



# Social Media Plan Guide

Science and Technology Directorate

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**Homeland  
Security**

Science and Technology

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## About the Social Media Plan Guide

The purpose of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Science and Technology Directorate (S&T) Social Media Plan Guide (Guide) is to provide step-by-step guidance to public safety and emergency management officials on how to develop an effective Social Media Plan. In this context, a Social Media Plan acts as a comprehensive roadmap for the initiation, sustainment, or enhancement of social media in support of emergency management and public information operations. This Guide builds upon the existing [DHS S&T Social Media Business Case Guide](#), which helps users implement a new social media emergency management (SMEM) program or improve an existing program through enhanced planning. References from successful SMEM practitioners and their best practices in social media planning are included throughout this Guide. **Users are encouraged to download, complete, and/or modify the Social Media Plan Guide Template in ways that suit their organization's needs.** A blank Word version of the Social Media Plan Template is available upon request at [first.responder@hq.dhs.gov](mailto:first.responder@hq.dhs.gov). The graphic below serves as a roadmap which outlines how to use this Guide and how it can support social media champions in developing a comprehensive Social Media Plan.

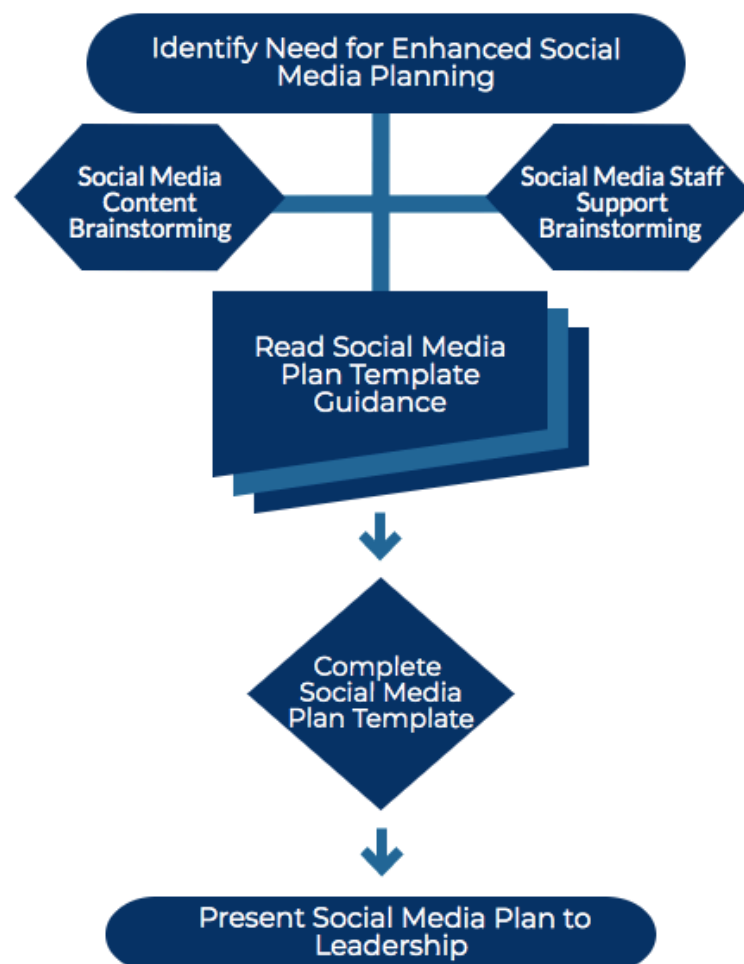


Figure 1: Social Media Plan Guide Flowchart

## 1.0 How to Start Social Media Planning

This step outlines the key components an agency should consider prior to creating a comprehensive Social Media Plan. The following sections are designed to assist users in securing leadership buy-in, forming a social media planning team to achieve goals, developing informed objectives to better manage SMEM operations, and assessing the current state of social media use. Some or all of these sections apply depending on the state of the user's current program. In this document, the "user" refers to the recipient or reader of this Guide. User responses directly inform completion of the Social Media Plan Template on page 26. **Users are encouraged to download, complete, and/or modify the Social Media Plan Template in a way that suits their organization's needs.**

### 1.1 Gain Leadership Buy-In

The first step to enhancing SMEM operations is communicating to key decision makers about how a Social Media Plan will support the agency's overall mission and strategy. Users that are considering implementing a SMEM program for the first time should refer to the [DHS S&T Social Media Business Case Guide](#) for step-by-step guidance on developing a strong Business Case. This Business Case can be shared with the organization's decision makers to support SMEM adoption. Users with existing SMEM programs seeking to build buy-in for a new or updated Social Media Plan should consider the following:

1. In what ways do you need your leadership to support Social Media Plan development and implementation (e.g. time, financial resources, advocacy)?
2. What is your leadership's level of familiarity with social media (e.g., frequent user or novice)?
3. What is your leadership's estimated level of involvement in agency SMEM operations to date (e.g., high or low) and how will this affect their understanding of agency SMEM operational decision making?
4. What risks or fears do your agency's leadership express about using social media?
5. How will a new or updated Social Media Plan address those risks or fears?

#### Buy-In Strategy Examples

SMEM practitioners shared the following strategies to obtain and sustain leadership buy-in:

- Schedule regular presentations with leadership to show how they can help with Social Media Plan development or implementation;
- Write quarterly reports on Social Media Plan implementation successes, roadblocks, and mitigation strategies;
- Schedule an annual presentation on challenges before, during, and after an incident. As part of the presentation, address how the Social Media Plan helps to overcome them;
- Develop social media-specific after-action reports (AARs) or incorporate social media performance issues into AARs to review lessons learned and best practices immediately following incidents and planned events; and
- Coordinate with other departments on social media usage (i.e., internal communications, public affairs).

## 1.2 Form a Social Media Planning Team

An effective Social Media Plan accurately reflects the broad range of roles and departments within an organization. While one person can develop and sustain a Social Media Plan, most agencies recommend forming a small social media planning team to support the development and execution of operational and content strategies. The following sections provide users with considerations when forming a social media planning team prior to Social Media Plan development.

### Social Media Planning Team Roles

Public safety organizations and practitioners interviewed for this guide recommended including some combination of the following roles when forming a social media planning team based on the organization's needs:

- Incident Command;
- Public Information Officer (PIO);
- Public Affairs Manager;
- Social Media Specialists;
- Digital Content Specialists;
- Graphic Designers;
- Video Production/Operations Specialists;
- Alert Originators; and
- Departmental Representatives.

### Common Social Media Planning Team Structures

When establishing a social media planning team, users may reference the common structures that successful practitioners use—as well as read about the associated advantages and considerations of each—listed in the table below.

Team Type	Definition	Advantages	Considerations
Volunteer	- A social media planning team comprised of an informal group of existing organization staff who are also interested in supporting SMEM operations	- Team members may be connected in the community through traditional social media methods (community ties or connections) - Volunteers who come from different departments may have a better grasp on accessible resources for the team	- Abilities among volunteer members may vary greatly. Training is essential to overcome this variance



Team Type	Definition	Advantages	Considerations
Centralized	- A standalone social media planning team comprised of individuals within the organization who directly interact with agency social media platforms and/or support SMEM operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Multiple team members across departments in an organization can provide the ability to identify specialties among different platforms</li> <li>- The team will understand the core mission of the organization and can work fluidly towards that mission</li> <li>- A structured reporting process and accountability process enables the team to communicate with leadership</li> </ul>	- Silos may occur within an organization where individuals may be acting independently, potentially limiting information sharing
Hub and Spoke	- A social media planning team comprised of a single representative from each department or team within the organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The team is cross-functional and can represent diverse perspectives</li> <li>- The structure allows for increased information sharing across departments</li> </ul>	- The team may require support from multiple decision makers

### 1.3 Define Your Organization's Objectives

When defining short-term and long-term objectives for the Social Media Plan, practitioners recommend ensuring the objectives are measurable to clearly direct social media content development and implementation of a comprehensive social media strategy. Defining long-term SMEM objectives can be challenging, as the social media landscape is constantly shifting. In the most effective Social Media Plans, SMEM objectives are broad enough to remain relevant despite environmental changes that may impact the organization. When crafting Social Media Objectives, consider the following process:

1. Discuss what is working well and what can be improved within the organization's use of social media among leadership and the social media planning team;
2. Review all agency communications strategies for guidance pertaining to external messaging;
3. Review other relevant departmental goals and objectives to ensure alignment of social media objectives to agency goals;
4. Craft objectives with the social media planning team, leveraging the S.M.A.R.T. approach;<sup>1</sup>
5. Document a strategy for achieving social media objectives and then prioritize tasks; and
6. Regularly measure progress against the objectives outlined in the Social Media Plan.

For additional best practices and considerations when defining organizational SMEM objectives, refer to the DHS S&T [Social Media Business Case Guide](#).

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<sup>1</sup> Eby, K. "The Essential Guide to Writing S.M.A.R.T. Goals." January 2019, [bit.ly/2iY4U2v](http://bit.ly/2iY4U2v). Accessed 24 April 2019. SMART goals are, Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Bound.

## 1.4 Determine Audiences and Platforms

When determining target audiences for the Social Media Plan, keep in mind audiences often differ across platforms. Successful Social Media Plans align with community interests on the platforms they find most throughout the full lifecycle of an emergency or event. Targeting entire communities across every social media platform without focus can lead to wasted resources and public confusion. To strategically identify audiences, consider the following:

1. Which populations frequently visit your current social media accounts, website, or other relevant landing pages (e.g. a partnering agency's social media page(s))?
2. Which age groups within your community are considered a priority to reach through social media?
3. What languages are spoken within your community? Of these, which are a priority to reach through social media?
4. Which platforms do the identified populations commonly use?
5. What is the platform's unique value in meeting your established objectives? In other words, how will this specific platform deliver on your objectives in ways that another platform may not?
6. Do other departments within your agency or neighboring jurisdictions use the identified social media platform(s)? If yes, which of their 'lessons learned' can be applied here?

### Descriptions of Common Social Media Platforms

The table below identifies descriptions of common social media platforms. Consider this information when choosing which platforms to engage citizens for emergency management operations.

Description	
Facebook	Facebook is a free social networking website that enables two-way interactions with citizens through text, photo, and video posts. Facebook provides a variety of tools that make public information sharing easier, such as Facebook live and Facebook Business Manager. Facebook is commonly used as a "landing page" for frequently asked questions and other useful information.
Instagram	Instagram is a photo and video sharing service that enables public safety officials to feature visual content and tell compelling, informative stories. The platform is commonly used to improve branding and build trust with citizens.
Snapchat	Snapchat is a mobile app and service for sharing photos, videos, and messages, called "Snaps," with other people. Once you view a message received via Snapchat, it is automatically deleted. Other tools like your "Story" disappear after 24 hours and can be used as an opportunity to share non-critical information before or after an emergency. Snapchat is particularly popular with Generation Z.
Twitter	Twitter is a microblogging social network that enables two-way interactions with citizens through sharing short messages of up to 280 characters called "Tweets." Twitter tools like #hashtags and retweets allow public safety users the opportunity to quickly amplify messages and increase situational awareness before, during, or after an emergency.

Description	
NextDoor	NextDoor is a social media platform for neighbors to build stronger communities by building connections, staying informed, and helping each other in their everyday lives. Public safety users can share important safety updates with residents.
LinkedIn	LinkedIn is a social networking site designed specifically for the business community. The goal of the site is to allow members to establish and document networks of people they know and trust professionally. Public safety can use tools like LinkedIn groups and extended networks to solve problems and connect with leaders both locally and outside of their community.

### Example Social Media Audience Demographics Across Platforms

The table below identifies demographics across social media platforms and the corresponding number of monthly users, respectively. Consider this information when developing a Social Media Plan.<sup>2,3</sup>

Platform	Number of Monthly Users	Average Age of Users on Platform	Gender
Facebook	2 Billion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Age 18-29: 88% of platform users</li> <li>- Age 30-49: 84% of platform users</li> <li>- Age 50-64: 72% of platform users</li> <li>- Age 65+: 62% of platform users</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Female: 52% of platform users</li> <li>- Male: 48% of platform users</li> </ul>
Instagram	800 Million	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Age 18-29: 59% of platform users</li> <li>- Age 30-49: 33% of platform users</li> <li>- Age 50-64: 13% of platform users</li> <li>- Age 65+: 8% of platform users</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Female: 58% of platform users</li> <li>- Male: 42% of platform users</li> </ul>
Snapchat	300 Million	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Age 13-17: 23% of platform users</li> <li>- Age 18-24: 37% of platform users</li> <li>- Age 25-34: 26% of platform users</li> <li>- Age 35-64: 12% of platform users</li> <li>- Age 55+: 2% of platform users</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Female: 70% of platform users</li> <li>- Male: 30% of platform users</li> </ul>
Twitter	317 Million	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Age 18-29: 36% of platform users</li> <li>- Age 30-49: 23% of platform users</li> <li>- Age 50-64: 21% of platform users</li> <li>- Age 65+: 10% of platform users</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Female: 47% of platform users</li> <li>- Male: 53% of platform users</li> </ul>
NextDoor	10-20 Million	N/A	N/A

<sup>2</sup> Spreadfast. "The 2018 Social Audience Guide." June 2019, [bit.ly/2NGbc6T](https://bit.ly/2NGbc6T). Accessed 28 June 2019.

<sup>3</sup> Pew Research Center. "Share of U.S. adults using social media, including Facebook, is mostly unchanged since 2018." April 2019, [www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/04/10/share-of-u-s-adults-using-social-media-including-facebook-is-mostly-unchanged-since-2018/](https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/04/10/share-of-u-s-adults-using-social-media-including-facebook-is-mostly-unchanged-since-2018/). Accessed 02 Aug 2019.



Platform	Number of Monthly Users	Average Age of Users on Platform	Gender
LinkedIn <sup>4</sup>	303 Million	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Age 18-29: 29% of platform users</li> <li>- Age 30-49: 33% of platform users</li> <li>- Age 50-64: 24% of platform users</li> <li>- Age 65+: 9% of platform users</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Female: 43% of platform users</li> <li>- Male: 57% of platform users</li> </ul>

## 2.0 How to Develop a Social Media Content Strategy

Social media is a mechanism to actively engage with communities through content. Developing a strategy for content creation and circulation within the Social Media Plan promotes organizational objectives, information sharing, and targeted citizen engagement. User considerations and responses in the following sections directly inform completion of the Social Media Plan Template on page 25. **Users are encouraged to download, complete and/or modify these templates in ways that suit their organization's needs.**

### 2.1 Characteristics of Effective Content Strategies

It is important that SMEM content aligns with community interests on designated key platforms before, during, and after an emergency or event. There is no one-size-fits-all guide to the most effective content strategy, and posts should reflect the unique goals of the organization and its audience. Data collected during interviews with successful SMEM practitioners pointed to the following as typical characteristics of effective content strategies:

- **Promote:** Every social media post and community response is an opportunity to connect with the public while promoting the organization's mission, objectives, and services. When possible, SMEM content should center on a call-to-action to encourage public response and engagement (e.g., when to call 9-1-1, visit a website, subscribe to alerts). Content should always be relevant to the target audience, concise, and informative.
- **Share:** An organization's SMEM content should not be limited to materials they produce themselves. Encourage staff to share and amplify relevant news articles, tips, and other multimedia sources from trustworthy sources, including other departments, neighboring jurisdictions, and emergency partners (e.g., National Weather Service (NWS), American Red Cross). This tactic helps to maximize resources, build an audience, and enhance collaboration across regions.
- **Converse:** When possible, respond to all public inquiries, comments, and posts warranting a response within 1 business day using conversational language that encourages comments and engages follow-up conversation. Followers expect you to be human, authentic, and personal. For more guidance on maintaining a conversation with followers on social media, refer to the DHS S&T [Social Media Business Case Guide](#).

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<sup>4</sup> Pew Research Center. "Social Media Use in 2018" March, 2018, [www.pewinternet.org/2018/03/01/social-media-use-2018-appendix-a-detailed-table/](http://www.pewinternet.org/2018/03/01/social-media-use-2018-appendix-a-detailed-table/). Accessed 04 Aug 2019

- **Customized to the Platform:** Keep in mind that effective engagement varies by social media platform. Many agency SMEM content strategies provide guidance tailored to platform best practices. It is important to adapt content and tactics per the platform and intended audience.
- **Content Repository:** Provide a database of pre-approved language (e.g., Tweet templates, Facebook posts), graphics (e.g., Hurricane season planning checklist), and other digital content for common hazards and planned events.
- **Style Resources:** Establish a style standard for social media and social networking accounts under the organization's greater branding strategy and style guidelines. Provide supplemental resources (e.g., image size cheat sheets, logos, colors) for staff which support a uniform voice, 'look and feel,' and other stylistic best practices relevant to the organization.

### 2.1.1 Content Best Practices for All Platforms

Practitioners identified the following best practices in developing engaging content across all social media platforms:

- Proactively post content Monday through Friday during normal business hours;
- Inform audiences that the organization's social media platforms are not monitored 24/7 and cannot address all inquiries;
- Reiterate that citizens who need help during an emergency should call 9-1-1 and NOT rely on social media interactions;
- Use multiple content formats (e.g., text, video, image) to capture the target audiences' attention while also meeting multiple device and format preferences;
- As a standard practice, do not block, ban, or mute users or pages on accounts unless they frequently violate your organization's community engagement guidelines. Instead, users or pages should be reported to platform management. "Social Media Use Policies and Guidelines" (Section 3.3) provides additional guidance on creating a strong comment policy to support social media community engagement. Social media platforms are often treated as public forums, making the First Amendment applicable to social media accounts run by public officials.<sup>5 6</sup>;
- Create engaging and informational posts in advance for events that affect your agency's operations each year (e.g., sports games, festivals, holidays);
- When sharing content that is not owned or generated by your agency, clearly reference the original source; and
- Use tools (e.g., Landscape by Sprout Social<sup>7</sup>) to optimize images and ensure proper sizing across platforms.

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<sup>5</sup> Davison Opinion. "United States Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit." January 2019, [bit.ly/2XGVh8t](https://bit.ly/2XGVh8t). Accessed 2 July 2019.

<sup>6</sup> Stern, M.J. "Federal Court: Public Officials Cannot Block Social Media Users Because of Their Criticism." July 2017, [bit.ly/2G7sgwq](https://bit.ly/2G7sgwq). Accessed 17 May 2019.

<sup>7</sup> Sprout Social. "Landscape." June 2019, [bit.ly/2rX5b5H](https://bit.ly/2rX5b5H). Accessed 7 May 2019

## 2.1.2 Content Best Practices for Specific Platforms

The following table outlines content best practices for specific platforms as identified by practitioners developing engaging content.

Platform	Content Best Practices by Platform
Facebook	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Highlight important posts by pinning them to the top of your page timeline.<sup>8</sup></li><li>- To maximize exposure of important content, schedule and post content via Facebook's internal interface. Facebook's algorithm is biased against third-party content management platforms (e.g., Hootsuite, TweetDeck, Sprout Social), which can impact the engagement rates of content posted through management platforms vs. using Facebook's interface directly.</li></ul>
Instagram	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Focus on the entire content post—not just the visual. Use captions and descriptions to provide context to the image and tell a story.</li><li>- If using Instagram filters on photos, use similar filters over time to establish a consistent look and feel.</li><li>- Use geolocations or geo-tag features when posting.</li><li>- Use polls through the Instagram Story feature to engage your audience.</li><li>- Leverage the Instagram Live video feature during both planned events or emergency incidents to provide real-time updates to followers.</li></ul>
Snapchat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Use vertical or portrait formatting.</li><li>- Keep 'Snaps' short—no more than one to two minutes in length.</li><li>- Test content as a private message first.</li><li>- Add elements, including text, stickers, and doodles to posts in order to keep them interesting.</li><li>- Use text and writing so videos can be consumed with or without sound.</li></ul>
Twitter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Highlight important posts by pinning them to the top of your page timeline.<sup>9</sup></li><li>- Search and follow accounts that share similar content.</li><li>- Ensure Tweets are limited to approximately 200 characters to allow users to Retweet and add their own comments.</li><li>- Use relevant keywords and #hashtags to make content easy to search.</li><li>- Develop a list of common hashtags. For example, the State of Michigan created a public <a href="#">Frequently Used Hashtag Guide</a>.<sup>10</sup></li></ul>

<sup>8</sup>Lee, K. "The Art of Pinning a Tweet or Facebook Post: Inside Our Stats and Strategies on Pinning." March 2016, [bit.ly/2XHkhBm](http://bit.ly/2XHkhBm), Accessed 16 April 2019.

<sup>9</sup>Lee, K. "The Art of Pinning a Tweet or Facebook Post: Inside Our Stats and Strategies on Pinning." March 2016, [bit.ly/2XHkhBm](http://bit.ly/2XHkhBm), Accessed 16 April 2019.

<sup>10</sup> Michigan.gov. "Social Media Community Guidelines." January 2019 [bit.ly/2XHlkkM](http://bit.ly/2XHlkkM). Accessed 28 June 2019.

### 2.1.3 Sample Social Media Visuals and Content

The samples below include examples of public safety organizations using different social media platforms to share engaging content with their communities. Figure 2 demonstrates an agency building trust on day-to-day operations through positive engagement on Twitter and Figure 3 demonstrates building trust through Instagram engagement by offering a ride along to citizens.



Figure 2: Mountain View Police Department Twitter Content<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> inTime. "Public Safety Agencies Doing Social Media Right." September 2018, [bit.ly/2DC7tzU](https://bit.ly/2DC7tzU). Accessed 8 May 2019.



Figure 3: Baltimore Police Department Instagram Content<sup>12</sup>

## 2.2 Content Planning

Social media content planning as part of the Social Media Plan ensures consistent messaging, provides visibility to SMEM initiatives, maximizes resources, and supports the measurement of SMEM objectives. Some practitioners interviewed for this Guide plan content by week, while others create monthly calendars filled with flexible content. Practitioners recommended starting with a manageable calendar (e.g., one-to-two platforms) at a cadence that works best for the agency's social media team. When content planning, consider the following:

1. What type of content (e.g., text, photo, video) does your agency already share?
2. What type of content does your agency want to share that it does not currently?
3. How do your objectives inform the types of information you want to communicate to your audience?
4. Who is developing content each week? Each month?
5. Who will have access to the content calendar?
6. What is the content approval process and who is part of the approval chain?

<sup>12</sup> inTime. "Public Safety Agencies Doing Social Media Right." September 2018, [bit.ly/2DC7tzU](https://bit.ly/2DC7tzU). Accessed 8 May 2019.

### 2.2.1 Example Content Calendar Formats

The table below highlights common content calendar formats identified by practitioners, and the benefits and limitations of each type.<sup>13,14</sup>

Scheduling Type	Benefit	Limitation
Manual Scheduling (spreadsheet)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Best for teams who publish content once or twice per week.</li><li>- Easily allows for users to manipulate and sort data.</li><li>- Simple to set up.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Requires manual maintenance.</li><li>- Can become difficult to manage if post frequency increases to more than once or twice per week.</li><li>- Permissions must be carefully managed to avoid unwanted changes to this critical document.</li></ul>
Shared Document or Intranet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Best for content teams who publish once or twice per week.</li><li>- Simple to set up.</li><li>- Allows for sharing between collaborators and documenting track changes.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Can become difficult to manage if post frequency increases to more than once or twice per week.</li></ul>
Online Content Management Tool	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Useful for managing a rigorous content schedule.</li><li>- Collaboration abilities are superior to other formats.</li><li>- Allows for different ways to view and sort data.</li><li>- Can be integrated into other applications.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Unplanned events may disrupt the flow of scheduled 'evergreen' posts. This conflict could result in postings that may appear poorly timed.</li><li>- Tools can be expensive for full capabilities.</li></ul>

### 2.3 Posting Frequency

Practitioners state that consistent two-way communications on social media before, during, and after an emergency or major event builds public trust. When public safety organizations maintain these two-way engagements with citizens during day-to-day operations, the public is more likely to turn to those organizations' social media accounts during incidents. Practitioners have also noted the value in reaching the targeted audience when that audience is online. This is essential to ensuring high engagement rates. For optimal engagement, practitioners and research suggest the following recommended posting schedule for common social media platforms:<sup>15</sup>

Platform	Posting Frequency	Recommended Post Time Frame
Facebook	One post per day	Wednesday through Sunday, in the afternoon
Instagram	Two to three posts per week	Weekdays in the early morning or early evening

<sup>13</sup> Wright, A. "5 Ways to Build an Editorial Calendar." May 2016, [bit.ly/2xEifT3](https://bit.ly/2xEifT3). Accessed 10 June 2019.

<sup>14</sup> Dorland, B. "Editorial Calendar Templates: Pros, Cons, and What to Look For." September 2018, [bit.ly/2LdHRie](https://bit.ly/2LdHRie). Accessed 1 July 2019.

<sup>15</sup> Arens, E. "Best Times to Post on Social Media for 2019." June 2019 [bit.ly/2qL761F](https://bit.ly/2qL761F). Accessed 27 June 2019.



Snapchat	Two to three posts per week	Throughout the day
Twitter	Three posts per day	Weekdays in the afternoon or evening
NextDoor <sup>16</sup>	Post as needed	Post as needed
LinkedIn	One post per business day	Business days in the morning

## 2.4 Evaluating Post Success

To track, analyze, and optimize content performance on a continual basis and ensure success for the long term, an organization must establish sound measurement practices. Without the right measures in place, it is difficult to know which social media posts work best. Account management tools and specific metrics can result in comprehensive, yet simple analyses for the ongoing evaluation of content performance by platform. Prior to determining SMEM metrics, consider the following:

1. Which key performance indicators (KPIs) is your organization tracking to achieve related agency-wide objectives?
2. Are there any KPIs you should consider incorporating that you are not currently using?
3. Who needs access to ongoing reports and statistics?
4. What target dates or milestones should your agency evaluate given the content strategy?
5. Which types of content are performing well?
6. Which types of content are performing poorly?
7. At what point will the organization make changes to the original content strategy?
8. Who has the authority to make changes to the content strategy?

### 2.4.1 Common Content Engagement Metrics

A variety of metrics can be used to determine the success of social media engagements and help organizations improve their brand across platforms. The following table highlights common metrics identified by practitioners for evaluating success across varying platforms<sup>17</sup>.

Platform	Metric	Definition
All platforms	Community Feedback	- Anecdotes of successful social media interactions with the public help to evaluate success and sustain leadership buy-in.
Facebook <sup>18</sup>	Reach	- The number of unique people who saw your post.

<sup>16</sup> Medium. "Nextdoor for Public Agencies Training Manual" January 2019. [medium.com/nextdooragencyresources/nextdoor-for-public-agencies-training-manual-513fdaf7d204](https://medium.com/nextdooragencyresources/nextdoor-for-public-agencies-training-manual-513fdaf7d204). Accessed 04 Aug 2019.

<sup>17</sup>October Social Media. "Glossary of Terms and Metrics." February 2019, [bit.ly/30uEEOZ](https://bit.ly/30uEEOZ). Accessed 10 May 2019.

<sup>18</sup>City of Boulder. "City of Boulder Social Media Guide: Strategic guidance and best practices for leveraging social media." March 2017, [bit.ly/2xDmNc3](https://bit.ly/2xDmNc3). Accessed 21 June 2019.

Platform	Metric	Definition
	Engagement Rate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Engagement rate measures an audience's activity with a post. It can be measured by the percentage of people who clicked, liked, commented, or shared your post.</li> <li>- Posts should achieve a minimum 1% engagement rate. Strong posts earn a rate of 5% or more.</li> </ul> <p>How to calculate the Engagement rate: <math>\text{Engagement rate} = (\text{clicks} + \text{likes} + \text{comments} + \text{shares}) / \text{impressions}</math></p>
	Post Clicks	- The number of clicks on the content in a post or ad. This indicates engagement with the content shared in the post.
	Link Clicks	- The number of clicks on links within a post or ad that led to destinations or experiences, on or off Facebook.
	Hide Post	- The number of people who hid your post. Watch this statistic to spot content that is not connecting with the audience.
	Extension Rate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Shows if users are sharing your posts.</li> </ul> <p>How to calculate the Extension rate: <math>\text{Extension rate} = \text{Total shares} / \text{impressions}</math></p>
	Categorical Reach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- This shows the number of unique people who saw your post, organized by category.</li> </ul> <p>Calculate: Code each line of data to a specific category in a spreadsheet. Utilize a pivot table to sort the data by category and arrive at a calculated reach number for each category. Use a bar graph or pie chart to represent the frequency or percentage for each category.</p>
Instagram <sup>19</sup>	Follower Growth Rate	- The rate that your organization is gaining new followers.
	Engagement Per Follower	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Look at the total number of likes and comments earned during a specific time period then divide that number by the number of followers for that same time period.</li> <li>- Calculate your engagement per follower on a monthly or weekly basis. Do not try to calculate it on a daily basis, since normal day-to-day fluctuations are likely to distort data.</li> </ul>
	Comments	- The number of users who have left comments on a post.
	Likes	- The number of users who have "liked", or double tapped, a post. This showcases audience engagement with your content.
	Best Time to Post	- Consider that you could be losing followers and hindering your engagement rate simply by posting at the wrong time. Refer to your Instagram Insights to determine when your followers are most active online.

<sup>19</sup> Kindness, J. "7 Instagram Metrics You Should Track to Measure Performance." November 2018, [bit.ly/2xH0D90](https://bit.ly/2xH0D90). Accessed 1 July 2019.

Platform	Metric	Definition
Snapchat	Total Unique Views	- The total number of people who have opened up the first frame in your Snapchat story for at least a second.
	Total Story Completions	- The total number of people who viewed the first snap in your story compared to the last snap in your story. The more people who viewed the last frame of your story, the more people who watched it all the way through.
	Completion Rate	- The percentage of people that started viewing a story compared to how many of them saw the last part of the story.
	Screenshots	- The number of people who have taken screenshots of snaps.
Twitter	Impressions	- The total number of times people saw your post. This number accounts for the same user seeing your content multiple times.
	Engagement Rate	- Percentage of people who clicked, liked, replied to, or Retweeted your Tweet. - Tweets should achieve a minimum 1% engagement rate. Strong Tweets earn a rate of 4% or more. How to calculate the Engagement rate: $\text{Engagement rate} = (\text{clicks} + \text{likes} + \text{comments} + \text{shares} + \text{retweets}) / \text{impressions}$
	Link Clicks	- The number of people who clicked on a link in your Tweet.
	Extension Rate	- Shows if users are sharing your posts. How to calculate the Extension Rate: $\text{Extension rate} = \text{Total shares} / \text{impressions}$
	Categorical Reach	- This shows the number of unique people who saw your post, organized by category. Calculate: Code each line of data to a specific category in a spreadsheet. Utilize a pivot table to sort the data by category and arrive at a calculated reach number for each category. Use a bar graph or pie chart to represent the frequency or percentage for each category.
NextDoor	Recommendations	- The number of positive reviews your neighbors have given you.
	Neighborhoods	- Reach in terms of communities and neighborhoods. The higher this number is, the greater the number of networks your agency can reach.
	Neighbors	- NextDoor users who can see your page.
LinkedIn	Updates	- Agency related posts such as achievements, advice, and how-to articles.
	Total Followers	- Total followers of your agency page.
	Unique Visitors	- Unique page visitors (excludes multiple visits from same user).

## 3.0 How to Start Implementing Social Media

This section outlines key practices identified by practitioners for successful Social Media Plan implementation that must be considered before the plan is finalized, such as defining operational roles and outlining social media policies. User considerations should directly inform completion of the Social Media Plan Template. **Users are encouraged to download, complete, and/or modify the Social Media Plan Template in ways that suit their organization's needs.**

### 3.1 Defining Operational Roles and Responsibilities

Designating specific members of an organization with Social Media Plan management and implementation responsibilities is an essential step in creating and implementing an effective Social Media Plan. Whether one person in an organization or a larger social media team is responsible for the Social Media Plan, defining operational roles and responsibilities ensures your organization remains accountable to what is outlined in the document. Successful practitioners use variations of the following roles and responsibilities to support effective Social Media Plan management and implementation:

- **Incident Decision Maker:** An individual in a key leadership position, likely at the incident management level, who is responsible for operations and what social media platforms are going to be used for the strategy. This individual usually operates within the Emergency Operations Center (EOC).
- **Social Media Team Lead:** This individual is responsible for social media governance, implementation, and strategy; they work directly with departments and authorized agents to drive social media initiatives.
- **Digital Content Lead:** This individual uses pre-written content templates and creates new written, audio, and video content for social media initiatives.
- **Social Media Account Manager:** This individual is responsible for managing and posting information on specific social media accounts.
- **Other Team Members:** Individuals who may be in full-time, part-time, or volunteer roles that provide support to help the team accomplish overarching social media goals. Individuals in this role may not have access to accounts or the authority to make decisions regarding SMEM activities.

### 3.2 Social Media Account Management Procedures

Account management procedures ensure an organization's platforms and personnel perform consistently no matter what.<sup>20</sup> Management procedures will vary depending on: (1) the goals and objectives of the organization, and (2) the size of the social media management team. For example, Durham, North Carolina has a policy for elected officials who want to request a new social media account. The policy includes guidance on adherence to laws and policies regarding copyright, use of photographs, public records retention, personnel privacy, First Amendment, Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA), the Americans with

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<sup>20</sup> Buryan, M. "How to Manage Social Media Like a Pro: A Comprehensive Guide." September 2018, [bit.ly/2YOv356](https://bit.ly/2YOv356). Accessed 26 April 2019.

Disabilities Act, and information security policies established by the City of Durham.<sup>21</sup> Examples of common management procedures identified by practitioners are included below.

### Procedure A: Auditing Social Media Platforms

Once a SMEM program is up and running, it is important to regularly conduct thorough audits of existing SMEM activities to identify optimization opportunities. A social media audit allows you to determine what is and is not working across platforms, while also identifying impostor accounts, outdated profiles, and new opportunities for social engagement. [Hootsuite](#) offers a free social media audit template and additional best practices on conducting a comprehensive audit.<sup>22</sup> Practitioners recommended outlining a social media audit process within the Social Media Plan. Prior to conducting a social media platform audit, consider the following steps:

1. Create an audit template to use throughout the audit;
2. Research what is working well for other organizations of similar size and scope to identify best practices;
3. Identify and document all social media accounts associated with your organization, including “rogue” accounts;
4. Identify the posts with the highest engagement for each platform;
5. Analyze posts to identify patterns and theme the data by best practice to know which content is working well; and
6. Compile key findings and metrics in the audit document. Note any underperforming platforms.

### Procedure B: New Account Creation

Prior to creating a new social media account, consider the following:

1. What is the purpose of this new account? (e.g., to push out different types of information)
2. How will the account support agency SMEM objectives?
3. Who is the target audience? How does the target audience differ from other existing audiences?
4. How does the proposed content differ from the content currently distributed?
5. Which metrics, if any, support your need for a new account?
6. What is the impact of NOT creating the account?
7. Are resources readily available to support account management and content creation?

### Procedure C: Account Deactivation

When determining whether or not a social media account should be deactivated, consider the following:

1. Is the platform used regularly?
2. Do you have the resources to maintain the platform?

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<sup>21</sup> City of Durham. “City of Durham Policy for Elected Officials and Appointed Boards, Commissions and Committees Using Personal or Professional Social Media Platforms.” October 2017, [bit.ly/2S9mAHd](http://bit.ly/2S9mAHd). Accessed 21 June 2019.

<sup>22</sup> Newberry, C. “How to Conduct a Social Media Audit.” *Hootsuite*, 12 September 2018, [bit.ly/2LdKJf0](http://bit.ly/2LdKJf0). Accessed 8 July 2019.

3. Does the platform support SMEM objectives?
4. Does the platform reach target audience(s)?
5. Is leadership still invested in using this platform?

## Procedure D: Records Retention

The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and open records laws require that any messages deemed as public records must be retained and accessible to ensure compliance.<sup>23</sup> Many state and local practitioners maintain an official archive of SMEM activities in case there are future questions regarding organizational content online. Tools such as [Archive Social](#)<sup>24</sup>, [Smarsh](#)<sup>25</sup>, and [PageFreezer](#)<sup>26</sup> are designed to help organizations remain compliant with public records laws and prepare for information requests in advance. In regard to your organization's social media, every post, comment, like, share, pin, or Tweet created or received may be considered a matter of public record. If creating a records retention process, consider the following:

1. What tactics are currently being used, if any, to keep track of social media engagements?
2. Does your organization have any policies on retaining records of social media engagements?
3. Do any other state public records laws apply to your organization?

## Common Social Media Account Management Tools

To effectively evaluate social media performance, practitioners recommend using social media account management tools that will manage, analyze, and simplify performance data. Presenting simplified and intuitive data reports to leadership can help sustain buy-in for social media use and support requests to incorporate tool costs into an annual budget. The table below highlights practitioner-identified social media tools for supporting implementation of the Social Media Plan.

Account Management Tool	Description	Price
<a href="#">Buffer</a> <sup>27</sup>	A web application that focuses mainly on post scheduling.	Standard plan: free Buffer Pro: \$15/month
<a href="#">Facebook Business Manager</a> <sup>28</sup>	A dashboard for users to organize and manage a business. Users can securely share Facebook assets among multiple people or teams in their organization for an already existing organization or business page.	Free

<sup>23</sup> Jones, A. "Smart Records Retention for Government Social Media Content." July 2016, [bit.ly/2JyLpIE](http://bit.ly/2JyLpIE). Accessed 13 May 2019.

<sup>24</sup> Archive Social. "Social Media Archiving Built for Government Transparency." [Archivesocial.com](http://Archivesocial.com). Accessed 14 Aug 2019.

<sup>25</sup> Smarsh. "Redefining Archiving for Electronic Communications." [Smarch.com](http://Smarch.com). Accessed 14 Aug 2019.

<sup>26</sup> Pagefreezer. "Protect Your Social Media Records." [Pagefreezer.com/social-media-archiving](http://Pagefreezer.com/social-media-archiving). Accessed 14 Aug 2019.

<sup>27</sup> Buffer. "Build Your Audience and Grow Your Brand On Social Media." [Buffer.com](http://Buffer.com). Accessed 14 Aug 2019.

<sup>28</sup> Facebook Business. "Manage everything in one place with Business Manager." [Facebook.com/business/tools/business-manager](http://Facebook.com/business/tools/business-manager). Accessed 14 Aug 2019.



Account Management Tool	Description	Price
<a href="#">Hootsuite</a> <sup>29</sup>	A dashboard for users to monitor, manage, analyze, and archive content from multiple social media platforms at once.	Professional plan: \$30/month Team plan: \$130/month Business plan: \$600/month Free 30-day trial available
<a href="#">Hubspot</a> <sup>30</sup>	An inbound marketing software designed to compare the performance of different platforms, campaigns, and publishing times. It also provides services to schedule posts and manage engagements across platforms.	Starter plan: \$50/month Professional plan: \$800/month Enterprise plan: \$3,200/month Free plan also available
<a href="#">SocialPilot.co</a> <sup>31</sup>	A dashboard for users to organize, schedule, publish, and analyze content across platforms.	Professional plan: \$25/month Small Team plan: \$42/month Free 14-day trial available
<a href="#">Sprout Social</a> <sup>32</sup>	A dashboard for users to organize, schedule, publish, and analyze content across platforms.	Standard plan: \$100/month Professional plan: \$150/month Advanced plan: \$250/month Free 30-day trial available
<a href="#">Trello</a> <sup>33</sup>	A project management blogging tool for users to assign tasks by team member. It can be used to create social media content calendars.	Business Class plan: \$10/month Enterprise plan: \$21/month Free plan also available
<a href="#">TweetDeck</a> <sup>34</sup>	A dashboard for users to manage Twitter accounts and produce analytics reports to measure engagement and identify trends.	Free

### 3.3 Social Media Use Policies and Guidelines

Practitioners who have implemented an effective SMEM program in their organization recommend including specific social media use policies and guidelines. Policies and guidelines that target staff member social media use—both personal and professional—can be instrumental to setting organization-wide social media standards. As the social media landscape continues to change, SMEM practitioners voiced the importance of organizations regularly reviewing and updating their social media use policies.

#### Procedure E: Comment Guidelines

Subject matter expert (SME) contributors to this Guide referenced the importance of providing clear expectations for social media administrators and public citizens to effectively address

<sup>29</sup> Hootsuite. "Manage all your social media in one place." Hootsuite.com. Accessed 14 Aug 2019.

<sup>30</sup> HubSpot. "There's a better way to grow." Hubspot.com. Accessed 14 Aug 2019.

<sup>31</sup> SocialPilot. "Social Media Scheduling & Publishing Made Effortless." Socialpilot.co/social-media-scheduling. Accessed 14 Aug 2019.

<sup>32</sup> Sproutsocial. "Build and grow stronger relationships on social." Sproutsocial.com. Accessed 14 Aug 2019.

<sup>33</sup> Trello. "Trello lets you work more collaboratively and get more done." Trello.com. Accessed 14 Aug 2019.

<sup>34</sup> TweetDeck. "New ways to Tweet with TweetDeck." Tweetdeck.twitter.com. Accessed 14 Aug 2019.

acceptable and inappropriate comments. Comment policies protect organizations from liability risks that can occur as a result of social media interactions with citizens. For example, the State of Michigan created a set of publicly available, [Social Media Community Guidelines](#)<sup>35</sup> which outline expectations for both employees and the public on engaging with the State’s social media accounts. Meanwhile, the United States Air Force posts their [Social Media Community Guidelines](#) in the ‘About’ section of their Facebook page. Displaying guidelines directly on the social media platform ensures users are aware of the specific regulations associated with each site. Figure 4 below demonstrates how to clearly and succinctly detail why the guidelines are in place through the General Information section and explains exactly what will not be allowed on the Facebook page.

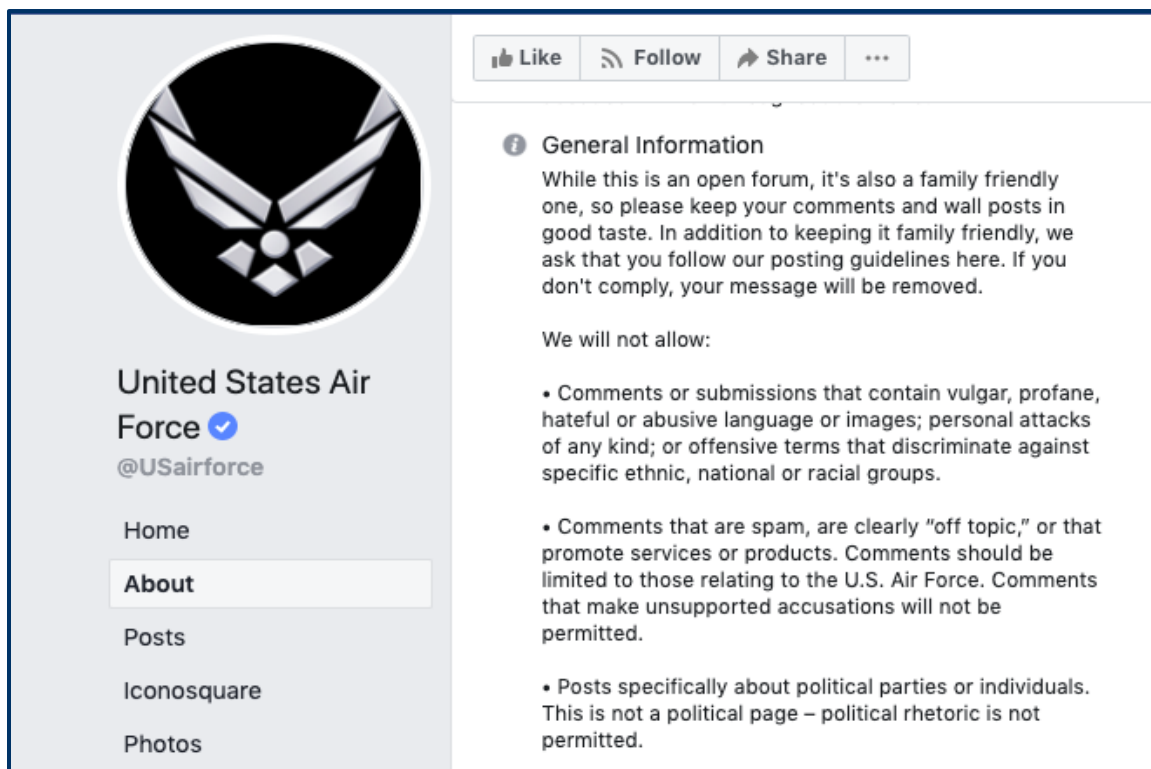


Figure 4: United States Air Force Comment Policy<sup>36</sup>

Practitioners identified other key elements for effective comment policies, such as:

- A moderation process for comments that also outlines the right of the organization to remove content and comments;
- A clear definition of the types of comments that will be removed; and
- Publicly available messaging that reiterates how the organization will archive social media engagements.

<sup>35</sup>Michigan.gov. "Social Media Community Guidelines." January 2019, [bit.ly/2XHlkkM](http://bit.ly/2XHlkkM). Accessed 28 June 2019.

<sup>36</sup>United States Air Force. "US Air Force Facebook Page." [bit.ly/2YJcmQc](http://bit.ly/2YJcmQc). Accessed on 21 May 2019.

## Procedure F: Security Guidelines

In many public safety organizations, leadership often has concerns about maintaining the security of social media accounts. Including security guidelines in the organization's social media plan can help to mitigate potential concerns and sustain buy-in for the use of social media in emergency operations. Individuals can enhance the security of all social media accounts by using tactics such as setting up a system of approvals for social media posts and training all staff on best practices.<sup>37</sup> Practitioners interviewed for this Guide also recommended the following for increased social media security:

- Unique passwords with 8-15 characters that include symbols, numbers, and capitalization;
- Two-factor authentication;
- Limited account access among staff members; and
- Password changes at least once per year using random password generators.

## Procedure G: Employee Personal Social Media Account Guidelines

Including personal social media account guidance for employees in a precautionary tone can help maintain an organization's positive image and prevent potential legal or security issues. Content on employees' personal accounts are still reflective of an organization's overall brand and should be in alignment with the organization's professional standards. The [Jefferson, CO County Sheriff's Office Social Media](#) Policy provides clear guidance for employees with personal social media accounts on types of content the organization considers appropriate and inappropriate.<sup>38</sup>

Practitioners interviewed for the Guide recommended the following as key elements of personal social media account guidance:

- Do not use personal social media accounts for work purposes.
- Use common sense when posting on any social media site.
- Understand that inappropriate content posted on personal social media accounts may:
  - Impair working relationships of the organization, for which loyalty and confidentiality are important;
  - Impede the performance of official duties or disrupt emergency operations; or
  - Impair discipline and harmony among coworkers.
- Never commit your department to a course of action without consulting leadership.
- Clearly label the social media account as 'personal' within the biography section.
- Do not disclose confidential or proprietary information acquired by way of your position within your organization.

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<sup>37</sup> Newberry, C. "8 Social Media Security Tips to Mitigate Risks." August 2018, [bit.ly/2JslTQg](https://bit.ly/2JslTQg). Accessed on 19 June 2019.

<sup>38</sup> Jefferson County Sheriff's Office Intranet, Internet, and Social Media Policy. "Policy 363: Jefferson County Sheriff's Office Policies and Procedures." [bit.ly/2Y9SKHO](https://bit.ly/2Y9SKHO). Accessed on 28 May 2019.

- Outline any corrective or disciplinary actions which may be considered if employees use social media inappropriately or violate the professional and personal guidelines provided.

## Procedure H: Accessibility Guidelines

Your organization's social media accounts should be accessible to all populations. As existing social media platforms enhance their features and new platforms emerge, it is essential for government agencies to create social media content that can be understood by all citizens, including those with disabilities or non-English speakers. The U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP), the U.S. General Services Administration's Office of Citizen Services and Innovative Technologies, and the Social Media Accessibility Working Group created the [Improving the Accessibility of Social Media in Government Toolkit](#) to outline key tips for creating accessible social media content.<sup>39</sup> Some example characteristics of accessible social media content recommended by practitioners include:

- Compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA);
  - Alt-Text Techniques (for describing photographs within the platforms)
  - Closed Captioning versus Open Captioning.
- Available contact information on each social media account page;
- Available through multiple social media channels;
- Available in multiple languages, as needed;
- Written in plain language; and
- Ensure images include keys that are not color specific for those who are color blind. Consider using different shapes instead.

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<sup>39</sup> The U.S. General Services Administration. "Improving the Accessibility of Social Media Toolkit." <https://bit.ly/2FPVMqt>. Accessed on 5 June 2019.

## 4.0 Social Media Plan Template Guidance

This step builds upon guidance and key considerations from “How to Start Social Media Planning (Section 1.0),” “How to Develop a Social Media Content Strategy (Section 2.0),” and “How to Start Implementing Social Media (Section 3.0)” to help users create a comprehensive plan supporting social media use in emergency management and public safety operations. This section provides users with instructions on completing the Social Media Plan Template (Section 5.0). **Not all components of this template may be applicable to each organization, and users are encouraged to download, complete, and/or modify this template in ways that suit their organization’s needs.**

### 4.1 Introduction

Similar to the [Social Media Business Case](#), the Introduction section of the Social Media Plan should explain the importance of having a social media presence. A social media presence will enhance the organization's brand, increase overall engagement with citizens on a daily basis, and support the effectiveness of emergency operations. The introduction should briefly outline the plan's purpose and scope to ensure a shared understanding of the document across the organization.

### 4.2 Social Media Team Information

The Social Media Team Information Section of the Social Media Plan Template should outline the designated team members who are responsible for implementing the Social Media Plan. Additionally, these individuals may be responsible for managing specific accounts for each platform. Guidance in “Form a Social Media Planning Team” (Section 1.2) directly informs the completion of the Social Media Team Information section in the template. An example is included below for reference.

Team Member Name	Team Member Role	Professional Social Media Handles (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc.)	Email Address	Phone Number
Personnel Name	Role on the team	(Facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc.)	JaneSmith@xxx.gov	(111)111-1111

### 4.3 Objectives

Defining strong, S.M.A.R.T objectives is key to ensuring an organization can track progress on social media initiatives. Refer to “Define Your Organization’s Objectives” (Section 1.3) and Evaluating Post Success (Section 2.4) for examples and guidance on establishing measurable, short-term and long-term social media objectives. An example is included below for reference.

Objective One	Use Twitter to increase interactions with those in my jurisdiction on Twitter by 10 percent by quarter four
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## 4.4 Platforms and Audience

Clearly outlining available platforms and their respective, target audiences will ensure an organization is prepared in the long term. For additional guidance, reference “Determine Audiences and Platforms” (Section 1.4). An example is included below.

Platform	Platform Description	Audience Demographics
Twitter	Twitter is a microblogging social network that enables two-way interactions with citizens through sharing short messages of up to 280 characters called “Tweets.” Twitter tools like #hashtags and retweets allow public safety users the opportunity to quickly amplify messages and increase situational awareness before, during, or after an emergency	Residents in my community on twitter are 60 percent women and between the age range of 18 – 40.

## 4.5 Content Strategy

Outlining a content strategy is essential to building your organization’s brand, voice, and style. This section should clearly describe how your organization will incorporate tactics such as those listed in “Characteristics of Effective Content Strategies” (Section 2.1) into a comprehensive content strategy. An example is included below for reference.

Platform	Platform Best Practices	Posting Frequency
Twitter	Highlight important posts by pinning them to the top of your page timeline.	Three posts per day

## 4.6 Social Media Metrics

The metrics section of the Social Media Plan Template should clearly demonstrate how social media posts and engagements with the public will be measured. Metrics are essential components of strong social media analytics reports, which an organization’s leadership may require. “Evaluating Post Success” (Section 2.4) directly informs how to complete the metrics section of this template.

Platform	Metric	Definition of Metric	Measurement Guidance
Facebook	Reach	The number of unique people who saw your post	The reach of Facebook posts will be measured using Hootsuite features and reported to leadership on a monthly basis.



## 4.7 Social Media Account Management Guidelines

The Social Media Account Management Tools section of the template outlines the different tools your organization will use to support tasks such as monitoring, scheduling, publishing, and analyzing across all social media platforms. “Evaluating Post Success (Section 2.4) lists common account management tools identified by practitioners and directly informs completion of this portion of the template.

Tool	Description	Price	Account Username	Account Password
Sprout Social	A dashboard for users to organize, schedule, publish, and analyze content across platforms.	Professional Plan: \$150/month	XXX	XXX

Platform	Account Username	Account Password
Facebook	XXX	XXX

### Procedure A: Account Audit Guidelines

The Account Audit Guidelines section should outline key consideration questions or directions for team members on how and when to conduct an audit of social media platforms. It is important to consider that the resulting analysis from a social media audit could lead to the addition or deactivation of social media accounts, referenced below. Guidance in “Social Media Account Management Procedures” (Section 3.2) directly informs the completion of the Account Audit Guidelines section in the template.

### Procedure B: New Account Guidelines

The New Account Guidelines section should outline key considerations or directions for team members on when it is appropriate to introduce a new social media account. To avoid redundancy in content and overwhelming the social media team, it is important to consider what the new account or platform will offer in accomplishing social media objectives or goals. Guidance in “Social Media Account Management Procedures” (Section 3.2) directly informs the completion of the New Account Guidelines section in the template.

### Procedure C: Account Deactivation Guidelines

The Account Deactivation Guidelines section should outline key questions or directions for team members on when it is appropriate to deactivate a social media account. Guidance in “Social Media Account Management Procedures” (Section 3.2) directly informs the completion of the Account Deactivation Guidelines section in the template.

### Procedure D: Records Retention Guidelines

The Records Retention Guidelines section should outline key questions or procedures for how the organization handles tasks such as archiving social media content or public records

requests. Guidance in “Social Media Account Management Procedures” (Section 3.2) directly informs the completion of the Records Retention Guidelines section in the template.

#### Procedure E: Comment Guidelines

The Comment Guidelines section should inform the public and the employees of an organization about an organization’s social media comment policy. This is an essential step to aligning an organization’s expectations with that of their social media users. Guidance in “Social Media Use Policies and Guidelines” (Section 3.3) directly informs the completion of the Comment Policy section in the template.

#### Procedure F: Security Guidelines

The Security Guidelines section should be set up before an issue occurs to ensure an organization’s information – and that of the people who use the accounts – is inaccessible to outside sources. Guidance in “Social Media Use Policies and Guidelines” (Section 3.3) directly informs the completion of the Security Policy section in the template.

#### Procedure G: Employee Personal Social Media Account Guidelines

The Employee Personal Social Media Account Guidelines section should provide employees with guidelines on how to use social media on personal accounts to help mitigate risks and establish a positive brand image, as well as protect confidential information. Guidance in “Social Media Use Policies and Guidelines” (Section 3.3) directly informs the completion of the Employee Personal Social Media Account Guidance section in the template.

#### Procedure H: Accessibility Guidelines

The Accessibility Guidelines section should outline how social media content must be accessible to all populations. All guidelines should be compliant with the ADA. Guidance in “Social Media Use Policies and Guidelines” (Section 3.3) directly informs the completion of the Accessibility section in the template.

# Social Media Plan Template

[Organization]  
[Date Prepared]

## Introduction

In one paragraph, highlight the importance of a social media presence (e.g., brand awareness, citizen engagement, internal and external communications) and the need for a comprehensive plan to support SMEM operations.

In one paragraph, outline the purpose and scope of the Social Media Plan.

## Social Media Team Information

The following table outlines designated staff members who will support the implementation of [Organization]'s Social Media Plan and the management of [Organization]'s social media platforms.

Team Member Name	Team Member Role	Personal and or Professional Social Media Handles	Email Address	Phone Number
Personnel Name	Role on the team	(Facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc.)	<a href="mailto:JaneDoe@xxx.gov">JaneDoe@xxx.gov</a>	(111)111-1111

## Objectives

The following table highlights [Organization or Team]'s SMEM objectives, which align with the [Organization]'s larger strategy. These objectives will serve as benchmarks to measure progress.

Objective One	Outline both long-term and short-term SMEM objectives.
Objective Two	
Objective Three	

## Platforms and Audience

The following table highlights [Organization or Team] platforms in use and audiences per each platform. Identifying specific platforms and audiences helps inform a targeted content strategy.

Platform	Audience
Facebook	Insert the key demographic attributes of the target audience to reach through this platform to achieve your objective

## Content Strategy

Outlined below are [X Organization]’s content strategy guidelines to help staff members maintain a consistent brand and tone for the organization across all platforms.

Platform	Platform Best Practices	Posting Frequency
Insert platform such as Twitter or Facebook	Outline best practices to keep in mind when creating and sharing content for each platform	Insert post frequency

## Content Repository

In the space provided, include example language or screenshots of typical content to be shared on each platform

## Social Media Metrics

Outlined below are the metrics that [X Organization] will use to evaluate the success of social media posts and engagement.

Platform	Metric	Definition of Metric	Measurement Guidance
Insert platform name	Insert name of metric	Insert definition of metric	Include any guidance on how the metric will be measured (i.e., any calculations, frequency)

## Social Media Account Management Guidelines

Outlined below are the tools the [X Organization] will use to manage posting across all social media platforms.

Tool	Description	Price
Insert tool such as Sprout Social or HubSpot	Include description and benefits of the tool	Include the price of the tool per month or per year

Platform	Account Username	Account Password
Insert Platform	Insert Account Username	Insert Account Password

### Procedure A: Account Audit Guidelines

[X Organization] will conduct a social media audit on an [annual, bi-annual] basis. The team will use the following process:

1. [Outline key consideration questions or directions for team members on how and when to conduct an audit of social media platforms].
- 2.

### Procedure B: New Account Guidelines

The following section lists [X Organization]’s guidelines for creating a new social media account.

1. [Outline key consideration questions or directions for team members on how and when to create a new social media account for the organization].
- 2.

### Procedure C: Account Deactivation Guidelines

The following section lists the Social Media Comment Policy or Community Guidelines for [X Organization]’s employees and the public engaging with their social media accounts.

1. [Outline key consideration questions or directions for team members on how and when to deactivate a social media account].
- 2.

## Procedure D: Records Retention Guidelines

The following section lists [X Organization]'s guidelines for retaining records of social media posts and engagements with other users.

1. [Outline key consideration questions or directions for team members on following the organization's policy retaining records of social media content and engagements].
- 2.

## Procedure E: Comment Guidelines

The following section lists [X Organization]'s Social Media Comment Policy or Community Guidelines applicable to all staff members and community members who choose to engage with the organization on social media.

1. [Outline key consideration questions or directions for team members on how to engage with citizen comments on social media platforms].
- 2.

## Procedure F: Security Guidelines

The following section lists [X Organization]'s security policy for social media accounts.

1. [Outline key consideration questions or directions for team members on how to ensure social media account information is always secure].
- 2.

## Procedure G: Employee Personal Social Media Account Guidelines

The following section lists [X Organization]'s guidelines and expectations for staff members on use of personal social media accounts.

1. [Outline key consideration questions or directions for team members on the policy for employee use of personal social media accounts].
- 2.

## Procedure H: Accessibility Guidelines

The following section lists accessibility guidelines for [X Organization]'s staff members to keep in mind when creating social media content for different platforms.

1. [Outline key consideration questions or directions for team members on how to create accessible content for all social media platforms].
- 2.