



**SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY**  
**2021/22**

## Summary

<b>Publication Date</b>	September 2021
<b>Related Legislation/Applicable Section of Legislation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Constitution of the Republic of South Africa</li> <li>• Local Government Municipal Structures Act 117 of 1998</li> <li>• Local Government Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000</li> <li>• Promotion of Access to Information Act 2 of 2000</li> </ul>
<b>Related Policies, Procedures, Guidelines, Standards, By-laws, Frameworks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Government Communications Policy 2015</li> <li>• National Communications Framework 2014/19</li> <li>• Government Communicators' Handbook 2014/17</li> <li>• Social Media Guidelines 2011</li> <li>• Code of Conduct (MSA)</li> <li>• Disciplinary Code of Conduct and Procedures</li> </ul>
<b>Replaces/ Repeals</b> <i>[Indicate whichever is relevant, if any]</i>	
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<b>Unit responsible</b>	Communications

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**REVISION RECORD**

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## **1. TITLE**

Social Media Policy

## **2. PURPOSE**

The purpose of this policy is to set out the framework, requirements and processes that form the basis of how the Ngqushwa Municipality will use social media to interact and engage with the general public. This policy sets out key guidelines for how to maintain a social media presence and it forms the basis for the strategy, implementation, monitoring and evaluation documents

## **3. SCOPE**

This policy covers all facets of social media with regards to the Ngqushwa Municipality's use thereof, as well as the values, responsibilities, content guidelines, employee interactions, citizen conduct and brand compliance. These are all aspects that have to be adhered to and it is the scope of this policy to define exactly what is expected from each of these key areas.

## **4. PROCEDURE DETAILS**

Social media has become an acceptable means of communication with citizens over the course of the last few years. Social media has afforded local governments the opportunity to engage with users using a personal and more direct approach, narrowing the gap between local government and communities.

As social media has become, in most cases, the chosen medium for communication, it is only natural that the Municipality take a step towards this form of communication in order to keep up with the changes in the rest of the world. This would be in order to take advantage of the free means of getting information across to the public.

By adopting social media as a form of communication it can help the Municipality to better inform, understand, respond to and attract the attention of specific audiences. It also enables interactive communication that is not possible via other platforms. Such interactivity allows for the exchange of perspectives and opinions among multiple audiences. It also allows effective and efficient communication to take place where those of Ngqushwa Municipality and its citizens keeping inline and to our promise of

a “Let us make a difference together”. Social media provides platforms that enables joint responsibility, which is dependent on Ngqushwa Municipality, its citizens, and businesses, working together. These platforms are drawn on to enhance participation and communicate responsibilities to all involved and relied on to help the Municipality to work as effectively as possible.

#### **4.1 WHY IS SOCIAL MEDIA IMPORTANT**

Social media is about communicating directly with the community: sharing Ngqushwa Municipality’s information and listening to our communities. Responsiveness, openness and mutual respect are essential at all times. The role of social media is to:

- Connect the Ngqushwa Municipality with the communities we serve in a cost-effective way that promotes good relationships.
- Strengthening local government and civil society.
- Improving service delivery.
- Improve relationships between Ngqushwa Municipality and key sectors of the community.
- Provides real time interaction.
- Promotion of the Corporate Identity.

#### **4.2 SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNT MANAGEMENT**

- Municipal Departments must submit approved content they require to be posted on social media platforms to the Municipal Communicator and/or Communication Team, which then needs to be approved and signed off by the Municipal Manager or applicable Director supervising in the event where the Municipal Manager is not available.
- The Communications Unit is responsible for ensuring that content on all social media platforms is updated and relevant at all times.
- The Municipal Communicator and/or dedicated Communications Unit is expected to respond to positive or negative developments from engagement via their social media accounts on the respective social media platforms, where and if applicable.
- The Municipal Communicator and/or Communications Unit will be responsible for the monitoring and reporting of the respective social media accounts.
- The Municipal Communicator and/or Communications Unit will be required to manage their own content on the various social media accounts with the approval thereof by the Municipal Manager

## **4.3 SOCIAL MEDIA CODE OF CONDUCT**

### **4.3.1 For Ngqushwa Municipal Employees**

- Nothing about social media changes the responsibilities and obligations of employees or contractors of the Ngqushwa Municipality.
- It does not matter if employees or contractors use a private account or access social media outside of work hours – their obligations in terms of their contract of employment, the Code of Conduct, and all other applicable policies apply to all of their conduct on social media.
- Employees or contractors of the Ngqushwa Municipality have a legal duty to act in good faith towards the Ngqushwa Municipality. They may therefore not do anything that damages or tarnishes the reputation of the Ngqushwa Municipality and must always act in its best interests of the organisation. This duty extends to their use of social media. For example, employees may not comment negatively on social media about anything associated with the Eastern Cape Government and/or the Ngqushwa Municipality.
- Everything employees do and say on social media reflects on the Ngqushwa Municipality and its reputation. In conducting themselves on social media, it is important that employees use sound judgment and common sense, act with professionalism and integrity, and adhere to the Ngqushwa Municipality's values.
- Employees who violate any terms set out in this policy may be subjected to disciplinary processes.

### **4.3.2. For Political Principals**

- Everything Councillors do and say on social media reflects on Ngqushwa Municipality and its reputation. In conducting themselves on social media, it is important that Councillors use sound judgment and common sense, act with professionalism and integrity, and adhere to the Municipality's values.
- Councillors should restrict party political messages and campaigning to their personal pages. The Ngqushwa Municipality will not share or endorse any political content on any of its social media platforms at any time.
- Councillors should also refrain from divulging administrative information via the social media platform to the general public, if the procedure is

still in the process of completion and not yet finalised. This type of information should first be clarified and verified with the Municipal Manager before it can be made public.

#### **4.4. SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AND RESOURCES**

- All employees using social media on behalf of the Municipality must undergo relevant training before gaining access to any social media accounts. It is the Ngqushwa Municipality's responsibility to provide training to such employees. Training from an accredited service provider, or in house capable person, is also acceptable, provided clear record is being kept and approval or instruction by the Municipal Manager.
- Communicators must be provided with the necessary tools in order to manage municipal social media accounts on desktop/laptop computers and mobile/smartphone. These tools include: access to social media platforms; budget and/or cell phone allowance to manage municipal social media platforms remotely (i.e. airtime and/or data to manage social media via smartphone) as the need arises and the available budget permits.

#### **4.5 CONTENT APPROVALS**

The nature of social media means that responsiveness is vital. Therefore, it is not feasible to subject every post or response to comprehensive approval processes. However it is recommended that information being uploaded and responded on must be verified, accurate and checked by the appropriate Directors, in order to ensure that the correct information reaches the public and to ensure that accountability is always being practiced by the responsible personal.

Employees responsible for updating the Ngqushwa Municipal social media accounts should be empowered to respond appropriately, and to exercise good judgment in accordance with the social media code of conduct, mentioned above.



#### **4.6. APPROPRIATE CONTENT FOR MUNICIPAL REPRESENTATIVES**

No employee or Councillor of the municipality is permitted to share the following:

- Any content that is unlawful, defamatory, racist, sexist, homophobic or insulting.
- Anything that is untrue.
- Any content that features explicit political messages or branding (for example, a councillor wearing a party political T-shirt)
- Content which is harassing, threatening, obscene, pornographic, indecent, lewd, foul language, suggestive or otherwise objectionable.
- Content that criticises individual community members, colleagues, Councillors by name.
- Content which infringes the privacy of others.
- Content that is the property of someone else, without permission to use it.
- Spam (unsolicited sales messages)

The same applies to content posted by members of the public on Municipal platforms. If any comment by a member of the public contravenes these rules, the municipality reserves the right to delete it, block the individual from its page and report the message. Comments that are critical of the Municipality or its officials should be allowed to stand, provided they do not contravene any of the rules outlined above. Accusations will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

#### **4.7 CONTENT NEUTRALITY**

- All content must not discriminate in any way and must not be seen to be biased.
- It is the Municipality's responsibility to remain impartial yet informative when communicating with the public about political matters.
- The Municipality is not to share political opinions of any office bearers on any of the department's social media platforms. However official statements made by office bearers which can be published on the Municipality's website can be shared on social media platforms.

The Municipality must not share content of a party political nature. Office bearers must use their personal accounts to publish party political statements.

#### **4.8 PERSONAL SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS**

- Where Municipal employees use social media platforms and wish to provide personal comments on platforms, they could contravene the accepted Code of Conduct and bring the public service into disrepute or be misinterpreted as being an official representative of the Ngqushwa Municipality. All employees must adhere to the Ngqushwa Municipality's Code of Conduct at all times.
- Any personal social media accounts, or accounts unrelated to the Ngqushwa Municipality, that currently exist or will be created in future, are not to be registered using a Ngqushwa Municipal e-mail address. This applies to any social media platform that requires an e-mail account to register. These accounts must make use of private e-mail addresses and contact details.
- Officials cannot use municipal-related usernames or handles when using or setting up their personal accounts, e.g. Public Servant Lisa, Mayor Phillip, Ngqushwa Municipal Worker. Umsebenzi wakwa Maspala etc.

#### **4.9 CONFIDENTIALITY**

It is critical that any information shared on the various social media platforms is not sensitive or confidential in any way. Municipal employees must refer to Internal departmental policies and guidelines on what is considered confidential information, and ensure that these policies and guidelines are enforced on social media. All information shared by any members of the Ngqushwa Municipality must be scrutinised and verified by the Municipal Manager before conveyed to the general public. The Municipal Manager must provide written approval for any media interaction regarding the Ngqushwa Municipality and its workings.

#### **4.10 USE OF DEVICES IN COUNCIL MEETINGS**

- From time to time, representatives from the media or members of the public may wish to be present in council meetings to view proceedings. Because these meetings are held to conduct council business, the public has a right to be present.
- Mobile devices with Internet access and cameras will therefore be capable of sharing information publically, in real time.
- Media or members of the public will not be prevented from tweeting, updating, photographing proceedings or taking video footage.
- In the above mentioned event, anyone who intends to share proceedings to social media platforms undertakes to inform all present of their plan to do so.

#### **4.11 PRINCIPLES TO REMEMBER AT ALL TIMES**

- If Communicators are unsure about what or how to post, they can refer to the Government Communication Framework for instance, which includes templates, how to guides and suggested content. The Ngqushwa Municipality's Communications Unit may also contact the Department of Local Government: Municipal Communication team for support.
- Nothing is private on social media platforms. If individual staff members or Councillors share something on any social media platform, even their own, they cannot claim that their privacy has been violated.
- No politics on municipal pages, including photographs of party political T-shirts and branding.
- Councillors and Employees should keep their tonality professional, while not losing the personal touch. They are people talking to the community they serve.
- Employees should obtain permission before sharing personal details. This applies to photographs as well.

- All response to public comments must be directed by the authorised personnel on the social media page of the Municipality.

#### **4.12 TRANSGRESSION**

Any action or behaviour by Councillors or members of staff, which is in conflict with this Policy, will be deemed a transgression of the Code of Conduct of Councillors or Staff members, as the case may be.

#### **4.13. MANAGEMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION**

The Communications Unit shall be ultimately responsible for the communication function of the Municipality, thereby ensuring better coordination and effective communications and that the municipality speaks with one voice. The Municipal Manager will thus be responsible for overall monitoring and ensuring that there is compliance with the Social Media Policy.

### **5. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

<b>Role</b>	<b>Authority</b>
Create, evaluate, review and adopt the Social Media Policy	Council

<p><b>Implement and enforce this policy</b></p> <p><b>Establish and control the administration necessary to fulfil this policy, and report efficiently and regularly to the Executive Mayor and the Executive Committee In this regard.</b></p> <p><b>Authority on communication issues vests with</b></p> <p><b>the Municipal Manager as the Chief Communicator of Ngqushwa Municipality.</b></p> <p><b>The Municipal Manager may delegate such authority to the Head or Department or Head of Communications. The Municipal Manager is also the Accounting Officer to Council. She is the Information Officer in terms of the Promotion of Access to Information Act (Act 2 of 2000)</b></p>	<p><b>Municipal Manager</b></p>
<p><b>Ensure that there is compliance with the Social Media policy</b></p>	<p><b>Heads of Departments (Executive Directors)</b></p>
<p><b>Ultimately responsible for the Communication function of the Municipality, thereby ensuring better coordination and effective communications and that the municipality speaks with one voice.</b></p>	<p><b>Manager: Communications</b></p>

## **6. MONITORING, EVALUATION AND REVIEW**

The Municipal Manager shall be responsible for overall monitoring, evaluation, review and ensuring that there is compliance with the Communications Policy. Council will review the policy on an annual basis.

## 7. DEFINITION OF TERMS

Account	A valid profile using a social media platform for the purpose of official social media use. Without an account one cannot create a profile.
Citizen	Any individual that resides in the country.
Citizen engagement accounts	Social media platforms used primarily for the communication and interaction with the citizens of the Western Cape. Such accounts make use of an informal and relaxed tone.
Digital Divide	An inequality between individuals, groups, socio-economic status, businesses and geographic areas in terms of access to, use of, or knowledge of information and communication technologies (ICT), in particular to computers and the Internet.
Following	The act of a person or entity gaining access to a social media platform via a particular mechanism or the permission of the account owner in order to view content that is of interest to them.
Handle	A handle is another word used to define a username on select social media platforms as chosen by someone using that specific social media platform.
Link / Hyperlink	A segment of text or a graphic that a user can click on, which takes you to different parts of a webpage or between two different websites.
Media channels	The methods used to communicate a message, including spoken words, print, radio, television, or the Internet.
Municipality	One of the Local Government entities in the Western Cape. The Municipality which you serve as an employee, consultant or councillor is the Municipality referred to in this document.

Networks	Interconnected paths of communication between various social media platforms, people, businesses and groups.
Official channels	A means of communication through which any content passes, is conveyed or disseminated, relating to an office and its administration approved by, recognized by, or issued from authority.
Online community	A group of people using social media tools as a means of sharing content and communicating with each other.
Social media platforms	The tools or mechanisms that are used to facilitate the creation and exchange of content generated for and by users.
Platform	A framework upon which tools of communication such as social media operate.
Post	This is a piece of content that is shared on a social media platform.
Posted	The act of having shared a piece of content on a social media platform.
Profile	A profile is a description a registered user or organisation inputs about themselves on a social media platform. This may include basic information about the user or organisation, a picture, a description and links.
Public space	In the context of social media this refers to areas online where the general public partakes in various forms of engagement in a personal and professional capacity.
Redirect	Webserver function that sends a user from one URL to another more often than not via a link.
Sharing	The act of passing on content to and from individuals, groups and organisations across social media platforms.

<b>Social Media</b>	A collection of interactive online platforms and tools that individuals, groups and other organisations use to share content, profiles, opinions, insights, experiences, perspectives and media itself. It allows for the creation and exchange of user generated content. Examples include Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, YouTube, Pinterest, Google+, blogs, comments facilities on third party websites, mobile and tablet apps and any other form of electronic communication to which it is possible to post messages that are visible to the public.
<b>Social Media Presence</b>	When an individual, group or organisation creates an account on any social media platform.
<b>Subscribing</b>	When an individual or organization selects to have access to an online service in order to receive up to date information.
<b>Tone</b>	This is implied by the words selected and in how the words are arranged. It is also determined by the writer's attitude and knowledge towards the subject and the reader. For example choosing to write in a formal way or using slang.
<b>Transactional engagement</b>	Two-way communication that focuses on positive working relationships in exchange for desirable rewards and where feedback is required. This is not exclusively based on the exchange of anything of monetary value.
<b>Unfollow</b>	To stop following someone's activities or remove oneself as a member of a community on a social media platform
<b>User-generated content</b>	This term is used to describe any form of content such as video, blogs, images, audio files, and other forms of media that are created by users online and is accessible to other users.



Usernames	A sequence of characters that is used as identification and is required when logging on to a computer or a social media platform.
Users	An individual or organisation that partakes in any type of engagement or information sharing on a social media platform.

## 8. SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

None

## 9. REFERENCES

None

## 10. APPENDIX

None

## 11. ADOPTION AND APPROVAL OF THE POLICY BY COUNCIL

This policy is adopted and approved by the full Ngqushwa Local Municipality Council for implementation

  
 MUNICIPAL MANAGER

22/08/2022  
 DATE

  
 MAYOR

30/08/2022  
 DATE