

NEOGOV

5 Components of a Strong Public Sector

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

IN TODAY'S TECHNOLOGICALLY ADVANCED SOCIETY, SOCIAL MEDIA IS UBIQUITOUS.

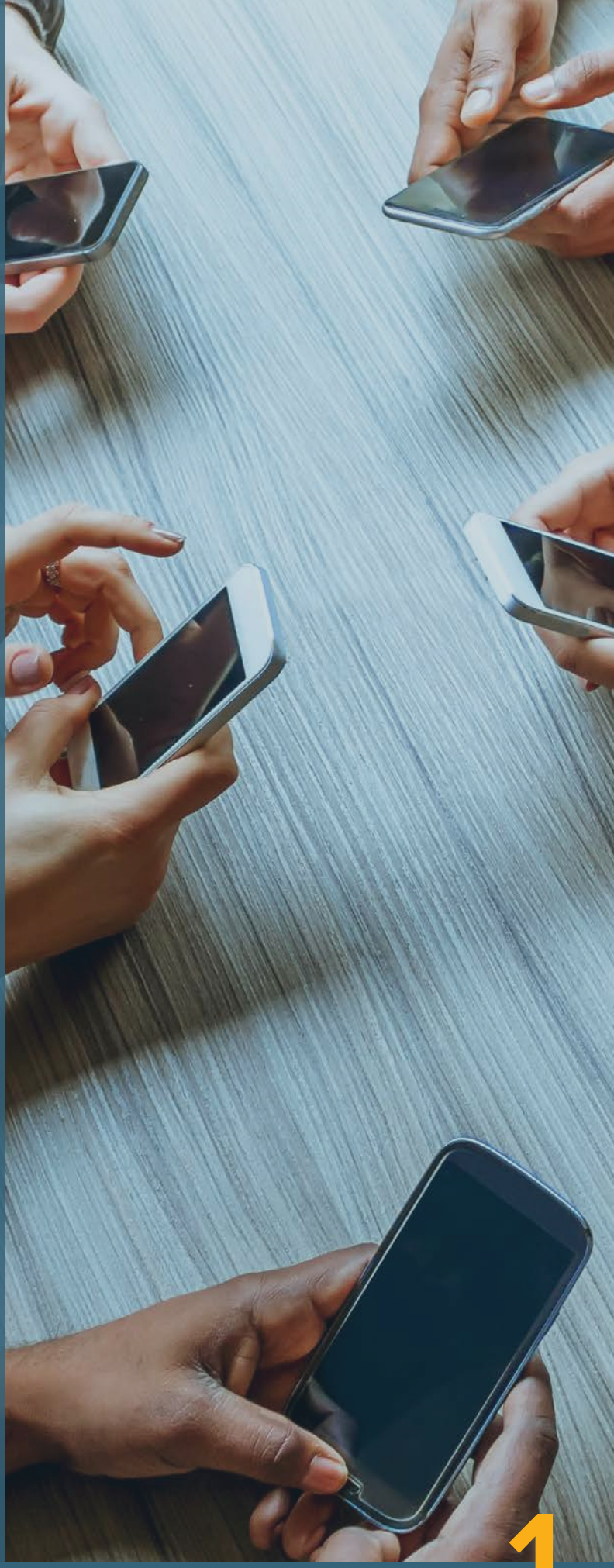
Social media can be a positive and useful tool for public sector organizations to engage with their community. However, the misuse of social media can be harmful to an organization's reputation or can distract employees from being productive. In fact, "19% of employees access social platforms for an hour during working hours" (Digital Information World).

Defining the appropriate and accepted use of social media platforms through a clear social media policy is essential for public sector agencies.

*"Only **51% of workplaces** have a social media policy in place"*

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According to the Center of Technology in Government, "given the emergent nature of social media, relatively few U.S. governments actually have a formalized set of policies." If your organization doesn't have a policy for employee's social media use, it is time to create one.



#1
MAINTAIN AN UP-TO-DATE POLICY

If your policy was written prior to 2012, it probably doesn't include newer social media platforms, such as Snapchat, TikTok, or the version of Instagram that hosts videos. In less than a decade, the landscape of social media has seen explosive growth and evolved in many ways. So, be sure to update your policy every few years to account for changes in technology and user trends or, as the **Pascua Yaqui Tribe** did, include a blanket statement that includes all future social platforms.

Social media includes all means of communicating or posting information or content of any sort on the Internet, including your own or someone else's web log or blog, journal or diary, personal website, social networking website, web bulletin board or a chat room, as well as any other form of electronic communication.

Blogging, "tweeting," email, texting, and other social media, including any and all social media available now or in the future such as Twitter, LinkedIn, Tumblr, and Facebook are subject to restrictions.

#2
CLARIFY PERMISSIONS FOR OFFICIAL USE

Official organization accounts can be very effective for organization updates, job opportunities, and more. However, organizations must clearly define who has permission to post, edit, and approve posts on the agency's accounts and when it is appropriate to use social media. The **City of Long Beach** does a great job of defining who is authorized to create an account or post on the agency's behalf. Be sure to also include whether the use of social media is permitted at work, as it can distract from productivity.

1. No City employee may establish any social media account in the name of or on behalf of the City or any City agency unless: (1) the department head or designee has approved the account; (2) the City Manager's Office of Public Affairs and Communications has approved and (3) all information to be posted on the account is approved in accordance with this policy.

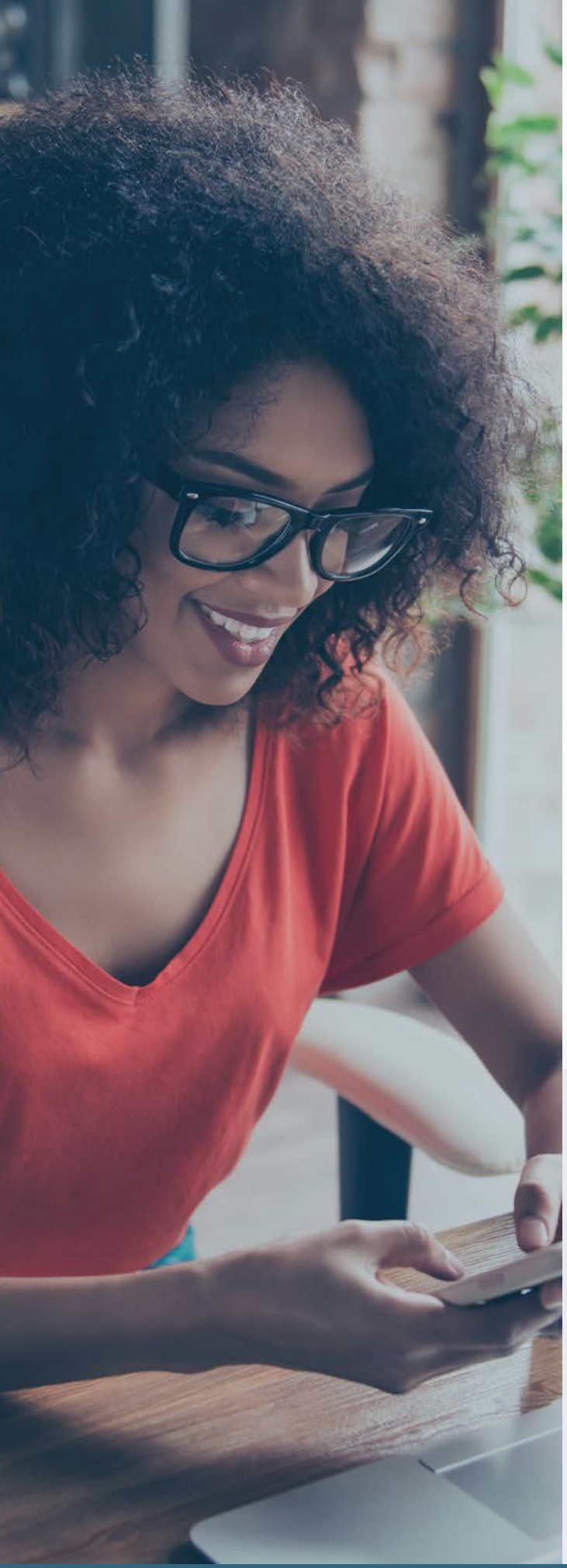
2. Department heads, or designees, are responsible for determining who is authorized to use social media on behalf of the department, and for designating appropriate access levels.



#3
EXPLAIN HOW PUBLIC RECORDS LAWS APPLY

Any content shared by or about the agency is considered public record. Sharing information about new projects or elected officials can seem harmless, but may violate public records laws. But it goes beyond that. A government agency's social media posts are also subject to being part of a public records request, so it's important that employees are informed of their responsibility for processing such requests. **Garden City** is very specific about who in the agency is responsible for complying with social media-specific requests.

City social media sites are subject to applicable public records laws. Any content maintained in a social media format related to City business, including communication posted by the City and communication received from citizens, is a public record. The Department maintaining the site is responsible for responding completely and accurately to any public records request for social media content.



#4 ESTABLISH APPROPRIATE EMPLOYEE USE OF PERSONAL SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is a powerful tool for both personal and professional engagement. However, this means the lines can become blurred between the two. As the **Department of the Interior's** social media policy states, "statements intended as personal opinion can be mistaken for official expressions of agency policy or position." Clearly outline what employees can and cannot share on their personal accounts when referring to workplace news or events.

Establishing a clear expectation of when it is appropriate for employees to use their social media accounts is also essential. 42% of employees report accessing personal social media accounts during work, so indicate when personal social media use is acceptable (Digital Information World).

Care must be taken to ensure that personal use of social media does not create the appearance of official use of social media, such as by the use of a government title or position in a manner that would create an appearance that the Government sanctions or endorses one's activities. Additionally, many ethics laws, regulations, and policies that apply to an employee's official activities apply also to employee activities in their personal lives. Questions concerning ethics restrictions applicable to personal use of social media should be directed to your bureau Deputy Ethics Counselor.

#5
DEFINE HOW OFFICIAL USERS CAN MODERATE PUBLIC COMMENTS AND POSTS

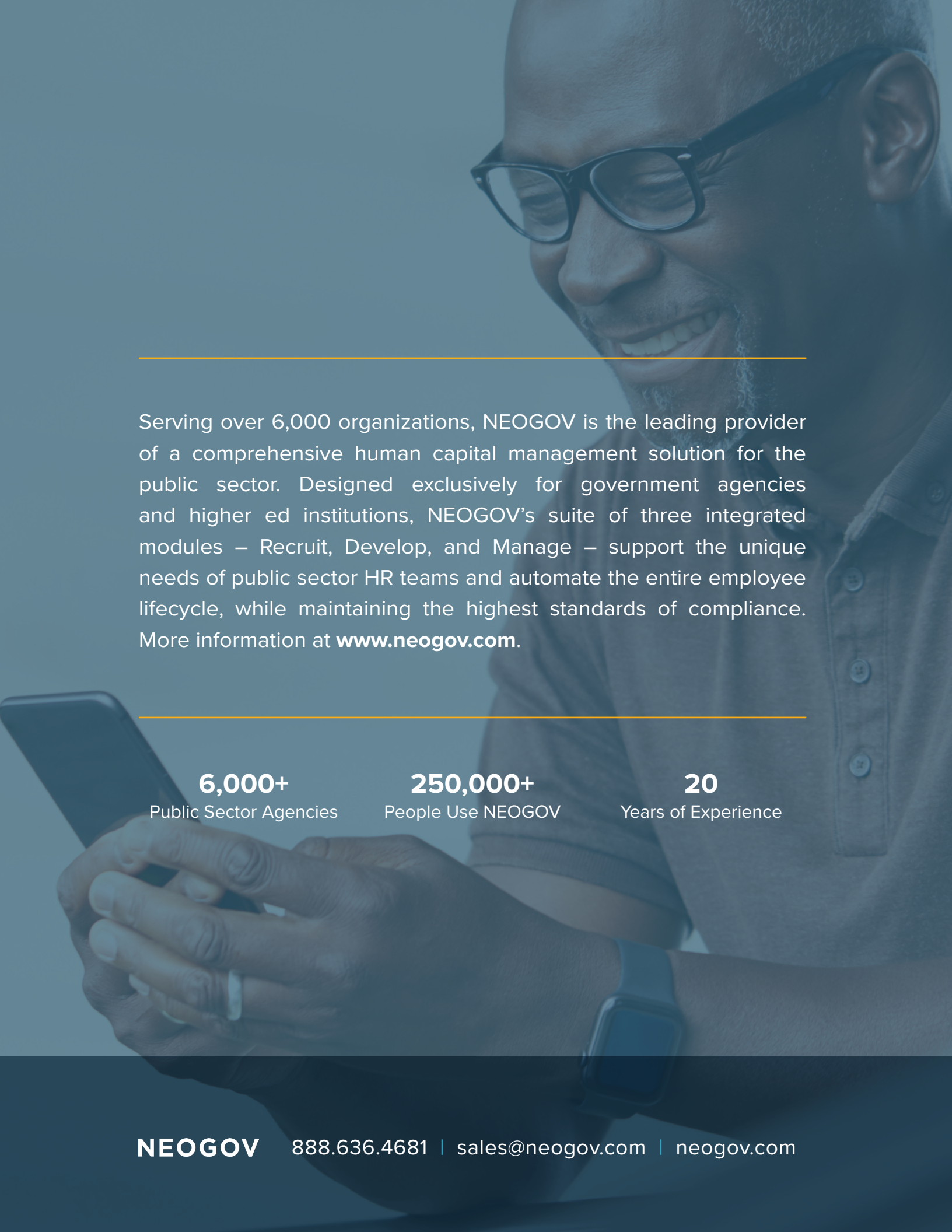
The freedom and access to post means anyone with a social media account can respond to posts or share information about your agency, even if the information is incorrect or damaging. In your policy, explain how employees with permission to access official agency social accounts should moderate and respond to comments or posts made by the public. **The City of Northfield** has created explicit guidelines for their employees, which are included in their employee handbook.



City Of Northfield Minnesota

Where moderation of comments is an available option, comments from the public may be moderated by city staff, with administrative rights, before posting. Where moderation prior to posting is not an option, sites will be regularly monitored by city staff.

City of Northfield's staff, with administrative rights, will not edit any posted comments but will not post any comments that are abusive; obscene; defamatory; in violation of the copyright, trademark right or other intellectual property right of any third party; or otherwise inappropriate or incorrect.



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