# Peace Corps Social Media Procedures

The Peace Corps encourages the use of social media to enhance communication, collaboration, and information exchange in support of our mission. The following procedures provide guidance to those granted permission to operate social media platforms on behalf of Peace Corps.

The Peace Corps encourages and supports its employees and Volunteers to use social media tools to communicate with the public and other customers about their mission and programs, and the Office of Communication works with offices and posts to help guide strategy and creative content.

Official social media accounts run by Peace Corps Offices and Countries are public-facing tools that promote the work of the agency, providing information to the public about Peace Corps programming, news and recruitment. Therefore, the accounts represent all Peace Corps Volunteers, staff and leadership, in addition to the United States. It is of utmost importance that all Peace Corps social media maintain the highest standards in terms of content and interactions with the public.

The use of social media technology follows the same standards of professional practice and conduct associated with everything else we do and with other forms of communication. Common sense and sound judgment will help address the most challenging issues that arise in this evolving area.

## Approval to Create and Use Official Social Media Accounts

Before beginning any social media project, employees must first be granted approval to use social media, social networking, or other Web 2.0 services or tools to directly support or enhance activities being undertaken in an official capacity. Those responsible for approving accounts are outlined in the “Responsibilities” section of MS 548.

The need for this approval is fourfold:

(1) There may already be social media efforts that accomplish the same or similar goals. It’s important for offices to track social media efforts to ensure there is no undue overlap, duplication or conflict, and to coordinate efforts across the agency.
(2) Although not every message will be synchronized, coordination and participation helps ensure that information is, when appropriate, delivered to our customers and the public in the context of unified themes or messages.
(3) A social media account must be covered under a special terms of service agreement (TOS), privacy impact assessment (PIA) and possibly a system of records notice (SORN) approved by the Peace Corps. In order for a new social

media account to be covered under a Peace Corps TOS agreement, it must be approved by the Office of Communications, in consultation with the Office of General Counsel.

(4) The Office of Communications can assist with analysis of analytics to determine what social media practices are and are not working for different accounts.

Any social networking profiles or social media presences that have not been approved through the process outlined in this policy and accompanying procedures may be terminated for failure to follow the MS 548 policy and these accompanying procedures.

## Requirements for Account Approval

*Fill out Social Media Work Plan:* A representative of the office, program or the employee that would like to launch an official social media account must make an initial request to the Digital Department in the Office of Communications. The Office of Communications will provide a Social Media work plan template. The plan must be completed to the best of the ability of the requester, taking into consideration all elements addressed in the checklist.

*Office Director approves Work Plan:* the requesting office "A" Delegate (in most cases, the office director or country director), the account manager(s) and a representative from the Office of Communications must approve the request by signing the work plan.

*Account Manager(s) attends meeting with Office of Communications representative:* Representatives from relevant offices will hold a planning meeting/webinar to discuss account launch timeline, benchmarks and required elements and practices. Required elements include, but are not limited to:

- Approved logo for account (see Social Media Account Branding)
- "About" the account and/or commenting policy pasted into appropriate place on account
- Account Manager registers account with the Federal Social Media Registry (see Inventory of Peace Corps Social Media Accounts)

*Office of Communications approves new account creation:* After meeting with the Account Manager(s) Once the Office of Communications and together reviewing the work plan and confirming the account's strategic value, the Office of Communications will approve creation of the new account.

## Training and Skills Building

The Office of Communications will offer one or more trainings on Peace Corps-specific uses of official social media. The Office of Communications will also direct Account Managers and other staff using official social media to additional trainings and resources for federal employees.

All staff managing and participating in official social media are encouraged to participate in the Peace Corps Digital Community of Practice. This community will provide opportunities to engage with the entire digital community at Peace Corps to ask questions, share ideas and build skills. Trainings and guidance will be offered in a variety of formats through the Digital Community of Practice.

### Social Media Account Branding

The Office of Communications will provide a basic branding framework, including icons and branding elements for all official Peace Corps social media accounts. This requirement includes, but is not limited to: icons, backgrounds, account names and account names/designations. Some aspects of account branding beyond the basic framework may be left to the discretion of the Account Manager.

In each official account's "About" section, official language from the agency must be included. See Appendix A at the end of this document for official language for each account. Individual official accounts may also add account-specific information to these sections.

### Inventory of Peace Corps Social Media Accounts

All official social media accounts must be registered with the Federal Social Media Registry sponsored by GSA: http://registry.usa.gov/embed/find

Once the official social media account has been established through the appropriate procedures, the Account Manager will be responsible for registering the account with the Federal Social Media Registry.

## Peace Corps Social Media Accounts Launched Before the Implementation of MS 548

Active social media accounts that were created for Peace Corps business before the implementation of the agency's social media policy, MS 548, should obtain approval to continue account operation from the Office of Communications. The Office of Communications will work with these account holders to grandfather them in and become official social media accounts.

# Appropriate Use of Social Media

## Official Use of Social Media and Social Networking

In addition to the MS 542 Rules of Behavior for General Users, the following principles should be employed when using official, public-facing social media services in an official capacity.

- Do not discuss any agency-related information that is not considered public information, such as PII, sensitive, proprietary, or classified information
- When you are representing Peace Corps in an official capacity, Peace Corps is responsible for the content you publish on blogs, wikis, social networking Web sites, or other forms of social media. Assume that any content you post may be considered in the public domain, will be available for a long period of time, and can be published or discussed in the media -- likely beyond your or Peace Corps' influence.
- Remain focused on your mission. If using social media tools to communicate with the public isn't one of your primary duties, don't let it interfere with those duties.
- Do not engage in vulgar or abusive language, personal attacks of any kind, or offensive terms targeting individuals or groups.
- Do not endorse commercial products, services, or entities.
- Do not endorse political parties, candidates, or groups.

## Non-Official/Personal Use of Social Media and Social Networking

Peace Corps employees, or those working on behalf of Peace Corps, who use social media and social networking services and tools for strictly personal use outside of the workplace do not require approval to do so. However, Peace Corps recognizes that these types of tools can sometimes blur the line between professional and personal lives and interactions. Therefore, employees are reminded that, as representatives of Peace Corps, the above rules and guidelines must be taken into consideration when participating in these services at any time, but particularly when identifying themselves as employees of Peace Corps or when context might lead to that conclusion. Any activity using Government equipment (including access to the Internet) is governed by Peace Corps guidelines on the Personal Use of Government Office Equipment.

By exercising discretion and common sense when employing social media for professional or personal purposes, you will help assure that their great potential is fully realized without inadvertently compromising our professional, legal, or ethical standards.

The following principles should be employed when using social media services in a non-official/personal capacity within Peace Corps.

- Be aware of your Peace Corps association in online social networks. If you identify yourself as a Peace Corps employee or have a public facing position for which your Peace Corps association is known to the general public, ensure your profile and related content (even if it is of a personal and not an official nature) is consistent with how you wish to present yourself as a Peace Corps professional, appropriate with the public trust associated with your position, and conform to existing standards, such as Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees of the Executive Branch. Employees should have no expectation of privacy when using social media tools.
- When in doubt, stop. Don't post until you're free of doubt. Be certain that your post would be considered protected speech for First Amendment purposes. Also, add a disclaimer to your social networking profile, personal blog, or other online presences that clearly states that the opinions or views expressed are yours alone and do not represent the views of the Peace Corps.
- In a publicly accessible forum, do not discuss any agency-related information that is not already considered public information. The discussion of sensitive, proprietary, or classified information is strictly prohibited. This rule applies even in circumstances where password or other privacy controls are implemented.
- For staff who manage an official social media account and have personal social media accounts, take extra precautions to make sure you are posting the right content from the right account. It's easy to get confused and post information meant for a personal account onto an official account.

## Appendix A: Social Media Account "About" Language

FACEBOOK (see Peace Corps' main account page here: https://www.facebook.com/peacecorps/info)

**Mission**
In 1961, President John F. Kennedy established the Peace Corps to promote world peace and friendship.

The Peace Corps' mission has three simple goals:

1. Helping the people of interested countries in meeting their need for trained men and women.

2. Helping promote a better understanding of Americans on the part of the peoples served.

3. Helping promote a better understanding of other peoples on the part of Americans.

**Description**
The Peace Corps traces its roots and mission to 1960, when then Senator John F. Kennedy challenged students at the University of Michigan to serve their country in the cause of peace by living and working in developing countries. From that inspiration grew an agency of the federal government devoted to world peace and friendship.

Since that time, 200,000+ Peace Corps Volunteers have served in 139 host countries to work on issues ranging from AIDS education to information technology and environmental preservation.

Today's Peace Corps is more vital than ever, working in emerging and essential areas such as information technology and business development, and contributing to the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief. Peace Corps Volunteers continue to help countless individuals who want to build a better life for themselves, their children, and their communities.

Visit Peace Corps on Facebook for more news and information.

**General Information**
COMMENT POLICY
Peace Corps welcomes your courteous contributions. However, please remember that you are fully responsible for the content of your comments.

To keep this page in the spirit of peace and friendship, we reserve the right to delete comments that include any of the following:

*Violent, obscene, profane, hateful, or racist comments

*Threats or defamatory statements against any person or organization

*Solicitations, advertisements, or endorsements of any financial, commercial or non-governmental entities

*Comments that suggest or encourage illegal activity

*Excessive off-topic posts by a single user

*Repetitive posts copied and pasted by multiple users

*Any other content that Peace Corps may deem inappropriate

If you have any questions or comments about this policy, please email us at webmaster @ peacecorps.gov

TWITTER

In the bio section you must include the following phrases:
Follows & RTs are not endorsements. Also follow us @PeaceCorps.

WORDPRESS BLOGS

**Community Guidelines & Policy**

The Peace Corps community is large and diverse, comprising current and returned Volunteers, their friends and family, agency staff, institutional partners and members of the international development and diplomatic communities. Blog commenters are expected to treat each other and Passport editorial staff with respect. Please remember that you are fully responsible for the content of your comments. Comments should be limited to comments related to the posted topic. The blog is not the proper place to express opinions or beliefs not directly related to the particular posted topic.

To keep Peace Corps Passport in the spirit of peace and friendship, we reserve the right to delete comments that include any of the following: Violent, obscene, profane, hateful, or racist comments; threats or defamatory statements against any person or organization; solicitations, advertisements, or endorsements of any financial, commercial or non-governmental entities; comments that suggest or encourage illegal activity; excessive off-topic posts by a single user; repetitive posts copied and pasted by multiple users; any other content that Peace Corps may deem inappropriate. The blog is not open to comments promoting or opposing any person campaigning for election to a political office, promoting or opposing any ballot proposition or advocating for partisan political actions.

This blog use policy is subject to amendment or modification at any time to ensure its continued use is consistent with its intended purpose as a limited forum.

**General Disclaimer**

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