



SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SECTION 1.0 PURPOSE.....2

SECTION 2.0 SCOPE2

SECTION 3.0 AUTHORITY SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS2

SECTION 4.0 PERSONAL SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE BY AUTHORITY EMPLOYEES3

SECTION 5.0 DISCLAIMER.....4

SECTION 6.0 RECORD OR REVISIONS.....4

SECTION 1.0 PURPOSE

The purpose of this Policy is to set forth the rules, regulations, procedure and appropriate use of social media as it pertains to the Development Authority of the North Country (Authority).

This Policy is not meant to address any particular form of social media, but rather to address the use of social media in general, including, but not limited to social media tools and applications that may result from future advances in technology.

SECTION 2.0 SCOPE

This Policy applies to all Authority employees.

“Social media” refers to social networking websites and applications including, but not limited to, Facebook, LinkedIn, Google + and X (formerly Twitter), as well as blogs and video, music and photo sharing sites including, but not limited to, YouTube, Snapchat, Instagram, TikTok and Flickr. Social media also includes all means of communicating or posting information or content of any sort on the internet, including to your own or someone else’s web log or blog, journal or diary, personal website, social networking or affinity website, web bulletin board or a chat room, whether or not associated or affiliated with the Authority. This Policy applies to social media accessed via all types of devices, including, but not limited to, personal and/or work-issued mobile devices, computers, tablets, cell phones, etc.

Employees are free to express themselves on matters of public concern as private citizens on social media outlets with limited exceptions outlined herein. Nothing in this Policy is intended to interfere with an individual’s constitutional rights; however, employees and affiliated non-employees should adhere to the guidelines set forth below when representing themselves as affiliated with the Authority or in communicating with others affiliated with the Authority or communicating about your work with the Authority.

SECTION 3.0 AUTHORITY SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS

3.1. CREATION OF ACCOUNTS

Creation of Accounts: No Authority social media account shall be created without the written approval of the Executive Director.

3.2. MANAGEMENT OF ACCOUNTS

The Authority’s social media accounts shall be managed by the Director of Public Affairs and Communications unless otherwise delegated by the Executive Director. Division Directors who would like to post on an Authority social media account must create the content they would like posted and send it to the Director of Public Affairs and Communications for authorization prior to posting.

3.3. PROPER USE

The Authority shall utilize social media outlets to disseminate information to the public. Social media is a means for the Authority to advertise events, public meetings, emergency notifications, project updates, improve government transparency and support operational efficiency.

1. The use of social media shall be in addition to, and not in place of, the Authority’s other means of communication already in place such as, but not limited to, e-mail blasts and posts on the Authority’s website.
2. When possible, messaging, comment and reply capabilities shall be turned off or disabled on all Authority’s social media accounts. Authority social media accounts are intended to act as limited public forums and shall not be used as a means for individuals to contact the Authority or to otherwise discuss Authority issues. If comments and/or replies are disabled, a statement will be made indicating

such in the “about us” or “bio” with instructions on where to send comments, questions, concerns, complaints, etc.

If there are “about” or “biography” sections of Authority social media accounts, they shall include the following: “The purpose of this site is to present matters of public interest. This social media account shall not be used as a substitute or as a means for public communication to the Authority. All comments and messages by the public which require review and/or response by the Authority should be communicated directly to the Authority by email, letter, phone call, or in-person visits or appointments with the appropriate Authority employee and/or official.”

3. Authority social media accounts may link, like, or otherwise associate with social media sites of other governmental agencies or non-governmental agencies as appropriate. The Director of Public Affairs and Communications or designee is permitted to like content of such agencies, but is not permitted to post comments on other pages/accounts.

SECTION 4.0 PERSONAL SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE BY AUTHORITY EMPLOYEES

4.1. GUIDELINES

The Authority respects its employees’ rights to personal expression as private citizens on personal social media sites to the extent that such expression does not impair or impede the performance of their job duties or adversely affect the interests of the Authority. Ultimately, individuals are solely responsible for all activities and posts on their own social media accounts and should be aware that their posts may remain archived on the internet even if deleted.

When using personal social media accounts, the following rules and guidelines shall be adhered to:

1. Employees and affiliated non-employees are prohibited from using Authority e-mail addresses to register for personal social media accounts or blogs.
2. Unless otherwise authorized, employees shall not represent themselves as a spokesperson for the Authority. The Director of Communications and Public Affairs is the media spokesperson for the Authority.
3. If a personal email, posting on social media or other electronic message could reasonably be construed to be an official Authority communication, a disclaimer is required. An example of such disclaimer is: “The views and opinions expressed are my own and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Development Authority of the North Country.”
4. Employees and affiliated non-employees shall not knowingly publish false or misleading information about the Authority, or their co-workers, supervisors, vendors, residents or others affiliated with the Authority.
5. Employees and affiliated non-employees shall not publish confidential information. “Confidential information” includes internal Authority reports, policies, procedures or other internal business-related private communications and private information about co-workers, supervisors, board members, vendors, government officials and others affiliated with the Authority, such as addresses, social security numbers, telephone numbers, dates of birth, employment/personnel records, etc. This prohibition is not intended to restrict an employee’s right to discuss terms and conditions of employment.
6. As with other Authority policies, conduct that adversely affects an employee’s job performance, the performance of fellow employees or otherwise adversely affects an employee’s ability to represent the Authority in their official capacity may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.

4.2. PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

Authority personnel shall assume that their speech and related activity on personal social media sites will be viewed by others and may reflect upon their position within the Authority.

4.3 PERSONAL CONDUCT

Employees shall strive to always be fair and courteous to fellow employees, affiliated non-employees, board members and others who work with the Authority. Employees must keep in mind that they are more likely to resolve work-related complaints by speaking directly with their co-workers or contacting their immediate supervisor, rather than by posting complaints to a social media outlet. If an employee decides to post complaints or criticism on social media, they must avoid using statements, photographs, video or audio that: (1) reasonably could be viewed as malicious, obscene, threatening or intimidating; or (2) might constitute discrimination, harassment or bullying. Examples of such conduct include, but are not limited to, offensive posts meant to intentionally harm someone’s reputation or posts that could contribute to a hostile work environment on the basis of race, sex, age, religion, disability, sexual orientation, predisposing genetic characteristics, genetic information, national origin, military status, color, marital status, familial status, domestic violence victim status, or any other characteristics protected by law. Social media posts that could contribute to a hostile work environment also will not be tolerated.

4.4 SEXUAL HARRASSMENT PREVENTION POLICY

Employees’ use of social media is also subject to the Authority’s Sexual Harassment Prevention Policy, Workplace Violence Prevention Policy and Personnel Policy as well as the Authority’s other policies and standards of conduct, rules, and regulations. Employees shall not harass anyone in contravention of the Authority’s Workplace Violence Prevention Policy, regardless of the time, place, form, or manner in which the information is posted or transmitted. Online postings that harass or threaten any Authority employee, affiliated non-employee or others are expressly prohibited.

4.5 PUBLIC SERVICE

Authority employees are reminded that they serve the public. Employees shall be mindful that any communication that disparages and/or damages the public’s trust may negatively impact the Authority’s ability to serve the public and the individual employee’s ability to serve in an official capacity for the Authority.

SECTION 5.0 DISCLAIMER

Nothing contained in this Policy is intended or should be construed to impair or otherwise limit the right of any employee to engage in lawfully protected and concerted activity, including, but not limited to discussing wages or other terms and conditions of employment, or making legally protected statements or reports to internal or external authorities.

Nothing in this Policy is intended to or should be interpreted as interfering with, limiting or restricting the rights provided to individuals under the First Amendment, the Taylor Law or any other law. To the extent a section of this Policy is found to be in violation of an individual’s rights, or becomes invalid or is otherwise unenforceable by reason of legislation or court decision, all other provisions of this Policy shall remain in full force and effect.

SECTION 6.0 RECORD OR REVISIONS

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