

Ohio Arts Council - Social Media Policy

Mission and Purpose

The Ohio Arts Council (OAC), a government agency of the State of Ohio, realizes the advantages of the internet and social media to share information with the public. As with all technologies, there are benefits and challenges with using these platforms.

The purpose of this policy is to help OAC board members, employees, and contract workers use social media professionally to support the agency and its mission; this policy discusses use in respect to employment or contract work with the OAC, not personal use. For instance, this policy applies if you (i) present yourself as an employee or representative of the OAC; (ii) post about OAC grants, programs, activities, services, products, or grantees; or (iii) discuss or connect with others (e.g., artists, legislators, etc.) about the OAC and the ambit of OAC activities. Failure to comply with the social media policy may subject OAC employees to disciplinary actions pursuant to the [OAC Staff Handbook](#) (Section VI: Disciplinary Policy), and may subject contract workers to termination of services pursuant to their respective contracts.

The OAC expects all full-time employees and contract workers who are designated by the executive director or operations and public affairs director to contribute to social media on the agency's behalf to understand and follow this policy. This policy is not intended to be all-encompassing. As technologies change, the application of this policy will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

Social media is a means of communication and it should be used appropriately for those who act on behalf of that agency.

All official presences on social media sites are considered an extension of the State's information networks and are governed by [State of Ohio Use of Internet, E-Mail, and Other IT Resources \(IT-04\)](#) and [public records laws](#). Staff members must know that there is no expectation of privacy when utilizing any type of social media on the agency's behalf. Social media activity conducted on State-owned computers and/or mobile devices will be subject to the same monitoring guidelines as all other internet usage.

Agency use shall conform to all current statutes, rules, orders and policies regarding the use of State IT resources, including, but not limited to, [DAS Policy 700-01](#) (Information Technology Resource Usage), [DAS State of Ohio Information Technology Policies numbered IT-01 through IT-15](#), and the [OAC Staff Handbook](#).

Social media has the potential to create a significant impact on audience engagement, as well as organizational and professional reputations. OAC board members, employees, and contractors who create or maintain personal social media accounts should exercise care to avoid any suggestion that they are endorsed by, acting on behalf of, or expressing the views of the agency, although interacting with posts is encouraged. For example, adding the following disclaimer to a personal social media

account may reduce confusion: “Any views expressed on this account are my own and not those of the Ohio Arts Council.”

Social Media Representatives

The communications strategist serves as the chief social media representative, develops and utilizes a strategic process for selecting social media platforms, incorporates social media into communications plans, develops plans for when to release and retire content, and monitors user comments. The communications strategist shall serve as an account administrator, and if possible, at least one other OAC employee as back up to ensure continuity. OAC employees who leave the agency shall have their administrative permissions promptly removed upon exiting agency service. Account administrators are responsible for managing and overseeing the content of social media accounts.

The following OAC employees and contract workers are explicitly authorized to speak on behalf of the OAC on social media:

- Executive director
- Operations and public affairs director
- Communications strategist
- Social media and special events fellow

Board members who share or comment on OAC posts or discuss the OAC on social media should be careful to make explicit that they are communicating as a private citizen, not on behalf of the OAC or in their capacity as an OAC board member or public official.

General Use

Use OAC branding. It is critical that all OAC-related social media platforms keep a consistent look and feel compliant with the [OAC Brand Guidelines](#). Sites must include appropriate visuals (logos, images, etc.) and be authorized by the communications strategist. If you have specific questions, please contact the operations and public affairs director.

Use Your State of Ohio email addresses and strong passwords. State email addresses should be used to confirm to users that the content provided is official. Personal email accounts should not be used for official state agency communications through social media platforms. Strong passwords (letters, numbers, etc.) will reduce possible security breaches. Some social media platforms (e.g., Facebook) require personal accounts to be tied to agency accounts, which is allowable on a limited basis in adherence with this policy.

Do not misrepresent the agency. Only employees who are authorized to speak on behalf of the OAC should do so. Concealing or misrepresenting one’s name or affiliation to mask unauthorized, fraudulent, irresponsible, or offensive behavior in electronic communications is strictly prohibited.

Do not violate confidentiality rules. Know what information can be shared with the public. Do not violate the state or agency’s privacy, confidentiality, or legal guidelines. Never comment on anything

related to legal matters, litigation, or any parties the state may be in litigation with, without appropriate approval.

Respect intellectual property. Protect the OAC’s intellectual property rights and those of third parties. Ensure that the OAC has permission to use trademarks, logos, photos, videos, graphics, images, and other content before posting them on a social media platform, and follow the branding guidelines.

Appropriate Content Statement & Disclosure

All content represents the State of Ohio and the OAC. Unacceptable usage of social media platforms includes content which violates—or supports and encourages the violation of—local, state, and federal law. Content which solicits money for or supports political causes is strictly prohibited. All content must be factual, credible, professional, and useful.

The OAC does not control, and is not responsible for, content posted by external users (e.g., the public) to any agency social media account. Such content may only be hidden, deleted, removed, or blocked by the communications strategist in accordance with this policy. Although the agency does not necessarily review content posted to social media sites by external users, it retains the right to do so, and should do so as part of its regular customer service.

Use the guidelines below to manage the appropriateness of social media content. The OAC reserves the right to hide, delete, or block content including but not limited to the following types:

- Vulgar or offensive language
- Content (or a user) that promotes, fosters, or perpetuates discrimination on the basis of race, creed, color, age, religion, gender, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, national origin, physical or mental disability, genetic testing, or sexual orientation
- Spam
- Content that advocates illegal activity
- Promotion of particular goods and services
- Content which supports or opposes political campaigns or ballot measures
- Infringement upon copyrights or trademarks
- Information that may compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems

Appendix: Rules of Thumb to Execute Social Media Policy

Social media is highly accessible and interactive. For social media platforms to remain relevant, content must stay current. Social media participation requires a significant commitment to ensure effective and sustained engagement.

Messaging

- **Use common sense.** Do not post any content that would not be appropriate in other forms of media or electronic communication. Apply the same rules to social media as applied to traditional forms of communications, such as emails, media releases, and websites.
- **Be credible, accurate, and truthful.** Before posting content or responding to comments, ensure that the information or response is accurate. Accuracy is critical because content on social media platforms is extremely visible and can be replicated in multiple locations within minutes.
- **Correct misinformation.** It is important that the agency corrects misinformation disseminated by employees or external users. OAC employees should identify themselves and correct mistakes with respect and factual information.
- **Be considerate.** Ensure that all communication is professional, respectful, and factual. Remember that all content represents the OAC.
- **Avoid advertisements, sponsorships, and endorsements.** Do not advertise, endorse, or make sponsorships on social media platforms unless related to promotion of the OAC or arts events deemed appropriate by the communications strategist.
- **Answer questions.** Whether someone asks a question directly on the Facebook page or mentions the agency in a question on Twitter, it is the OAC's responsibility to provide a timely, accurate answer, where and when appropriate. Social media often serves as an extension of agency's customer service

Social Media Managers Should:

- Address issues only within the scope of their specific authorization and unless prohibited by statute or policy, use the agency brand to post or otherwise identify themselves as state employees and provide public contact information. If you are not sure how to identify yourself, please reach out to OAC operations and public affairs director.
- Create profiles and related content that is professional, appropriate to the public trust associated with one's position, and conforms to existing standards. Remember you are representing the State of Ohio.
- Respect brand, trademark, copyright, fair use, disclosure of processes and methodologies, confidentiality, and financial disclosure laws.
- Review and understand security documentation and understand how to implement privacy settings offered by the social media site.
- Pause and think before posting; reply to comments in a timely manner, when a response is appropriate.
- Be aware of the security implications of using the same log-on credentials for state computer systems as they use on social media sites.
- Be aware of the potential perception of lobbying elected officials or members of the legislature through the use of social media as a state employee.

Social Media Managers Should Not:

- Post or release proprietary, confidential, sensitive, personally identifiable information (PII), or other state government intellectual property on social media sites.
- Speak on social media or other online forums on behalf of an agency, unless authorized by the agency executive director.
- Speak on behalf of the state unless authorized by the governor.
- Mix their personal and professional information. Never.
- Utilize tools or techniques to spoof, masquerade, or assume any identity or credentials except for legitimate law enforcement or public safety purposes.
- Use off-topic, vulgar, denigrating or abusive language, or offensive terms targeting individuals or groups, or engage in personal attacks of any kind.
- Endorse commercial products, services, political parties, political candidates, groups, or entities when representing the OAC.
- Violate the state's privacy, confidentiality, or any applicable legal guidelines for external communication.
- Comment on anything related to legal matters, litigation, or any parties the State may be in litigation with without the appropriate approval; or publish or report on conversations that are meant to be pre-decisional, private, or internal to the state without permission.
- Allow use of social media applications to interfere with their primary duties, with the exception that use of social media applications may be a position's primary duty.

Other Rules of Thumb:

- Published content is persistent in the public domain. Assume your communications are in the public domain, available for publishing or discussion in all forms of media.
 - Personal thoughts, even in clearly personal venues, may be misunderstood as expressing official agency and/or state positions. Be aware that your comments will be read by those outside of state government.
 - If identifying yourself as a state employee, you are creating perceptions about yourself, your expertise, your colleagues, and the State of Ohio. Ensure that content associated with you is consistent with your work and with the state's values and professional standards.
 - If you are about to publish something that makes you even the slightest bit uncomfortable, do not post the statement.
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