

## **INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS, MEDIA PUBLICATIONS/CONTACTS AND SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY**

- Policy Number:** BP # 106
- Effective Date:** Approved by the **Eastern Washington State Historical Society (EWSHS)** Board of Trustees on December 8, 2015.
- Application:** Applies to all board members, employees, volunteers, and contractors of the EWSHS.
- History:** This policy replaces Policy HR # 107.
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### **Article I PURPOSE**

The EWSHS's Internal Communications, Media Publications/ Contacts and Social Media Policy is designed to: 1) foster open, transparent, timely, professional, accurate and effective internal communications between the Board of Trustees, Administration, and Staff; 2) to foster open, transparent, timely, professional, and accurate information exchanges with the media that support quality relationships; and 3) to use EWSHS Social Media, consistent with applicable rules and regulations, as a tool to support the mission of the EWSHS and as a tool to interact with the public in new and dynamic ways that facilitate interactivity, collaboration, interest and support for the EWSHS.

### **Article II INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS**

- A. **Executive Secretary and Media Relation's Specialist:** The EWSHS's Executive Secretary and Media Relation's Specialist will monitor newspapers, media outlets and magazines for important news, major achievements and issues of concern related or relevant to the EWSHS and will provide notification of such information and copies of the printed materials (newspaper and magazine articles) to Board Members, the Executive Director and relevant staff as quickly as possible. When the Executive Secretary or Media Relations Specialist learns of upcoming mentions of the EWSHS in the media, they will inform the Board, and relevant EWSHS staff via email as quickly as possible.
- B. **Executive Director:** When the EWSHS's Executive Director learns of important news, major achievements and/or issues of concern related or relevant to the EWSHS, regardless of the source, (i.e. media, Department of Enterprise Services, Office of Financial Management, affiliate institutions, Governor's Office, Legislature, Auditor's Office, EWSHS Foundation, American Indian Cultural Council, employees, etc.) the Director will provide the EWSHS Board and relevant EWSHS staff with accurate and thorough information as quickly as possible to support and ensure the ability of staff and board members to have information they need to make well informed decisions and successfully perform their responsibilities on behalf of the EWSHS. The Executive Director shall coordinate with the EWSHS Board to gain a mutual understanding of what the Board deems "important" regarding Board Communications. Generally, important matters for the Board include, but are not limited to: fiscal and budget matters;

fundraising progress; capitol campaigns; strategic matters related to programming, exhibits, and collections; administrative strategy regarding marketing, branding, and advertising; facility issues including major damage, plans to remodel and/or build; significant issues regarding staffing (significant achievements and concerns); legislative strategy and communications; and potential or pending legal matters.

- C. **Board of Trustees:** When a EWSHS Trustee learns of important news, major achievements and/or issues of concern related or relevant to the EWSHS, regardless of the source, (i.e. media, Department of Enterprise Services, Office of Financial Management, affiliate institutions, Governor's Office, Legislature, Auditor's Office, EWSHS Foundation, American Indian Cultural Council, employees, etc.) the Trustee will inform the Executive Director, Executive Secretary, and Board President as quickly as possible.

### **Article III MEDIA RELATIONS**

- A. **Communication Expectations:** The EWSHS is interested in fostering and maintaining positive relationships with reporters, editors, and journalists who represent the news media, press, magazines, and journals. These publications and the media can have a significant impact on the EWSHS and its operations. Therefore, consistently open, transparent, timely, professional, and accurate information exchanges are key to promoting relationships.

B. **Coordination of Media Contacts:**

1. **General Contacts:** Employees, the Executive Director, and Board Members will coordinate routine media contacts with the Media Relations Specialist and Executive Director including:

- a) Media inquiries
- b) Requests for interviews, background information, video or photographs
- c) Media announcements
- d) Crisis communications
- e) Online and social media communications
- f) Requests for guest columns, quotes for articles for magazines, websites, etc.

2. **Significant Contacts:**

- a) **Media Contacts Employees and Executive Director:** Media Contacts with employees or the Executive Director that involve "significant contacts" which include significant; crisis; negative publicity/press; and/or high level administrative or strategic issues regarding the EWSHS, its exhibits, collections, staffing or facilities shall be coordinated with the Board President and Media Relations Specialist.
- b) **Media Contacts Board or Board Members:** Media contacts with the Board or Board Members that involve "significant contacts" regarding the EWSHS, its exhibits, collections, staffing, facilities shall be coordinated with the Board President. The Board President is an authorized designated spokesperson for the EWSHS Board and the EWSHS. The Board President will coordinate with

the Media Relations Specialist and Executive Director absent any conflicts of interest.

- C. **Designated Spokespersons:** The EWSHS is committed to maintaining professional, open, transparent, timely, and accurate information exchanges with the media. It is also important that the EWSHS maintain a consistent message and brand. Only designated spokespersons for the EWSHS are authorized to participate in media interviews or in online communications such as blogs, discussion forums, and other social networks regarding general or routine matters on behalf of the EWSHS. Employees, the Executive Director, and Board Members will advise the media representative that the matter will be referred to the designated spokesperson.
1. **General Contacts:** The Media Relations Specialist and Executive Director are considered designated spokespersons for general matters. The Executive Director may designate other employees as spokespersons, as appropriate.
  2. **Significant Contacts:** In regards to “significant contacts,” before you communicate with the media you must contact and coordinate with the Media Relations Specialist, Executive Director, and/or Board President as detailed in Article II, Subsection B above. The Board President is considered the designated spokesperson for “significant contacts.” The Board President may delegate the Media Relations Specialist and Executive Director as designated spokespersons for specific matters absent any conflicts of interest.

### **Article III SOCIAL MEDIA**

- A. **Definition:** For the purposes of this policy, social media includes online services (available over the internet by computer or mobile device) that allow people to socially network, to collaborate, or to share information. Social media services are usually based on participant contributions to content. These social media tools might include:
1. Social and professional networking websites,
  2. Video and photo sharing websites,
  3. Blogs, micro blogs, wikis
  4. Personal websites,
  5. Forums and discussion boards, and
  6. Online encyclopedias.

Examples of specific media include: Facebook, Google+ and MySpace (social networking); YouTube, Tumblr, Flickr, Instagram, Pinterest (video and photo sharing); Twitter (microblogging), LinkedIn (professional networking), and Wikipedia (online encyclopedia) to name a few.

- B. **Designated Official Spokespersons:** Employees and volunteers will not participate on social media websites or other online forums on behalf of the EWSHS unless expressly authorized to serve as an “official” spokesperson by the Executive Director or Board President. All communication must be professional in tone and content and conducted in accordance with all applicable EWSHS policies, practices and expectations. Official spokespersons should exercise good judgment and take personal and professional responsibility for any content they publish via social media.

- C. **Permitted Use**: Authorized Official Spokespersons shall use social media only for approved agency purposes, including professional networking to support the mission of the agency. All use shall be consistent with applicable laws and regulations related to use of the EWSHS's resources. Use of social media for personal purposes including de minimis use, is **not permitted** on the EWSHS's equipment.

Social media shall not be used to transmit information or knowingly connect to sites for an unlawful or prohibited purpose, including, but not limited to the following examples:

- Discrimination on the basis of sex, race, creed, color, gender, religion, age, marital status, national origin, sensory, mental or physical disability, sexual orientation, veteran status or genetic information.
- Transmission of obscene, defamatory, profane or otherwise offensive or inappropriate language or materials.
- Personal attacks, threats, sexual harassment or sites containing sexual content.
- Transmission of privileged, protected, confidential or private information.
- Transmission of proprietary information, copyright infringement or any infringement on intellectual property.
- Expression of any campaign, political or religious beliefs.
- Conduct of a personal, outside business or other financial benefit or gain.

The EWSHS reserves the right to monitor use of institutional resources including Social Media, computer, and internet to ensure use is consistent with this and other EWSHS policies.

- D. **Privacy Issues**: Official spokespersons, employees, and volunteers, have no expectation of privacy in the use of EWSHS Internet resources. Private or protected information may never be disclosed absent express legal authority.

Owners of social media sites often share user activity and demographic information with third parties. This information may be captured directly during user interactions or indirectly using tracking cookies. It is important to remember that all activity conducted on social media sites is open to unrestricted public observation and users should conduct themselves accordingly.

Where the agency posts information to a site or service offered or controlled by a third party, the employee posting the information and the employee authorizing the post should, to the extent possible, include or make reference to the privacy policies or privacy notice applicable to the site or service.

The Internet is an unsecured publicly accessible network. Links and embedded files on social networking sites may contain malicious software or redirect users to inappropriate sites. Owners of social media sites commonly monitor usage activity and those activities may be disclosed to any number of parties.

- E. **Links**: Extra care should be taken in posting links. Sharing or posting links that support/oppose ballot measures or initiatives or are associated with political purposes/campaigns are prohibited due to state ethics law. Linking to an outside company website could be perceived as promoting its products or services and could also violate state ethics law. Linking to a personally owned business is also prohibited due to state ethics law.

- F. **Public Records** – A record is defined broadly to include electronic records, including e-mail and metadata. Any record that is prepared, owned, used or maintained by the EWSHS potentially relates to the conduct of government and is potentially disclosable. While many social media postings may be considered transitory in nature, social media records will be maintained consistent with the EWSHS’s records retention policies and Washington State public records laws.
  
- G. **Consequences and Restrictions** – Failure to follow this policy may result in the loss of access privileges and corrective or disciplinary action up to and including termination.

**References that apply to this policy**

Chapter 27.34 RCW, State Historical Societies	Chapter 42.52 RCW, Ethics in Public Service
WAC 292-110-010 Use of State Resources	EWSHS Information Technology Policy
EWSHS Ethics Policy	

## SOCIAL MEDIA BEST PRACTICE GUIDELINES

At the EWSHS, we value quality relationships with all of our stakeholders, and we foster communications that are open, truthful and professional. Social media tools enable people to gather online and can be a fun and rewarding way to share experiences and opinions with family, friends, co-workers and the general public.

While we recognize the value of using social media, there are certain responsibilities and expectations when using these tools. These Best Practice Guidelines do not constitute agency policy, but provide general information about the culture of social media and how to be a good citizen of the social media environment. At the same time, this document attempts to identify circumstances that may implicate EWSHS policy. Much of the information included here is useful for personal as well as business use of social media. Employees are strongly encouraged to use these guidelines to educate themselves on effective, responsible and safe use of social media tools so they may avoid pitfalls. These guidelines primarily apply to personal, off-duty use of social media. Personal use of social media is NOT ALLOWED on EWSHS work time, equipment or resources.

### **Be Responsible**

Your personal use of social media should not be attributable to the EWSHS or to your job function at the EWSHS. Nevertheless, there may be circumstances when you make personal posts in other settings and you may be ***perceived*** as speaking on behalf of the EWSHS. If you talk about EWSHS-related matters on social media sites or create a link from a blog, website or other social networking site to the EWSHS's website, you should disclose your affiliation with the EWSHS, including your full name and official role on the board, staff or volunteer team. Clearly state that it's ***your*** opinion if you are creating or posting content in your personal capacity that involves the EWSHS and be transparent about your role with the EWSHS. In these circumstances you should always make it clear that your views do not represent those of the EWSHS. You should include a disclaimer such as, "The postings on this site are my own, and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Northwest Museum of Arts & Culture."

If you are asked to provide official comment about the EWSHS in a social media environment, you should follow the requirements specified in the Internal Communications, Media Publications/ Contacts & Social Media Policy BP #107. You should also notify the Executive Director or Board President, as quickly as possible, so arrangements can be made for an official response by the Designated Spokesperson.

### **Be Honest and Transparent**

Your honesty or dishonesty will be quickly noticed in the social media environment. Don't communicate under anyone else's name or photo. Use your own name. If you make a mistake, correct it quickly. Be open about any previous posts you have altered. Remember that the internet archives almost everything; therefore, even deleted postings can be searched. Never post any information that you know to be false about the EWSHS, board members, staff, volunteers and colleagues, EWSHS patrons, suppliers, contractors or EWSHS competitors.

### **Be Respectful**

When disagreeing with others' opinions, keep it polite and appropriate. Do not post content that: 1) Includes defamatory or libelous language or engage in damaging innuendo; 2) Could be viewed as abusive, offensive, malicious, obscene, threatening, explicit, racist or might constitute harassment or bullying; 2) is meant to intentionally harm someone's reputation, or the reputation of the Northwest Museum of Arts & Culture; 3) could contribute to a hostile work environment on

the basis of race, sex, disability, religion or any other status protected by law; or 4) is otherwise in violation of EWSHS policy.

**Understand First Amendment Rights**

Although the EWSHS can moderate social media sites that accept comments from the public (Such as Facebook and blogs) to restrict speech that is obscene, threatening, discriminatory, harassing, or off topic, we cannot use the moderation function to restrict speech with which the EWSHS merely disagrees (e.g. subject matter restrictions). Users have First Amendment rights when posting content to public social media sites hosted by state agencies. Moderators must respect those rights by posting all comments other than those excluded for specific legitimate reasons, such as those identified in the EWSHS's Social Media Terms Of Use Policy. When in doubt, the EWSHS can consult with its assigned Assistant Attorney General.