



## City of Novi Web 2.0 (Social Media) Policy

These are the official social media guidelines for City of Novi employees. We expect all who participate in social media on behalf of Novi to understand and follow these guidelines, in conjunction with those guidelines set out in the Administrative Personnel Policy and Email/Voice Mail Policy. These guidelines will continually evolve as new technologies and social networking tools emerge - "Web 2.0" signifies the constantly changing trends in the utility and capacity of the World Wide Web use and design - so routinely check to make sure you're up to date.

**Purpose:** We encourage you to engage with the public through social media outlets. This document outlines the rules and guidelines you should follow when working in social media.

**Scope:** This policy applies to all City of Novi employees or contractors creating or contributing to blogs, wikis, social networks, virtual worlds, or any other kind of social media both on and off [www.cityofnovi.org](http://www.cityofnovi.org) (and our related websites).

**Policy Detail:** Social media examples include blogs, wikis, Facebook, Twitter, podcasts, videos, photos, online posts to newspaper articles, etc.

### **Social media = interaction**

New and emerging online platforms are fundamentally changing the way the world works, offering us new ways to collaborate and to engage with our constituents. These are new models for interaction that complement sources already in use. Ignoring social media platforms is not an option. As City of Novi employees - and part of the Novi Community - social media must be built into our business processes and responsibilities.

The City of Novi is working to offer citizens multiple ways to receive Department updates via various avenues, e.g., YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, etc. We also are working toward City communications that work across platforms, that are interactive and that engage our citizens.

### **Why use social media?**

- Help achieve business goals.
- Monitor and respond to hot topics and emerging issues quickly.
- Proactively share stories to address current issues and projects.
- Expand communication tools with a vast distribution system for content, while broadening and engaging new audiences.
- Open up government to encourage citizen participation, strengthen our democracy, and support a civic culture.
- Increase transparency of government.
- Listen to residents, customers - enabling us to improve City services, programs and practices.
- Reach out - go to the conversation, don't wait for it to come to us.
- Answer what people want to know.

## Rules of engagement when using social media

- **Use official accounts for official business.** When you're conducting official City business, use one of our official accounts whenever possible. Be sure to use your City email address (not personal email) when responding to citizens.
- **Write what you know.** Make sure that you write and post about your area of expertise, as it relates to your position in the City and that the information you provide is both factual and accurate. Write in the first person.
- **Be transparent.** Your honesty, or dishonesty, will be quickly noticed in social media environments. When blogging or commenting about your work at the City of Novi, use your real name, identify that you work for the City and be clear about your role.
- **Perception is reality.** In online social networks, the lines between public and private, personal and professional are blurred. Just by identifying yourself as a City of Novi employee, you are creating perceptions about the City. Be sure all content associated with you is consistent with our work and with the City's values and professional standards. In addition, be aware that when you post something on any site it is a reflection of you as an individual and the City as well, even if it is on a personal page or non-City site.
- **Be judicious.** All statements must be true and not misleading and all claims must be substantiated and approved. What you publish will be around for a long time, so consider the content carefully. **Don't publish anything you wouldn't want your mom, co-worker, clergy or supervisor to read!** [Also see the City's **Code of Ethics** on e-Web.]
- **Your responsibility.** What you write is ultimately your responsibility. Participation in social media on behalf of the City is not a right and it therefore needs to be taken seriously and treated with respect. When responding to a request or question, or stating information on behalf of the City, be sure you're the right person in your department to be doing so. When in doubt, consult with the department head.
- **It's a conversation.** Talk to your reader like you'd talk to real people in professional situations. Avoid bureaucratic or formal language. Don't be afraid to bring in your own professional expertise. Don't be combative.
- **Use common sense:** If a request or response requires a formal reply, letter or phone call then do so. The social media venue may not always be the appropriate one for all situations.
- **Be open.** One of the great benefits of social media is the interaction between us (you) and our customers. Take in ideas. Share relevant feedback and input with colleagues. When in doubt, talk to your community relations contact or department director.
- **Are you adding value?** There are millions of words out there. The best way to get yours read is to write stuff people will value. Communication should help our residents, employees and others in the region. It should be thought-provoking and build a sense of community.
- **Did you screw up?** If you make a mistake, admit it. Be upfront and quick with your correction. If you're posting to a blog, you may choose to modify an earlier post – just make it clear that you have done so.
- **If it gives you pause, pause.** If you're about to publish something that makes you even the slightest bit uncomfortable, don't shrug it off and hit 'send.' Take a minute to review these guidelines and try to figure out what's bothering you, then fix it. If you're still unsure, check with your department head. Ultimately, the decision about what you publish is yours - as is the responsibility. So be sure what you respond to you can deliver.

- **Follow the rules.** Employees who fail to comply with these policies are subject to disciplinary action, including dismissal.

### **Topic taboos**

Do not write any content or postings that involve or are related to the following:

- Matters in litigation or otherwise in dispute, or that could be in the future.
- Non-public information of any kind.
- References to illegal or banned substances and narcotics.
- Pornographic, sexually-oriented, otherwise offensive or illegal materials.
- Defamatory, libelous, offensive, or demeaning material. (Don't engage in a combative exchange.)
- Solicitation of business.
- Comments supporting/opposing political campaigns/ballot questions.
- Information that might compromise the safety or security of public buildings or activities.
- Disparaging/threatening comments about or related to anyone.
- **Personal, sensitive or confidential information** of any kind about yourself or others.

### **Getting Started / Responsibilities - creating a social media forum**

All City of Novi social networking sites shall adhere to applicable state, federal and local laws, regulations and policies including all Information Technology and Records Management City policies and other applicable City policies.

Freedom of Information Act, e-discovery laws and records retention schedules apply to social media content and must be able to be managed, stored, and retrieved to comply with these laws.

All social network sites and entries shall clearly indicate that any articles and any other content posted or submitted for posting are subject to public disclosure.

The City reserves the right to restrict or remove any content that is deemed to be in violation of this policy or any applicable law or that is "off-topic" to the discussion or activity.

The Department Head and / or designee are responsible for refreshing content on an acceptable basis, including removing old posts.

Each City of Novi social networking site shall include an introductory statement that clearly specifies the purpose and topical scope of the blog and social network site. Where possible, social networking sites should link back to the official City of Novi Internet site for forms, documents and other information. In addition, all efforts shall also be made to implement City of Novi branding guidelines where possible within the site.

All City of Novi social media sites shall be (1) approved by (in order) the Department Head, Director of Communications and Director of Information Technology; 2) published using approved City social networking platform and tools; and (3) administered by the department's designee(s). Designee(s) can be any department employee or volunteer designated by the requesting department head that has a complete understanding of this policy and has appropriate content and technical experience.

**The responsibility for assuring complete compliance with the provisions of this policy rests with the Department Director, supervisors, and designees involved.** It is the responsibility of social media users and those engaged in social networking to stay informed regarding City policies related to this activity.

Departments will use a disclaimer message (on the main City website) for all City of Novi-created social media formats, indicating that:

Opinions expressed herein are the personal opinions of the original authors, not of the City of Novi. The content is provided as a public service and for informational purposes only and is not meant to be an endorsement or representation by the City of Novi or any other individual or entity. This site is available to the public. No information that you consider confidential should be posted to this site. By posting you agree to be solely responsible for the content of all information you contribute, link to, or otherwise upload to the website and release the City of Novi from any liability related to your use of the Website. The City of Novi disclaims liability for advertisements, videos, promoted content or comments accessible from any external web pages.