

**Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to provide uniform guidelines by which information regarding City activities, issues, initiatives, and policies will be disseminated using social media tools; to provide guidance for employee use of social media; to outline the City's policy for assessing and managing comments and replies posted on Carson City social media assets; and, to provide guidance on the use of linked websites.

**Policy**

Carson City recognizes the value of social media for reinforcing brand recognition, engaging constituents and employees in conversation, and for delivering information to the public. The city intends to leverage the power and reach of social media to communicate and deliver messages directly to citizens and to encourage citizen involvement, interaction and feedback.

Because the City supports open dialogue and the exchange of ideas, this policy has been created to provide guidelines for staff involved in the use of social media.

Given the immediate nature of these tools, the City will take a controlled, strategic approach to the use of social media to ensure information is current and appropriate and that responses to constituent requests and questions are accurate and timely.

Employees involved in social media management are responsible to know and uphold Carson City's rules of conduct and ethical standards.

**Responsibilities**

A. The City Manager's Office is responsible for acting as the City's central public information center; for coordinating the release of information to the public through all available avenues; for selecting, testing, and implementing the use of communications tools, including social media; and for monitoring and responding to public comments, questions, and requests.

B. Department Directors may assign staff additional duties as content editors for social media for official Carson City social media assets or, upon approval of the City Manager's Office, to manage appropriate departmental social media assets.

C. The District Attorney's Office, upon request, is responsible for reviewing the legal terms and conditions required for creating a social media account and for determining what information is confidential, privileged or otherwise exempt from public disclosure.

D. Social Media Administrators are responsible for posting to Carson City social media assets only if assigned to do so by the appropriate authority within this policy.

## Procedures

### A. Social Media Communications on Behalf of Carson City

#### 1. Selection of Social Media Assets

- a. The asset must be accessible to anyone above the age of 18 and available free of charge to users. No site that limits access to services based on race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, or physical ability shall be used by the City.
- b. Accounts set up for the purpose of communicating with residents on behalf of the City must be created by the City and identified with the description - "Department of Carson City, A Consolidated Municipality" and use either the City logo or department branding.
- c. City representatives who set up account profiles should use a City email account (@carson.org), City or department name, and a City office phone number. All profiles should provide a link to the City's website (www.carson.org).
- d. Profiles, networking sites, blogs, or other social media assets should have comments limited to authorized users of those sites or require registration to discourage anonymous posts and comments.
- e. Departments wishing to create and manage department specific social media assets, such as a Facebook or Twitter, should fill out a Social Media Asset Form (available on CCNET) and submit it for approval by the City Manager. The form includes log-in documentation so that designated personnel can access, monitor, and edit all City-owned assets.

#### 2. Content Development

- a. To ensure efficient use of resources, content developed for social media uses should be located on and linked to the City's official website (www.carson.org) whenever possible.
- b. All content, including photos and videos, must be owned by the City or have the appropriate release or authorization from the copyright holder.
- c. Content related to crisis or emergency communications must conform to the policies and procedures contained within the relevant plans.

#### 3. Design and Branding

- a. All profiles and pages should be clearly identified as official Carson City assets, using a profile picture or City logo as the identifying image and description - "Department of Carson City, A Consolidated Municipality."
- b. Profiles and pages should be designed to emulate the City's website, if possible. Otherwise, design colors should be consistent with the official colors in use by the City.
- c. When possible, third-party advertising should be removed or disabled on official City social media pages. If this is not possible, a statement should be added to the effect that the City did not authorize or endorse any advertisement on the site.

#### 4. Management and Monitoring

- a. The City Manager or his/her designee, will make use of available and appropriate online monitoring tools to ensure conformance with this policy, quality, and consistency.
- b. Login information, including user name and passwords, must be submitted to the IT Director and kept on file.
- c. Staff should monitor the list of users who voluntarily "follow" or "friend" our social media assets to ensure that spam, obscene material, material not within the authorized scope of a limited public forum, or strictly commercial messages are not introduced into the City's communications. Users fitting those categories

should, where possible, be given a warning that continued introduction of such messages will result in their access being blocked; followed by blockage where the warning is ignored.

- d. Staff should develop and post the purpose of the communications channel somewhere on the site where it is located, clearly identifying the types of comments that are appropriate for that channel, and providing warning that comments or posts not fitting the policies contained in Section C (Comments and Replies) below will be deleted.

## B. Use of Social Media by Employees

### 1. Use of Social Media as an Authorized City Representative

- a. As a representative of the city or one of its departments, each employee engaged in social media should take responsibility for what they write, identify themselves as the author, and exercise good judgment and common sense.
- b. When an employee participates in an online social network, blog, wiki or any other form of social media as a representative of the City, certain standards of conduct apply:
  1. City representatives should always show respect. Avoid ethnic slurs, personal insults, obscenity, or any conduct that would not be acceptable in the City's workplace. Show consideration for others' privacy and for topics that may be considered objectionable or inflammatory—such as politics and religion.
  2. Employees should avoid engaging in arguments, be the first to correct their own mistakes, and indicate if they have altered previous posts.
  3. All content and posts should be designed to add value. Employees should strive to provide worthwhile information and perspective.
- c. The City promotes transparency and honesty in communications and therefore employees may not post anonymously or use pseudonyms or misleading screen names when representing the City.

## C. Comments and Replies

1. To encourage engagement and increase transparency, it is Carson City's intent to leverage social media as a method of two-way communications. To that end, when the appropriate resources are available, comment and forum features will be activated to allow users to make comments or ask questions.
  - a. When activated, comments and forums should be reviewed every work day.
  - b. Staff will assess the content of each post or comment to determine it meets the standards described below or if it requires a response from the City.
  - c. Posts or comments requiring a response will be answered with a status of the response within 16 work hours (two work days) and with the full response within five work days. Whenever possible, responses should be made immediately.
2. Social Media Administrators should immediately remove any comment which violates any local, state, or federal law regarding discrimination, harassment, or violence.
3. In a designated public social media forum created by the City, the City shall delete or reject posts from users that contain content that is obscene, threatening, harassing, maliciously defamatory, copyrighted or commercial.
4. In a limited public social media forum created by the City, in addition to any other limitations imposed on the specific site by the City, the following posts or comments shall be removed or deleted:

- a. Obscene, vulgar, threatening, harassing, or maliciously defamatory comments.
  - b. Comments not related to the specified subject or, although portions relate to the specified subject, include substantial unrelated material;
  - c. If applicable, comments from persons or groups not within the permitted commentator group or other limitations of the limited forum;
  - d. Comments promoting or opposing any person campaigning for election to a political office or promoting or opposing any ballot proposition;
  - e. Comments promoting or advertising a business or commercial transaction or containing copyrighted material; or
  - f. Overtly self-promoting comments.
5. Comments shall not be deleted or removed based upon the views expressed. Comments will not be edited. Applicable limitations should be posted on the social media site. Hyperlinks may be prohibited in their entirety, or they may be deleted or removed where the linked site includes material falling within the above listed prohibitions.
  6. When deleting comments or posts, staff should save a screen capture as a jpeg of the content and send it to the City Manager's Office for archiving.
  7. Unless the City specifically states on a social media system that communications on that specific system shall be considered as official communications with the City for a specific purpose, communications made through a social media system will in no way constitute a legal or official notice or comment by or to the City or by or to any official or employee of the City for any purpose. For example, a post or comment that asks that the City provide public records will not be considered a public records request until being sent through the proper channels. Likewise, a social media post or comment related to a business license application or building permit will not be considered by the City. Comments specific to a City license, application, permit, project, etc., should be submitted directly to the appropriate City official, department or division, as indicated at [www.carson.org](http://www.carson.org).

D. Linking Policy and Disclaimer of Endorsement

1. The City shall review and reserves the right to reject any hyperlink to the site not maintained by the City.
2. The City shall follow or "friend" other social media users. This is a customary practice in social media in order to enhance engagement, improve flows of communication, and even gain followers and friends who will then receive information from the City. This is not to be viewed as an endorsement of those persons', entities' or groups' posts, activities, views or goals. This is to be seen as an effort by the City to reach out to its citizens, businesses, associations and others.
3. The City shall not re-post entries (e.g., "re-tweet") coming from person who have filed as candidates for public office for the duration of their election campaigns. The City shall not re-post entries of those with objectionable profile pictures and others whose activities reflect poorly on the City. The City encourages the reposting of content about City activities, services and programs and content that aligns with the City's mission and goals (e.g., nonprofit entities).

## **Definitions**

- A. Administrator—An employee who establishes, creates and maintains content for any communications media employed by Carson City.
- B. Blog— A contraction of the term "weblog," blogs are websites that contain regular entries of commentary, descriptions of events, or other material such as graphics or video.
- C. Comment —A post made in response to a particular blog entry or post on a social media site or forum.
- D. Forum—An Internet forum, or message board, is an online discussion site using web applications managing user-generated content, or posts.
- E. Microblog—Online services that limit the size of posts. Twitter, for example, limits posts to 140 characters.
- F. Post—An entry in a forum, social media site, or blog by an author.
- G. Profile Picture—An image that represents the profile owner or user.
- H. Social Media—Any website or electronic medium that allows for communication, accessible to anyone via the internet. Examples of social media sites include: MySpace, Facebook, YouTube, Flickr, LinkedIn, Wikipedia, Digg, Reddit, Delicious, StumbleUpon, and Twitter.
- I. Spam—Spam is an abuse of electronic messaging systems by sending unsolicited bulk messages.
- J. SMS—Short Message Service (SMS) is a standardized communications protocol allowing the exchange of short text messages between mobile telephone devices.
- K. User—A duly registered participant in a social media website.
- L. Wiki—A collaborative software program or platform that allows web pages to be created and collaboratively edited using a web browser.

# Social Media Asset Form

Requested by: \_\_\_\_\_

Department: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of social network application (i.e. Facebook, Twitter, etc.): \_\_\_\_\_

Primary Administrator: \_\_\_\_\_

Login ID: \_\_\_\_\_

Password: \_\_\_\_\_

Secondary Administrator: \_\_\_\_\_

Login ID: \_\_\_\_\_

Password: \_\_\_\_\_

Description and Intent: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Primary Administrator: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature

Date

I have read and understand the Social Media Policy.

Secondary Administrator: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature

Date

I have read and understand the Social Media Policy.

Department Head: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature

Date

City Manager: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature

Date