

## **APPENDIX F FAIRFAX COUNTY SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY**

### PURPOSE

Fairfax County uses social media tools to provide ways to build community and officially and rapidly communicate directly with stakeholders, partners, the general public and the media as part of online communications. These tools are simply another way to deliver public information, customer service and E-government to our residents. To address the fast-changing landscape of the Internet and the way residents communicate and obtain information online, county agencies may consider using social media formats to reach a broader audience.

### DEFINITIONS

Social media sites refer to a collection of online services such as, but not limited to, Facebook, YouTube, MySpace, Flickr, LinkedIn and Twitter. Social media provides opportunities to engage residents through information sharing, customer service and community building.

### POLICY

A. All official Fairfax County presences on social media sites or services are considered an extension of the County's information networks and are also governed by other related policies such as Use of County Electronic Communications Services Policy 70-04 and Information Technology Security Policy 70-05.

B. All social media requests must be submitted in the form of a business case to the Deputy County Executive for Information, who will then consult with the E-Government Steering Committee. If approved, agencies must fill out and have an agency director sign the Procedural Memorandum 70-05 Revised: Request for Waiver/Exemption Form (available at [http://infoweb.fairfaxcounty.gov/dit/iso/forms/PM70-05\\_Exception.pdf](http://infoweb.fairfaxcounty.gov/dit/iso/forms/PM70-05_Exception.pdf)) and return it to the Information Security Office in the Department of Information Technology.

C. It is important to ensure the public's trust of Fairfax County's presence on social media sites because many imitation sites (both deliberate and not deliberate) exist. Naming conventions (URLs) for social media sites must be submitted to the Office of Public Affairs in advance before establishing an account to ensure the name is sufficient for an official Fairfax County government entity and are consistent with other department names. Once finalized, all new URLs must be shared with the Information Security Office and the Office of Public Affairs. If agencies are permitted to use Twitter in the future, names will be predetermined. Visual elements of social media sites should be designed, as much as possible, to reflect the public Web site brand of fairfaxcounty.gov to ensure visual consistency and credibility. The Office of Public Affairs reserves the right to develop additional standards for naming conventions and visual consistency as social media sites evolve.

D. Agencies are responsible for establishing, publishing, and updating their pages on social media sites. Although it will be the agency's responsibility to maintain the content, the Office of Public Affairs will monitor the content on each of the agency pages to ensure 1.) a consistent countywide message is being conveyed and 2.) adherence to the Social Media Policy. The Office of Public Affairs also reserves the right to direct agencies to modify social media content based on best practices and industry norms. The Office of Public Affairs will advocate using social media to help departments reach their stated goals by assisting departments in developing appropriate uses for social media, assisting the selecting of appropriate social media outlets and helping departments define a strategy for using social media.

E. Comments from the public are allowed on social media sites but those sections must be monitored daily during working hours to ensure the comments meet certain criteria. Some mediums such as Facebook allow instant commenting while others like YouTube allow for a moderated/approved process. County-created social media forums must be structured narrowly to focus discussions on a particular interest of Fairfax County rather than creating a "public forum." Agencies are only allowed to remove postings that do not meet the narrow focus of a County media forum. All sections of social media Web sites that allow comments must include either a link to the following comments policy published on the public Web site or the complete text published on the social media site:

The purpose of this site is to present matters of public interest in Fairfax County, including its many residents, businesses and visitors. We encourage you to submit your questions, comments, and concerns, but please note this is a moderated online discussion site and not a public forum.

Once posted, the County reserves the right to delete submissions that contain vulgar language, personal attacks of any kind, or offensive comments that target or disparage any ethnic, racial, or religious group. Further, the County also reserves the right to delete comments that are: (i) spam or include links to other sites; (ii) clearly off topic; (iii) advocate illegal activity; (iv) promote particular services, products, or political organizations; or (v) infringe on copyrights or trademarks.

Please note that the comments expressed on this site do not reflect the opinions and position of the Fairfax County government or its officers and employees. If you have any questions concerning the operation of this online moderated discussion site, please contact the [Agency Name] at [agency e-mail]@fairfaxcounty.gov.

Agencies may choose to reply to comments so we're engaged with our residents much like we reply to phone and E-mail inquiries, but business decorum must prevail and factual responses, not opinions, must be shared. Agency staff monitoring for and replying to comments are strongly encouraged to coordinate responses with other agencies, if appropriate, so the best response can be provided. If you are replying on a social media platform, know that it is a series of conversations that constantly evolve. Be a part of them, provide constructive information that mirrors county information elsewhere and don't try to control other peoples' opinions.

F. Wherever possible, links should direct users back to the County's official Web site for more information, forms, documents or online services necessary to conduct business with Fairfax County.

G. All YouTube channels must contain the following disclaimer on the home page and on each video:

Please note: Fairfax County is not responsible for the content provided on "related" and "promoted" videos that are accessible from this county's YouTube channel. All viewers should note that these related videos and comments expressed on them do not reflect the opinions and position of the Fairfax County government or its officers and employees.

H. Agencies are strongly encouraged to follow the metrics of their social media sites to ensure viability and effectiveness. The Office of Public Affairs reserves the right to occasionally request metric reports.

I. Approval is not needed from the E-Government Steering Committee for podcasting and RSS feeds as Channel 16 and the Department of Information Technology, respectively, produce those social media. The Office of Public Affairs is available to consult with agencies about best practices for both options.

J. Departments that use social media are responsible for complying with applicable federal, state, and county laws, regulations, and policies. This includes adherence to established laws and policies regarding copyright, records retention, Virginia Freedom of Information Act (VFOIA), First Amendment, privacy laws and information security policies established by Fairfax County.

K. Login information, including User IDs and passwords, should be provided to at least one backup in the agency. Passwords must be secure.

L. Violation of these standards may result in the removal of agency pages from social media sites. The Deputy County Executive for Information retains the authority to remove pages.

M. The E-Government Steering Committee will constantly evaluate various social media technologies and the appropriateness of using these media to promote established County goals and policies.