public feedback and share the County's story.

4. **Roles and Responsibilities**

Executive Office will:

- Coordinate a process for reviewing all social media accounts, projects and plans.
- Coordinate a process for reviewing, approving and maintaining a list of authorized agents, which will include usernames and passwords in use for the conduct of official County business.

KCIT will:

- Provide expert review and authorization of social media tools and websites prior to their use in the conduct of official King County business.
- Ensure that there is clear direction to authorized agents about their responsibilities, social media best practices, and authorized social media tools and websites.
- Maintain a publicly available list of all active County-sponsored social media accounts.

Digital engagement manager will:

- Recommend social media accounts for use by departments, and review new types of social media platforms and tools for effectiveness, efficiencies and security.

- Work directly with departments to coordinate social media strategies and tactics, including digital communications for specific events and programs.

- Coordinate the use of centralized social media resources and content, as well as interdepartmental use of social media during issues affecting the Executive Branch.

- Monitor issues, trends and risks in social media, and provide training materials and workshops for authorized agents that use social media regularly.

- Train employees on best practices and implementation on an ongoing basis.

- Manage the program for documenting authorized agents, account logins and passwords for the purpose of emergency management.

- Set standards for measuring effectiveness of social media, working with departments to establish reporting techniques and success metrics.

- Consider records retention and public records issues whenever implementing social media.

Departments will:

- Oversee and manage social media accounts in use by authorized agents in conduct of official County business.

- Designate and train authorized agents in proper use of social media; refer to this handbook and employee training created by the digital engagement manager.

- Monitor the access levels of consultants working with the department on County-sponsored social media efforts.

- Provide the digital engagement manager with up-to-date lists of social media accounts, account logins and passwords for the purpose of emergency management and account security.

- Change social media passwords every 90 days per KCIT policy, or immediately if authorized agents are removed as administrators or leave King County employment.

- Manage records retention of social media in conformity with King County and Washington State recordkeeping requirements as outlined in RCW 40.14 and KCC 2.12.

Authorized agents will:

- Uphold brand standards, and County and department values, when representing a department on social media in conduct of official County business.

- Manage social media in accordance with the King County Customer Service Promise, such as answering questions or responding to inquiries within 24 hours during the standard workweek, and flagging concerns and escalating issues when appropriate.

- Work with the digital engagement manager and KCIT to employ best practices for social media use.

- Monitor and measure social media accounts, analyzing effectiveness and making recommendations to the department for continuous improvement.

Records Management will:

- Work with departments to identify appropriate retention periods of social media accounts and content based on the legal, fiscal, administrative and historical value of the information.

- Provide best practices and guidelines for managing social media content as a public record.

5. **Implementation & Administration**

   King County Information Technology (KCIT) determines, under the King County Social Media Policy and these procedures, how the County's social media resources will be designed, implemented and managed.

   All official King County social media accounts must be set up as organizational or business accounts, rather than individual or personal accounts.

   In accordance with the King County Social Media Policy, the King County Webteam must maintain a current listing of all active social media accounts representing King County.

   All administrators of King County social media accounts must access the accounts with a kingcounty.gov email address, not a personal email address, for security and records retention purposes.

   If a social media manager is not a King County employee or does not have a kingcounty.gov email address, the department may request an account to conduct official business or the department may use a third-party tool to manage access to social media accounts.

Social Media Handbook

King County

Approved Platforms

Approved platforms appropriate for official King County social media engagement include:

- Facebook
- Flickr
- Instagram
- LinkedIn
- Nextdoor
- Pinterest
- Snapchat
- Twitter
- YouTube
- Others as they receive approval and meet the County's requirements.

The social media landscape is constantly changing, with frequent additions of features and changes to the algorithms the platforms use to determine which posts receive priority.

Over time, the list of platforms appropriate for official County engagement may change due to shifts in audience, accessibility and features, and/or a platform's popularity and usage.

To submit a new or additional platform for consideration, please contact the KCIT Webteam at webteam@kingcounty.gov.

Creating a Social Media Account

Before requesting a County-sponsored social media account, authorized agents must have approval from the department director (or their designee) to use social media on behalf of the department and the County.

Once the department director (or their designee) has approved the request, authorized agents should contact the digital engagement manager and complete a Social Media Action Plan (SMAP) in order to establish a social media account.

Only social media platforms approved by KCIT may be used on behalf of the County. KCIT will retain password and login information for all County-sponsored social media accounts.

Social Media Action Plan

For all new social media accounts, prospective administrators must submit a Social Media Action Plan (SMAP) to the digital engagement manager.

Each administrator must have a SMAP on record for official King County social media accounts. Please use the SMAP as a conversation starter to help your teams determine audiences, choose a platform, set goals and success metrics, etc. for social media engagement.

Departments should have a broad communications plan that aligns with the King County Strategic Plan. When planning to launch new social media accounts, departments will work with the digital engagement manager to address key questions, including:

- What is your vision for digital engagement?

- Who is your target audience?

- Why is the proposed social media platform the right fit?

- Do you have the resources to maintain the account in accordance with County and industry best practices?

- How would the proposed account help the County to advance equity?

Please allow five business days for a response. Submit your SMAP two to four weeks before you intend to launch the account to allow time for adjustments.

If approved, new accounts must be set up to "follow'' all other County-sponsored accounts on a particular platform.

The SMAP shall help the digital engagement manager determine, at a minimum:

- How, or in what respect, there is a clear benefit of specific stakeholder outreach that is not already met by other County-sponsored social media accounts; and
- The long-term sustained ability of the prospective account administrator to create high-quality content, and manage the day-to-day engagement as outlined in these procedures; and
- How the department, board, or commission has developed an effective strategy to maintain the County-sponsored social media account, including who is able to access and post, removal of inappropriate content, ability to provide data for data requests, retention, and destruction of data.

The digital engagement manager is the decision-making authority for approval or denial of any request for new County-sponsored social media accounts.

All administrators of County-sponsored social media accounts must access the accounts with a kingcounty.gov email address, not a personal email address, for security and records retention purposes.

Existing Social Media Accounts

Departments using social media accounts created prior to the publication of this handbook shall work with the digital engagement manager to update the SMAP on record.

Authorized agents who administer County-sponsored social media accounts are required to regularly monitor the account to respond to comments and determine whether the comments or any content placed on the site by the public is inappropriate under these procedures.

Refer to current King County Digital Engagement and Social Media Best Practices and the King County Hashtag Strategy Guide for additional guidance. If you have questions, please contact the digital engagement manager for further information.

Deactivating a Social Media Account

If a decision is made by the digital engagement manager or the authorized agent to deactivate a County-sponsored social media account, the following actions shall occur:

- Contact the digital engagement manager to assist in preserving all content.
- Set a timeline for deactivating the account.
- Develop a farewell message to post on the account that includes when the account will be closed and where followers can go for information in the future.
- Confirm to the digital engagement manager once the account has been deactivated that the site is now completely deactivated and no longer a channel for public communication.
- Consult with the digital engagement manager to determine whether to protect the account name by keeping it active to prevent use of the County's name for improper purposes. If a decision is made to protect the account name, take all necessary action to do so.

Considerations for deciding whether to deactivate a County-sponsored social media account may include, but are not be limited to:

- It is no longer needed to accomplish a department's goals
- It does not align with the County's vision for digital engagement
- It does not comply with these procedures
- It is not currently being used or is being underutilized with no original posts for at least 60 days
- It is not being monitored

Centralized Social Media Assets

Unless a business case is made and a SMAP is approved for a separate social media account, County-sponsored social media content should be coordinated through the County's centralized assets:

- @KingCountyWA is the County's flagship Facebook account
- @KingCountyWA is the county's flagship Twitter account

Use of these assets is governed by the following guidelines:

- In emergencies, working in concert with KCEmergency.com, the flagship accounts serve as the primary means of communication with the public.
- Departments should contact the digital engagement manager to coordinate posts to the assets.
- In order for after-hours use, and use during emergencies, login and password information for the @KingCountyWA accounts is shared as appropriate with public information officers (PIOs). Other requests for login access will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
- Posts to these assets shall not serve as a replacement for postings, notifications and public hearings as required by law or County policy or procedures.

6.   **Standards**

These standards are designed for authorized agents working to inform the widest audience possible by disseminating content via social media platforms. Content may be time-sensitive, such as in emergency incidents, or related to marketing or

promoting County information, updates, events, etc., as well as topics with a broad community interest or items deemed to be in the best interests of the County.

These standards may need to be updated as social media platforms change features and policies.

Authorized agents with social media or blogging responsibilities are not allowed to post information or comments on County-sponsored accounts that are critical, false or disparaging, or could be damaging to the County's reputation.

To help prevent errors, official communications should be fact-checked before being posted to social media accounts. If a factual error is made, it should be corrected as soon as possible. Corrections should be up-front and as timely as possible.

Any content removed based on these guidelines must be retained, including the time, date and identity of the poster, when available.

In order to avoid terms of service violations, any authorized agent implementing social media on behalf of the County shall consult and review the platform's current terms of service before proceeding.

If a social media platform's terms of service contradict County policy, the digital engagement manager should be made aware of it and a decision should be made about whether use of such platform is appropriate.

State law and relevant County records retention schedules apply to blogs, social media formats and content.

Profile Names

KCIT must approve all social media display names and account URLs.

An acceptable name and URL must clearly and concisely identify the elected official, department, division or program. Accounts shall not be named in a way that it might be confused with any other County department or a non-County entity.

Images

Profile images must reflect the official department or County logo to clearly identify the account to users and maintain consistent branding.

Cover photos must be relevant to the department's work, comply with all relevant County policies and follow current best practices.

Images must be of sufficient resolution and size to not appear pixelated or grainy when displayed.

Refer to the Graphic Standards and Guidelines to ensure the County maintains a consistent image on social media.

Content

A link to the department's landing page within the County's website at kingcounty.gov must be the main website link included in the account profile settings.

All accounts must include a link to a consolidated list of relevant policies with the following statement: "View King County's comment policy at kingcounty.gov/comments."

7. **Use of Social Media**

Professional Use

Only authorized agents may post content to social media accounts on behalf of a department. Non-Executive Branch employees should consult their department's communications policy for more information on social media use within their department.

Do not disclose confidential or proprietary information acquired by way of your official position with the County. This restriction applies whether the information is disclosed on professional or personal social media accounts, or by any other method.

Do not use personal social media accounts for work purposes. This is to facilitate compliance with public records law and protect information on your personal accounts from public disclosure.

You should always consider whether it is appropriate to post an opinion online, commit your department to a course of action, or discuss areas outside of your expertise.

Hourly employees should not work on social media after hours without prior approval. This is considered overtime, and failure to obtain prior authorization may be cause for corrective action.

Inappropriate use of social media in violation of these professional and personal guidelines can be grounds for corrective action, including disciplinary action.

Personal Use

You may access your personal social media accounts at work for limited personal communications as long as it does not interfere with your tasks. Please refer to KCIT's Acceptable Use of IT Assets.

Do not use a County email address when using social media in personal capacities. For example, do not create a personal Facebook or Twitter account using your kingcounty.gov email address.

If you identify yourself as a County employee when conducting personal social media activities, consider stating in your profile that your comments are not representative of King County government.

Regardless of whether you specify on your personal social media accounts that you work for the County, your employment with the County is public record. Be mindful that whenever you discuss issues online, whether in a personal or professional capacity, your comments can be connected to your employment with the County.

Nothing in this handbook is meant to prevent an employee from exercising their right to make a complaint of discrimination or other workplace misconduct, engage in

lawful collective bargaining activity, or to express an opinion on a matter of public concern that does not unduly disrupt County operations.

8. **Engaging with the Public**

Comments

King County welcomes community engagement and feedback. Per the County's Comments Policy, comments are subject to public disclosure laws and will be screened for the following:

- Potentially libelous comments.

- Obscene or explicit comments.

- Hateful or mean-spirited comments.

- Personal attacks, insults or threatening language.

- Plagiarized material, or material that violates intellectual property rights.

- Private, personal information published without consent.

- Commercial promotions or spam.

- Comments that are off-topic or that link to material that is off-topic.

- Comments that embed images from external sources.

Some platforms, such as Nextdoor and YouTube, allow account administrators to limit comments. Authorized agents shall use this feature judiciously and only after consulting with the digital engagement manager.

Blocking

As a general rule, authorized agents shall not block individuals from interacting with County-sponsored social media accounts.

If an authorized agent feels it is necessary to block an individual from interacting with County-sponsored social media accounts, consult with the digital engagement manager.

In determining whether an individual will be blocked, the digital engagement manager may consider, among other factors, whether blocking is allowed under these procedures, applicable laws, the nature of the incident on the County-sponsored social media account that prompted review, whether blocking would entail viewpoint discrimination, and whether other actions could be attempted to stop or prevent further violations without blocking an individual.

If an individual is blocked, documentation must be kept, such as screenshots of the data that prompted the block and the reason for the block.

Privacy Policy

As a government entity, the County conducts public business and its records are generally available for public review. Nevertheless, the County is committed, to the

extent allowable by law, to protect and secure your personal information contained in County records. View the County's [Privacy Policy](#).

Third-party social media platforms maintain their own privacy policies. Refer to the individual platform's privacy policies for more information, as you are no longer on a County website and are subject to the privacy policy and conditions of that platform.

9. Public Records

Content published on County-sponsored social media accounts that relates to the conduct of government actions will be retained and managed by departments in compliance with County records retention and Washington State record-keeping requirements. Departments should set all privacy settings on County-sponsored social media accounts to public.

The public may not be aware of the state's public records law, so departments should include language similar to the following on their social media accounts, where applicable:

- This is a King County government account. All content is a public record and may be subject to public disclosure.

10. Records Retention

Treat each comment, post, photo, and list of individuals connected to a County-sponsored social media account as an open record. Do not assume third-party platforms such as Facebook, Instagram or Twitter will keep accurate records of your content, as they are under no obligation to do so.

All social media accounts used for County business, including personal accounts, may be subject to the Public Records Act, as outlined in [RCW 42.56](#), even if the work was conducted on personal time and equipment.

The County uses a cloud-based application called Pagefreezer to record webpages, WordPress blogs and most social media accounts. The digital engagement manager shall work with departments to add new social media accounts to Pagefreezer.

11. Security

Departments must follow KCIT's [Password Management Policy and Guidelines](#).

Departments must change social media passwords every 90 days and immediately after the password or social media account accessed using the password has been, or is suspected of being, compromised.

Departments must also change passwords immediately if authorized agents are removed as administrators or leave County employment.

Do not use automated login options on social media accounts, such as Facebook's "Keep me logged in" feature. Additionally, if you use a third-party program manage passwords, make sure to configure the account so that you must log in each time you open a web browser, in order to prevent unauthorized access to County-sponsored social media accounts should a computer or digital device be compromised or stolen.

If additional security guidance is needed, contact the Information Assurance hotline at 206-263-7980 or infosec@kingcounty.gov.

Government agencies' social media accounts are at risk and often the target of hacking and hijacking. Authorized agents with access to County-sponsored social media accounts must take proper measures to ensure Social Media Site security, including but not limited to:

- Enabling two-factor authentication or multi-factor authentication;
- Not sharing access with those not approved for access;
- Periodically changing passwords, especially after a reported breach or leak of log-in credentials; and
- Not allowing those who are not authorized agents access without approval from the department.

Account access is at the discretion of the digital engagement manager and the department, and shall be detailed in the SMAP for new County-sponsored social media accounts.

12.   **Social Media Tools**

Desktop Applications

Desktop applications, such as Hootsuite, offer a third-party solution to help manage social media accounts, often in a dashboard format.

As a best practice, authorized agents should not include professional and personal social media accounts in the same dashboard. This helps prevent the accidental posting of personal information from official County-sponsored social media accounts.

If authorized agents use desktop applications to manage County-sponsored social media pages, they must use their kingcounty.gov email address and a password that is unique to the application (not the same as their kingcounty.gov email password).

Mobile Apps

Authorized agents shall use separate mobile apps for professional and personal use of social media to help prevent the accidental posting of personal information to County-sponsored social media accounts.

Authorized agents shall use a County-issued device to manage County-sponsored social media accounts, rather than administering official accounts from personal devices.