



DRAFT

Framework and Guidelines for the Use of Social Media Platforms in Government Establishments

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**NATIONAL INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT
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Definitions

- I. **Social Media** includes any web or mobile-based platform that enables an individual or government establishments to communicate interactively.
- II. **Social media Platform** means a web or mobile-based technology use for developing, deploying and managing social media solutions and services.
- III. **Social Media Account** means an established relationship that binds an entity (individual or government establishment) and a social media platform. The relationship allows the user of the social media account to have access to the type of social media services provided by the social media platform through a legal agreement.
- IV. **Government Establishment** means any organization established or owned by the Federal, State or Local governments in Nigeria.
- V. **MDA** means Ministries, Departments, Extra-Ministerial Departments and Agencies of Government at Federal, State and Area Council levels

Part One

1.0 Introduction

The rapid development of information and communication technologies (ICTs) has offered government new opportunities for greater outreach to citizens. The advent of social media is transforming the way in which people connect with each other and the manner in which information is shared and distributed. The technology powering the social media is Web 2.0. Web 2.0 encourages participation, collaboration, and information sharing. It is characterized as participatory, pervasive and integrated. Social media has become a crucial part of how we interact with one another. It is a global phenomenon and governments are starting to take serious notice and incorporating social media into their plans. This provides an opportunity for two-way communication between government and citizens, partners and other stakeholders thereby increasing the frequency and speed of engagement.

Given its potential of giving voice to all and 24/7 engagement characteristics, Social Media offers a unique opportunity to governments to engage effectively with their stakeholders especially citizens in real time. Many governments across the world including Nigerian government are using various social media platforms to reach out to citizens, businesses and experts to seek inputs into policy making, rulemaking process; get feedback on service delivery; create community-based and sustainable development programmes etc. Precisely, social media can help governments at all levels, among other benefits, to enhance their outreach; maximize awareness and manage perception; improve service delivery and citizens' experience; build trust and promote transparency as well as to facilitate real time engagement. It comes in different forms

Effective usage of Social Media Platforms by Nigerian governments could enhance the country's political, economic and social development considering the huge numbers of Nigerians using the internet and by extension social media platforms. In August 2016, Nigeria internet users were put at about 94 Million. Statistics have also shown that Facebook has 16 Million users in Nigeria as at 2016. Thus, using these platforms by the governments to reach out to the stakeholders could be very effective. Social media is becoming a critical tool for sustaining democracy, building an information society, knowledge-based/digital economy and to achieving sustainable development goals (SGDs).

However, realizing these objectives requires planning, political will, practical social media usage guides and policies. Many anxieties still remain including, but not limited to issues related to technologies and platforms to be used for communication; scope of engagement, communication strategy and compliance; compliance with organizational rules and regulations; security and privacy etc.

In order to encourage and enable government organizations to make use of this dynamic medium of interaction, a Framework and Guidelines for use of Social Media by Government establishments in Nigeria has been formulated. In addition, because social media blur the lines between personal voice and institutional voice, it is important a guideline be issued to

spell out the dos and don'ts when the medium is being used to disseminate information by government establishments.

1.0.1 Authority

In exercise of the powers conferred on it by section 6 of the National Information Technology Development Agency Act of 2007, NITDA hereby issues the following governments' framework and guidelines for the use of Social Media platforms in Nigeria. NITDA shall exercise the power to institute a sustainable implementation and compliance framework for the guidelines.

1.0.3 Purpose

The purpose of these guidelines is to make government establishments and their staff aware of how to manage the risks associated with the use of social media technology. The framework and guidelines are aimed at guiding the use of social media within the Nigerian governments' communications environment, in order to improve government transparency, participation and interaction with the public. This document and the contents therein shall form part of the ICT policy of all MDAs.

In addition, the guidelines will help government organizations to create and implement their own strategies for the use of social media.

The intention of developing these guidelines is to specify:

- i. general overview, potential benefits, and risks associated with social media usage in the Nigerian governments;
- ii. standard responsibilities for government establishments and employees while engaging in social media activities; and
- iii. best-practice in using social media

1.0.3 Scope

The framework and guidelines provide standard and operating procedure for using social media in government establishments. They are applied to all government establishments at all levels.

1.0.4 Audience

The Framework and Guidelines have been developed for all government establishments (Federal, State and Local Governments) to help them conceptualize and evolve their Social Media strategy and usage.

1.0.5 Review and Amendment

NITDA, in consultation with stakeholders, shall amend or review these guidelines periodically to reflect the reality of time and trends.

1.3 Principle

NITDA has developed these guidelines to ensure the following guiding principles are observed in public sector when social media are used by any government establishments.

- I. Transparency
- II. Accountability
- III. Easy of doing business
- IV. Participatory Governance
- V. Strengthening of Democracy

Part Two

2.0 Governments' Social Media Implementation Framework

The framework for social media for Nigerian governments is created to enable governments establishments to use social media platforms more effectively in reaching out to their stakeholders. This will enable them to understand their concerns and hear their voices. The Framework is made up of the following 11 elements:

- i. Policy
- ii. Objective
- iii. Target Audience
- iv. Governance Structure
- v. Communication Strategy
- vi. Risk
- vii. Implementation
- viii. Institutionalize Social Media
- ix. Success Criteria and Key Performance Indicator
- x. Engagement Monitoring & Analysis
- xi. Evaluation

2.1 Social Media Policy by MDAs

MDAs shall develop and implement a social media policy within six months of the coming into force of these guidelines. Such a policy shall either be an independent document or be part of the ICT Policy of the MDA

2.2 Define Objective

Every MDA shall define their social media usage objectives. These objectives shall include to:

- I. disseminate information;
- II. undertake public engagement for a meaningful public participation in formulation of public policy;
- III. create awareness and sensitize the public on government policies and programs; and
- IV. obtain feedback from citizens.

2.3 Identify Target Audience

The social media policy document or sub section of an ICT policy of an MDA shall clearly specify and delineate the target audience.

2.4 Choosing Platforms

it is advisable to choose platforms will best suit the organization's social media needs. Whichever platform is chosen, it's important to understand the platforms your target

audience use. You can use a multi-platform strategy to reach as many stakeholders as possible. Social media platform can be developed by the organizations themselves.

2.5 Governance Structure

Considering the nature of social media with their “viral” (news spreads exponentially) and “almost immediate response” characteristics; the official pages and profiles of the organizations must reflect the official position. Therefore, some measures of control must be observed in the way accounts are created, information is disseminated to the public and the way responses are handled.

Some of the critical aspects of governance structure are:

2.5.1 Human Capital

The Social Media Unit of an MDA shall be headed and staffed by well trained, professionals in Public Relations and Communications with requisite experience in social media management

2.5.2 Account Governance

The following are some of the aspects of account governance that needs to be managed effectively.

a). Account Creation: A social media account establishes the organization’s online identity. A standard naming convention should be agreed and followed when a social media is to be created. If possible, the same name for different social media accounts may be adopted to ensure ease of search and consistency of identity.

b). Login and Password: To open a social media account, each new account requires a URL, username and/or email address and a password. A proper record of login IDs and passwords must be maintained. This is critical as multiple people may be authorized to post on behalf of the organization.

c). Account usage/ information presentation: It is important to determine how the engagement is going to be undertaken. This determines who publishes or posts what on behalf of the organization; how each piece of information is published and in what capacity (personal or official) responses are disseminated.

d). Account Update/Response: This determines how often the pages/information is updated and how often posts/comments are responded to. It is important to determine the scope of response and response time. There are some Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) in which fixed response format may be applied.

2.5.3 Content Governance

The type and nature of contents to be published on social media are critical and speak volume of the organization. Interesting and engaging content that draws positive attention is critical to the successful use of social media. Messages that inform and invite comment should be prepared as part of the general communication strategy. The tone of the contents

must be professional and consistent. Who should generate contents, what type of contents and approval process should be established? Therefore, the following aspects should be observed:

a). Content generation & publishing: Government organizations must establish a process for contents creation and publishing. The process can transform into content policy. Consistent contents are expected to be shared on all social media platforms.

b). Contents Archiving & Management: It is important to make provision for archiving of all the contents that are going to the organization's social media platforms. The contents should be organized as well. This is to ensure prompt response to the query on previous contents published.

2.3.3 Resource Governance

Engaging through social media is resource intensive exercise. Resource plan should be developed from the onset.

a). Resources allocation: A dedicated team could be formed to manage engagement or outsource to the third party. The team should be reoriented and trained since social media engagement requires special skill sets to keep abreast of fast-paced developments using these media platforms. Also, ICT requirements for specific platforms should be identified and properly managed.

b). Roles & Responsibility: To ensure effectiveness and accountability in the management of social media engagements; the roles and responsibilities of each member of the team responsible for creating, managing and responding on social media platforms must be clearly defined.

c). Resource Maintenance: The strategy for the use and maintenance of necessary technological resources should be developed.

2.3.4 Legal Provisions & Policies

Relevant legal provisions and regulations should be observed when using social media platforms. E.g. Cyber Crime Act, 2015, copyright laws etc.

2.6 Communication Strategy

The Communication strategy should be developed to streamline information flow within and outside the organization. It will also specify how often the social media sites will be updated and responses are handled; who is responsible for updates and responses. In addition, the strategy should specify how social media would be integrated into the existing communication and ICT infrastructure of the organization.

2.7 Risk

Every project has its risks, same with social media projects. Social media sites make it very easy to share information with others. In as much as they are convenient, they are also associated with a lot of risks. The official use of social media has the potential to

compromise compliance with legislation, particularly in regard to accessibility, privacy and recordkeeping.

Content contributed by anyone may infringe upon the rights of others in areas such as defamation, intellectual property and fraud. The risk to consider are:

- i. **Misrepresentation and misinterpretation:** information and views can be spread very quickly and widely through online media and can easily be subject to misinterpretation and misrepresentation.
- ii. **Lack of control:** once an online material is made public there is little control or influence over how it might be used or modified or integrated ('mashed').
- iii. **Resourcing:** establishing, contributing to and moderating social media sites takes expertise, time and resources.
- iv. **Privacy:** there is no guarantee that privacy can be protected.
- v. **Security:** high traffic sites/accounts may pose a greater risk for 'malware' or 'spyware'. Accounts can also be compromised.
- vi. **Bandwidth:** some social media requires higher levels of bandwidth.

An appropriate risk management strategy should be developed by each government establishment.

2.8 Implementation

It is always advisable to start a social media implementation with a pilot project since social media are relatively new forms of communication. Its effectiveness can be tested using a pilot project. All aspects of the framework should be considered when implementing the pilot project but tailored and tied to organizational mission.

2.9 Institutionalize Social Media

Institutionalizing social media is critical to its sustainability within the organization. It ensures that social media is linked to the existing administrative and communication structure. Government establishment should set up mechanisms to institutionalize social media within their structure.

2.10 Success Criteria and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

Success criteria and KPI are critical to the success of a media campaign. Ensure the KPIs directly measure the goals and objectives you set out to achieve. For instance:

- i. the number of likes or page views etc. are good indicators of awareness;
- ii. the number of comments could be a good gauge of participation in initiatives to gather feedback
- iii. the number of fans and positive comments are possible signs of strong support

2.11 Engagement Monitoring and Analysis

Social media monitoring and analysis must be an essential part of any social media strategy because its data is different from other data or information. Organizations have no control over its dissemination on the Web. There a lot of Social Network Monitoring & Analysis (SNA) Software. Many social media monitoring platforms offer demographic information such as age and location. This information can be used to expand platform reach by creating

a geo-targeted campaign focused on areas that generate the most traffic to social media sites.

Other analysis can be done by the organizations to make informed decisions.

2.12 Evaluation and Capacity Building

Ongoing evaluation should be part of the organizations' social media strategy. A timeline should be set for when the evaluation is conducted for the social media project success using the set objectives.

NITDA shall from time to time issue guidance notices, conduct service-wide usage reviews and evaluation, and institutional capacity building programs to enhance the use and management of social media for government communication.

Part Three

3.0 Guidelines for Official Use of Social Media

All government establishments, in using social media, shall:

- i. Obey relevant laws, policies and regulations related to the use of ICT in the cyberspace;
- ii. Maintain high standard of professional conduct and behavior online;
- iii. Establish authority to vet information being posted online;
- iv. Establish protocols in relation to who is authorized to respond to media inquiries or political inquiries received via social media;
- v. Ensure only authorized spokespeople or duly delegated officials provide comment to the media on government-related issues.

Government official, in using social media, shall:

- i. Not use personal social media accounts for official engagement;
- ii. Not publish personal opinions on official social media accounts;
- iii. Keep his/her postings legal, ethical and respectful;
- iv. Respect copyright laws;
- v. Ensure his/her comments are apolitical, impartial and professional;
- vi. Require permission from the authority before posting anything online which could be interpreted as an official statement or commitment;
- vii. Represent the Government professionally and be sure that what he/she publishes is consistent with relevant policies, standards, executive orders, circulars related to the mandates of its organization;
- viii. Not disclose information, make commitments or engage in activities on behalf of Government online unless he/she is authorized to do so;
- ix. Not engage in harassment, bullying, illegal or otherwise inappropriate activity while using official social media account;
- x. Not divulge confidential information or post what represents "official view" unless authorized to do so; and
- xi. Observe and respect the code of conduct for public servants and public service rule when using private social media account in a private capacity on public discussion.

Part four

4.0 Conclusion

Social Media presents a great opportunity for governments to reach out to the citizen and help them carry out their functions in a more collaborative manner than ever before. However, its implementation in government comes with unique challenges. The framework and guidelines in this document have been formulated to help government establishments make use of social media platforms to effectively and meaningfully engage with their various stakeholders.

To utilize the social media platforms meaningfully and ensure they meet the objectives with which they have been set up, government establishments are expected to respect the guidelines and follow the framework outlined in this document. In that way, the platforms can be used to improve access to and exchange of information and data between government to government and government to citizen, thus enhance the country's social, economic and political development.

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6.0 Appendix

Social Media Characteristics

Social Media share most or all of the following characteristics:

a). Participation

Social media encourages contributions and feedback from everyone who is interested. It blurs the line between media and audience.

b). Openness

Most social media services are open to feedback and participation. They encourage voting, comments and the sharing of information. There are rarely any barriers to accessing and making use of content – password-protected content is frowned on.

c). Conversation

Whereas traditional media is about “broadcast” (content transmitted or distributed to an audience) while social media is better seen as a two-way communication.

d). Community

Social media allows communities to form quickly and communicate effectively. Communities share common interests, such as a love of photography, a political issue or a favorite TV show.

e). Connectedness

Most kinds of social media thrive on their connectedness, making use of links to other sites, resources and people.

f). Collaboration

The connections achieved on social media, enable people to collaborate and create knowledge. Such collaborations can be either open or closed. Wikipedia is an example of open collaboration which enabled the creation of an open web based encyclopedia through the contribution from hundreds of thousands of people. GovLoop is an example of closed collaboration wherein experts’ groups contribute on specific policy matters.

Forms of social media

The following, though not exhaustive, are the forms in which social media are categorized.

a). Social networks

These sites allow people to build personal web pages and then connect with friends to share content and communicate. Some of the biggest social networks are Facebook and LinkedIn etc.

b). Blogs

Blogs are online journals, with entries appearing with the most recent first.

c). Wikis

These websites allow people to add content to or edit the information on them, acting as a communal document or database. The best-known wiki is Wikipedia, the online encyclopedia.

d). Forums

Areas for online discussion, often around specific topics and interests. Forums came about before the term “social media” and are a powerful and popular element of online communities.

e). Microblogging

Social networking combined with bite-sized blogging, where small amounts of content “updates” are distributed online and through the mobile phone network. Twitter is the clear leader in this field.

f). Multimedia Sharing

A website that enables users to store and share their multimedia files (photos, videos, audios, files, music etc.) with others. Youtube is a clear example of multimedia sharing site.