



FRAMEWORK AND GUIDELINES FOR THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS IN PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

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Foreword

The rapid development in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has offered government new opportunities for greater outreach to citizens. The advent of Social Media is transforming the way people connect with one another and the manner in which information is shared and distributed. The technology powering the Social Media is Web 2.0, which encourages participation, collaboration and information sharing. It is characterised 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 governance. 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 round the clock 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 the Nigerian Government use various Social Media platforms to engage citizens, businesses and experts to seek inputs into policy making, receive feedback on service delivery and to create community-based and sustainable development programmes. Precisely, Social Media can help governments at all levels, among other benefits, enhance outreach, maximize awareness, manage perception, improve service delivery and citizens' experience, build trust, promote transparency and facilitate real time engagement.

Effective usage of Social Media Platforms by Nigerian Government could enhance the country's political, economic and social development considering the huge number of Nigerians using the internet and by extension Social Media platforms. In August 2018, 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 in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

However, realising these objectives requires planning, political will, pragmatic Social Media usage guidelines and policies. Many anxieties remain, including but not limited to issues relating to technologies and platforms to be used for communication, scope of engagement, communication strategy, compliance with organizational rules and regulations, security, privacy etc.

In order to encourage and enable Public Institutions (PIs) to use this dynamic medium of interaction in a sustainable and useful manner, a Framework and Guidelines for the use of Social Media by Public Institutions in Nigeria is hereby issued. Chiefly, it is understood that Social Media may blur the lines between personal and institutional voices, therefore this Framework and Guidelines spell out the rules of operation and management of Social Media platforms when the medium is being used by Public Institutions.

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Definitions

- I. **Social Media:** any web or mobile-based platform that enables an individual or government establishments to communicate interactively.
- II. **Social Media Platform:** a web or mobile-based technology used for developing, deploying and managing Social Media solutions and services.
- III. **Social Media Account:** 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. **Public Institution (PI):** any organisation established or owned by the Federal, State or Local governments in Nigeria.
- V. **Federal Public Institution (FPI):** any of the Ministries, Departments, Extra-Ministerial Departments, Agencies, Commissions, Tertiary Institutions or other government establishments.

Part One

1.0 Preamble

1.0.1 Authority

In exercise of the powers conferred on it by Sections 6, 17, 18 and 32 of the National Information Technology Development Act of 2007, the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) hereby issues the following Framework and Guidelines for the use of Social Media Platforms in Nigeria. NITDA shall exercise the power to institute sustainable implementation and implement a compliance framework for these Guidelines.

1.0.2 Purpose

The Framework and Guidelines is aimed at providing guidance on the use of Social Media within the PIs' communications environment in order to improve government transparency, participation and interaction with the public.

1.0.3 Scope

The Framework and Guidelines shall apply to all Public Institutions. State and Local Government entities are encouraged to adopt by the provisions of the Framework and Guidelines as best practice.

1.0.4 Review and Amendment

NITDA shall amend or review these guidelines periodically to reflect the reality of time and trends.

1.0.5 Principle

This Framework and Guidelines is issued on the following principles:

- i. Transparency in the use of Social Media platforms for the promotion of openness in governance;
- ii. Accountability - Public Institutions should be accountable and responsible for every action taken on Social Media platforms;
- iii. To create enabling environment for seamless and efficient ways of doing business;

- iv. Use of Social Media to promote electioneering processes, rule of law, effective civic engagement and good governance.

Part Two

2.0 Social Media Framework

The implementation framework is created to enable government establishments use Social Media platforms more effectively in reaching out to stakeholders. The implementation framework is made up of the following elements:

- i) Policy
- ii) Objective
- iii) Target Audience
- iv) Governance Structure
- v) Communication Strategy
- vi) Risk
- vii) Implementation
- viii) Institutionalisation of Social Media
- ix) Success Criteria and Key Performance Indicators
- x) Engagement, Monitoring and Analysis
- xi) Evaluation

2.1 Social Media Policy and Strategy by MDAs

PIs are encouraged to develop and implement a Social Media policy and strategy for policy implementation within six months of the coming into force of this Framework and Guidelines. Such a policy shall either be an independent document or be part of the ICT Policy of the PI.

2.2 Define Objective

Every PI shall define their Social Media usage objectives. These objectives shall among others, include the following:

- i) dissemination of information;
- ii) public engagement for meaningful public participation in formulation of public policy;
- iii) create awareness and sensitise the public on government policies and programmes; and
- iv) obtain feedback from citizens.

2.3 Identify Target Audience

The Social Media policy document or sub section of an ICT policy of any PI shall clearly specify and delineate the target audience.

2.4 Choosing Platforms

PIs are required to choose platforms that will best suit the organisation's public engagement need or strategy. Whichever platform is chosen, it is important to understand the platforms a PI's target audience use. A multi-platform strategy can be adopted to reach as many stakeholders as possible. Alternatively, bespoke Social Media platforms can be developed by the PIs.

2.5 Governance Structure

Control measures shall be observed in the manner accounts are created, information is disseminated and the process responses are handled. PIs should observe the following:

2.5.1 Human Capital

The Social Media desk of a PI shall be manned by properly 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 need to be managed effectively:

- i) **Account creation:** A Social Media account establishes the PI'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.
- ii) **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. PIs are required to use official email(s) to open Social Media account. This is critical as multiple people may be authorised to post on behalf of the organisation.
- iii) **Account usage/information presentation:** The PI shall determine who publishes or posts, how each piece of information is

- published and in what capacity (personal or official) responses are disseminated.
- iv) **Account update/response:** The PI shall determine how often pages/information are updated and posts/comments are responded to. It is important to determine Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) in which fixed response format may be applied.
 - v) **Account handover:** PIs are required to develop and institute a Social Media account handover process whenever any of the designated Social Media handlers is leaving the organisation or desk. The handover process may entail a password(s) change.

2.5.3 Content Governance

PIs are to develop interesting and engaging content that draws positive attention in their use of Social Media. The tone of the contents must be ethical, professional, correct and consistent. The PI shall also generate contents, the type of contents and the approval process of the content to be published hence, the following aspects should be observed:

- i) **Content generation and publishing:** PIs must establish a process for contents creation and publishing. Consistent contents are expected to be shared on all Social Media platforms.
- ii) **Contents archiving and management:** All PIs shall make provision for archiving of all the contents on their Social Media platforms. The contents should be structured for easy access and retrieval.

2.5.4 Resource Governance

Every PI shall develop a resource plan for the management of Social Media platforms.

- i) **Resources allocation:** All PIs shall form a dedicated team to manage engagement or outsource to a qualified third party.
- ii) **Roles and responsibility:** The roles and responsibilities of each member of the team for creating, managing and responding on Social Media platforms must be clearly defined.
- iii) **Resource maintenance:** PIs shall develop strategy for the maintenance of the technological resources required to manage Social Media.

2.5.5 Legal Provisions and Policies

PIs shall comply with all legal and regulatory provisions in the use of Social Media.

2.6 Communication Strategy

PIs shall develop communication strategy to streamline information flow within and outside the organisation.

2.7 Risk

All PIs shall develop an appropriate risk management strategy taking into consideration the following:

- i) **Misrepresentation and misinterpretation:** Information and views can be spread very quickly and widely through online media and can easily be subject of misinterpretation and misrepresentation.
- ii) **Lack of control:** Once an online material is made public, there is little or no control over how it might be used, modified and/or mashed.
- iii) **Resourcing:** Managing Social Media sites requires 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.

2.8 Implementation

It is always advisable to start a Social Media implementation with a pilot project. All aspects of this Framework should be considered while implementing the pilot project but tailored and tied to organisational mission.

2.9 Social Media Institutionalisation

PIs are required to set up mechanisms to institutionalise Social Media within their structure.

2.10 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

PIs are required to set indicators for measuring performance for the use of Social Media platforms and ensure the KPIs directly measure the goals and objectives earlier set.

2.11 Engagement Monitoring and Analysis

PIs are to monitor and analyse all information available, created, processed, and/or stored on the Social Media for planning and decision making.

2.12 Evaluation and Capacity Building

PIs shall conduct periodic evaluation of the Social Media project. NITDA shall from time to time issue guidance notices, conduct service-wide usage reviews and evaluation, and institutional capacity building programmes to enhance the use and management of Social Media for government communication.

Part Three

3.0 Guidelines for Official Use of Social Media

3.1 All PIs, in using Social Media, shall:

- i) obey relevant laws, policies and regulations related to the use of ICT in cyberspace;
- ii) use official email(s) for Social Media account;
- iii) establish an account handover processes for Social Media handlers who leave the organisation or are moved to another desk, unit or department;
- iv) maintain high standard of professional conduct and behavior on Social Media;
- v) establish authority to vet information being posted on Social Media;
- vi) establish protocols in relation to who is authorised to respond to inquiries received via Social Media;
- vii) ensure only authorised spokespeople or duly delegated officials provide comment to the media on government-related issues.

3.2 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) respect copyright laws;
- iv) ensure postings or comments are factual, ethical, respectful, apolitical, impartial and professional;
- v) require permission from the authority before posting anything on the Social Media;
- vi) represent the PI professionally and be sure that what is published is consistent with relevant policies, standards, executive orders and circulars related to the mandates of the organisation;
- vii) not disclose information, nor make commitments or engage in activities on behalf of the PI on Social Media unless authorised to do so;
- viii) not engage in harassment, bullying, illegal or otherwise inappropriate activity while using official Social Media account;
- ix) not divulge confidential information or post what represents "official view" unless authorised to do so; and

- x) observe and respect the code of conduct for public servants and public service rules when using private Social Media account in a private capacity on public discussion.

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 as password-protected content is usually frowned upon.
- c) **Conversation** - Whereas traditional media is about "broadcast" (content transmitted or distributed to an audience), 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, Twitter, Instagram, 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. You-tube is a clear example of multimedia sharing site.

THIS INSTRUMENT WAS SIGNED THIS 25TH DAY OF JANUARY 2019

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