



ACT Government Social Media Policy Guidelines

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Introduction

Document Details

Owner	Manager, Communications and Engagement, CMCD
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Acknowledgements	This document is derived from the ' Official Social Media Guideline ' developed by Smart Service Queensland, Department of Public Works, available under a Creative Commons Attribution 2.5 Australia Licence, and on work undertaken by the ACT Government Single Public Face project
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Purpose

These guidelines are designed to assist with the management of social media use in the ACT Government. They are in two parts. Part One contains guidelines for using social media. Part Two contains 'how to' information and facts sheets about using social media successfully.

The ACT Government recognises that employees and business units will increasingly use social media to interact with each other, with the ACT community, and to promote the work of their Directorate.

These guidelines provide a safe framework for online participation by ACT Government employees. They apply to all employees who use social media for official purposes. They are intended to cover future social networking services as they develop. These guidelines will be regularly reviewed to reflect changing technology.

Audience

This document is intended for ACT Government employees who use social media as an official communication channel of the ACT Government. It also provides general guidance for officials on using social media tools and guidance for using the ACT Government ICT resources to access social media for personal use.

Background

The ACT Government is committed to the principles of Open Government, which means:

- **transparency** in process and information
- **participation** by citizens in the governing process
- public **collaboration** in finding solutions to problems, and participation in the improved well-being of the community.

Accordingly, the Government is committed to engaging effectively with its citizens in a meaningful, accountable, responsive and equitable way.

The ACT is a well-informed community that expects Government to take its views and knowledge into account when making decisions. Canberrans are generally well equipped to participate in consultation processes and able to take advantage of a range of engagement tools, particularly Web 2.0 tools, this includes social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter.

Part One – Guidelines for use of Social Media in ACT Government

Key principles for official use of social media

All employees who are authorised to use social media as an official communication tool need to familiarise themselves with these key principles for its use.

Know and follow relevant expectations of behaviour set out in the Public Sector Management Act 1994 and Acceptable Use of ICT Resources Policy

- You are expected to maintain the same high standards of professional conduct and behaviour online as would be expected elsewhere.
- It is never acceptable to engage in harassment, bullying, illegal or otherwise inappropriate activity, whether you use an official or private social media account.
- What you disseminate using social media can ultimately have consequences for you and failure to abide by the relevant policies and standards may lead to disciplinary action.
- Where you are authorised to speak in an official capacity, represent the Government professionally and be sure that what you publish is consistent with relevant policies, standards and behaviours.
- Directorates should establish protocols in relation to who is authorised to respond to media inquiries or political enquiries received via social media. Timeliness in response may mean additional employees may require permission to reply to enquiries via social media beyond normal approval channels.
- You should not disclose information, make commitments or engage in activities on behalf of Government online unless you are authorised to do so.
- *Section 9(n)* of the *Public Sector Management Act* specifically states that employees should not make a comment that they are not authorised to make where the comment may be taken as an official comment.
- You will need permission from your supervisor or manager before posting anything online which could be interpreted as an official statement or commitment to some course of action from your Directorate or the ACT Government. Permission must also be obtained if you wish to post information or discuss matters which are sensitive or not already in the public domain.

Be aware of your responsibilities when you mix your work and personal lives

- It is acceptable to use a personal account to comment on matters unrelated to work provided it does not interfere with your official duties.
- Using a private account will not excuse you from misconduct proceedings if you are identifiable as an ACTPS employee and are proven to engage in conduct that would otherwise amount to misconduct.
- Do not publish personal opinions on official social media accounts.
- Remember that your role within the ACT Public Service creates an association between what you say online and the ACT Government itself.
- Do not list or cross-promote personal accounts on ACT Government platforms unless authorised.
- Be clear that your views are your own, when using your personal account.

Be transparent and identify yourself when discussing ACT Government-related topics

- Identify that you are an ACT Government employee, if you are publishing content in an official capacity as part of your work.
- You can only use an official Government account if you are authorised to do so and it is part of your duties.
- As an identified ACT Government employee, your comments should be apolitical, impartial and professional.
- When commenting on ACT Government topics on a personal account be sure to make it clear that your views are your own.
- Always use your judgement when making private comments, particularly to ensure these comments cannot be misconstrued as official commentary (this is particularly important for senior officials for whom separating their private views from their positions may prove increasingly difficult the higher they are in the ACTPS hierarchy).

Consider what you say, before you say it

- If you're uncertain about something, don't publish!
- Make sure information is correct before you post and seek advice if in doubt - your professional credibility is inextricably linked to your online comments.
- If you are responding to a question that falls outside your area of expertise, seek advice from the appropriate area within Government.

Use your discretion

- Never publish information that should not be made public – always seek permission to publish content that isn't already in the public domain. The

provisions of the Crimes Act and the Public Sector Management Act relating to the unauthorised disclosure of official information apply.

- Unless you are authorised, avoid discussion of industrial or legal issues, and refer these to the relevant areas if asked to comment specifically.
- Always seek advice if you are in doubt about whether information can be made public.

Acceptable personal use of social media in the ACT Government

Personal use of social media is defined as individual or private use, using your own personal social media accounts and where you are not commenting as a authorised officer of the ACT Government. You should not use work email or social media accounts for private blogging or other forms of personal online comment. Your personal account profiles should be linked to a personal email address, for a Facebook or Twitter account. Do not use an ACT Government email address to establish a personal social media account.

When accessing personal social media accounts via your Directorate's ICT systems, you must do so in a manner that does not interfere with your duties and is not inappropriate or excessive.

Examples of **unacceptable** use include:

- using Government resources to access or post any material that is fraudulent, harassing, threatening, bullying, embarrassing, sexually explicit, profane, obscene, racist, sexist, intimidating, defamatory or otherwise inappropriate or unlawful
- using the Government's ICT resources to provide on the record comments to journalists, politicians and lobby groups other than in the course of your official duties
- excessive time using social media that is not related to your work.

Examples of **acceptable** use include:

- re-tweeting content from your Directorate's account on your own Twitter account
- accessing and posting comments within your Directorate's microblog service (e.g. SharePoint)
- engaging as an individual citizen in community debates which do not cross-over into your areas of policy responsibility or matters unrelated to your official duties.

Refer to [Acceptable Use of ICT Resources Policy](#), Whole-of-Government Policy No. 136 for guidance. The use of social media for inappropriate activities may lead to disciplinary action being taken against you.

Risks associated with using social media

Social media sites make it very easy to share information with others. While this convenience is their selling point, it means that you need to be aware of the risks involved in the use of these sites.

Risks to consider:

- **Misrepresentation and misinterpretation** - information and views can be spread very quickly and widely through online media and can easily be subject to misinterpretation and misrepresentation.
- **Lack of control** – once online material is made public there is little control or influence over how it might be used or modified or integrated ('mashed').
- **Resourcing** – establishing, contributing to and moderating social media sites takes expertise, time and resources.
- **Privacy** – there is no guarantee that privacy can be protected.
- **Security** – high traffic sites/accounts may pose a greater risk for 'malware' or 'spyware'.
- **Time wasting** – employees may use social media in a way that interferes with their duties.
- **Bandwidth** – some social media requires higher levels of bandwidth.
- **Accessibility** – some sites may be blocked or may not provide content in accessible formats.

The official use of social media has the potential to compromise compliance with legislation, particularly in regard to accessibility, privacy and recordkeeping.

Content contributed by anyone may infringe upon the rights of others in areas such as defamation, intellectual property and fraud.

Transparency when using social media

Directorates should be fully transparent in their interactions within social media, including the addition and removal of content. Any officer responding to and posting new comments should identify the comment as an official response from an Directorate.

Identify as an official Government presence

When publishing using social media, Directorates should identify the account as an official Government presence. For example, an officer seeking to respond to a post on an official Facebook account or publish an official video to YouTube should use the official account that is named to represent their Directorate or activity. Personal accounts should not be used when making comment in an official capacity.

Other ways to identify and convey the official status of social media presences include:

- use of ACT Government and Directorate branding
- links between Directorate websites and the social media account (for example, link to a page on the Directorate website that also links to the official social media account – evidencing its official status)
- use of customised disclaimer messages or terms of use hosted on the official Directorate website.

Communicate account closures

Where a directorate wishes to close a social media account they should advise via the account both the reasons for closure and options for further communication or engagement.

Intellectual property infringement

The term 'intellectual property' covers the various legal rights to protect the result of original and creative effort.

You may infringe intellectual property by:

- re-tweeting or sharing content without acknowledgement to the original author
- posting photos to Flickr or Facebook without consent from participants or photographer
- copying work such as songs, articles, movies, or software, from a source without being authorised to do so is a breach of intellectual property
- posting Government content on social media sites whose terms of service do not comply with Government policy.

To avoid intellectual property infringement:

- produce content specifically for social media sites – if choosing to post Government content on social media sites, be mindful of the potential conflict between the site's terms of use and the intellectual property requirements
- do not post third party information without permission or licence – where the third party has provided permission, check the permission is broad enough to cover posting to social media.

Recordkeeping and the Territory Records Act 2002

The Territory's Records Act 2002 states a Directorate must make and keep full and accurate records of its activities.

<http://www.legislation.act.gov.au/a/2002-18/current/pdf/2002-18.pdf>

A record can be in written, electronic or any other form, under the control of the Directorate, kept as a record of its activities, whether it was created or received by the Directorate.

The use of social media sites raises questions about the status of the records created. Attention needs to be given to ensure that information of importance is appropriately captured.

Information that provides evidence of business activity or a business decision is a public record. The [Territory Records Act 2002](#) covers all public records irrespective of the technology or medium used to generate, capture, manage, preserve and access those records. Records created through the use of social media should be captured and managed in accordance with the [Territory Records Act 2002](#) and the associated recordkeeping

procedures. Remember that a public record may exist in any format, including emails, text messages and other digital forms.

Different projects or initiatives may require more detailed recordkeeping controls depending on the risk and/or visibility of the initiatives, among other factors. Therefore, consideration should be given to what records need to be kept of the business being transacted, and how these records will be managed as part of your Directorate's broader recordkeeping framework when planning the use of social media.

Common information about the records you are creating that may need to be captured includes:

- date of discussion or business activity
- details of your name and other stakeholders involved
- key discussion points
- details of instructions or advice provided
- approvals, decisions and recommendations made.

Advice should be sought from the ACT Territory Records Office in relation to the retention of information obtained through social media sites. Please also refer to this Digital Records Guideline.

http://www.territoryrecords.act.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/125463/Guideline_No_6_-_Digital_Records.pdf

Accessibility

Federal and state anti-discrimination law helps protect people from discrimination and harassment. For example, the [Discrimination Act 1991](#) prohibits unlawful discrimination in certain areas including work, education and accommodation.

Social media offers new ways to involve and interact with the community in many aspects of their lives. In the community access to official social media accounts may be constrained by:

- lack of access to a computer
- inadequate skills or technical support
- lack of access to a reliable internet connection
- organisational restrictions on access to the social media platform
- lack of conformance of social media platforms with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines.

Some examples include:

- promoting a new initiative exclusively via Twitter to 4,000 followers means you're potentially excluding a large segment of the community. However, don't underestimate the role of subscribers in the redistribution of this information via Facebook, blogs etc
- publishing online video via YouTube without an accessible equivalent such as caption or audio equivalent content. You may wish to consider including a link on the YouTube site to a captioned version hosted on the website.

Where appropriate, content on official social media accounts should also be made available in an accessible alternative format, on other official ACT Government information channels. In many cases, this alternative may be represented on ACT Government internet sites, however given the social interaction inherent through social media, it may also be appropriate to refer individuals to telephone or face-to-face channels.

Other legal considerations

Defamation

Defamation is the injury to another person's reputation either directly or implied through the publication of words or sounds. It does not matter if the defamation was unintentional. For example, if you make false accusations about an individual in a blog which cannot be substantiated.

In certain circumstances accurate information that lowers the public perception of an individual or organisation can amount to defamation if it is published in some jurisdictions.

Avoiding defamation:

- do not post information online that is unsubstantiated relating to a business or individual
- avoid re-tweeting or commenting on posts and tweets which may be a rumour or confidential relating to a business or individual.

Negligence

Negligence is the failure to act when bound by a duty of care. You should take reasonable action to avoid acts or omissions which you can reasonably foresee would be likely to injure someone. The degree of care which the law requires is that which is reasonable in the circumstances of the particular case.

Example

If a Twitter user lodges a complaint through Twitter to a Government Directorate, the Directorate acknowledges receipt of the message but does not act on the complaint and the complainant sustains injury as a result. If a Twitter complaint is acknowledged, it should be treated in the same way as a phone call or email complaint.

Avoiding negligence

- Avoid providing advice or recommendations unless part of your standard customer service scripting or information passed through your official approval processes.
- Establish systems and processes to appropriately monitor and respond to social media channels.
- Explicitly set expected response times and state any limitations to responding (such as during business hours), or disable comments (where possible) if resources are temporarily unavailable. If such a situation occurs involving a Twitter account, tweet a message to this effect.

- Recommend appropriate channels for certain types of communication (such as emergencies).

Privacy

Social media by its nature can result in the disclosure of personal information in a public way. Privacy is one of the major concerns of those using social media and legal advice should be sought in relation to compliance with the information privacy law.

Relevant Legislation and Literature on Web 2.0 and Social Media

Acceptable Use of ICT Resources Policy, Whole-of-Government Policy No. 136,

<http://sharedservices/actgovt/ICTpolicies.htm>

ACT Government Service Induction Manual

http://sharedservices/actgovt/HRdocs/ACTPS_Induction.pdf

Territory's Records Act 2002

<http://www.legislation.act.gov.au/a/2002-18/current/pdf/2002-18.pdf>

Ahead of the Game: Blueprint for the Reform of Australian Government Administration

http://www.dpmc.gov.au/publications/aga_reform/aga_reform_blueprint/docs/APS_reform_blueprint.pdf

Government 2.0 Taskforce Report

<http://www.finance.gov.au/publications/gov20taskforcereport/appendixf.htm>

Circular 2009/6: Protocols for online media participation, Australian Public Service

Commission, <http://apsc.gov.au/circulars/circular096.htm>

The Archives Act 1983 http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/cth/consol_act/aa198398/

Part Two – ‘How do’ advice about successful use of social media

What is social media?

Social media is an umbrella term covering websites, mobile technology, applications or tools that enable active and participatory publishing and interaction between individuals over the internet.

Social media can be characterised by:

- building relationships
- user participation
- user-generated content
- collaboration
- multi-directional conversations
- accessible and scalable publishing.

Social media sites

Social media sites include:

- social networking sites – focus on building online communities of people who share common interests e.g. Facebook and MySpace
- video and photo sharing sites – allow users to upload and share images and video e.g. Flickr, YouTube and engage in discussion about the content
- blogs – provide commentary on news or specific topics, and allow sharing of information and opinions - includes corporate blogs, personal blogs or blogs hosted by traditional media outlets. They usually offer interactivity in the form of comments.
- micro-blogs – similar purpose to a blog except entries are limited to a certain number of characters. Microblogs tend to be much more interactive and discussion based than long form blogs e.g. Twitter
- forums and discussion boards – online discussion sites where users can post messages and comments e.g. Whirlpool, Yahoo! Groups
- online encyclopaedias that allow web pages to be created, interlinked and edited e.g. Wikipedia.

Community engagement and social media

Social media can be used as a channel by the community to access the ACT Government and vice versa. Social media platforms are an effective way of encouraging multi-directional communication with the community and key stakeholders. Increased openness and transparency can be enhanced by expert use of social media platforms.

Additionally, an increased sense of community belonging can be achieved and, if responsiveness and tone are carefully managed, citizens can feel more invested in Government and its Directorates as stakeholders.

Directorates can refer to [Engaging Canberrans – a guide to community engagement](#) for further information about how online channels can complement your community engagement activities.

It is not intended for social media to replace other traditional forms of communication when engaging with the community, rather to augment and enhance such forms. It is important to select the most appropriate social media tool carefully.

For the Government, social media represents a channel which can be used to support or deliver a wide range of activities including:

- community engagement, communication and marketing
- policy development and implementation
- service delivery
- research.

Social media allows users to share and upload content quickly and easily, and increase the community's access to Government. It can also reach specific audiences on specific topics, and provide additional or alternative communication channels in times of emergency.

When using social media sites for work purposes, the objective should be to:

- promote ACTPS policies, programs and services
- reach a wider, more diverse audience quickly
- educate, inform and entertain
- promote discussion and debate
- gather and consider a wide variety of ideas and opinions
- promote events and community engagement activities
- improve awareness of community expectations and needs.

Simply using a website because it is popular can be counterproductive if it is not suitable for the intended purpose or audience. It is important to first develop your community engagement strategy and then determine which social media tools will best meet your aims.

Before using social media tools in an official capacity or for an official function:

- prepare a community engagement strategy
- identify traditional communication and community engagement activities that could be enhanced by social media
- consult with your Communications area
- consult with Shared Services ICT
- determine your resources – social media requires active management and resources.

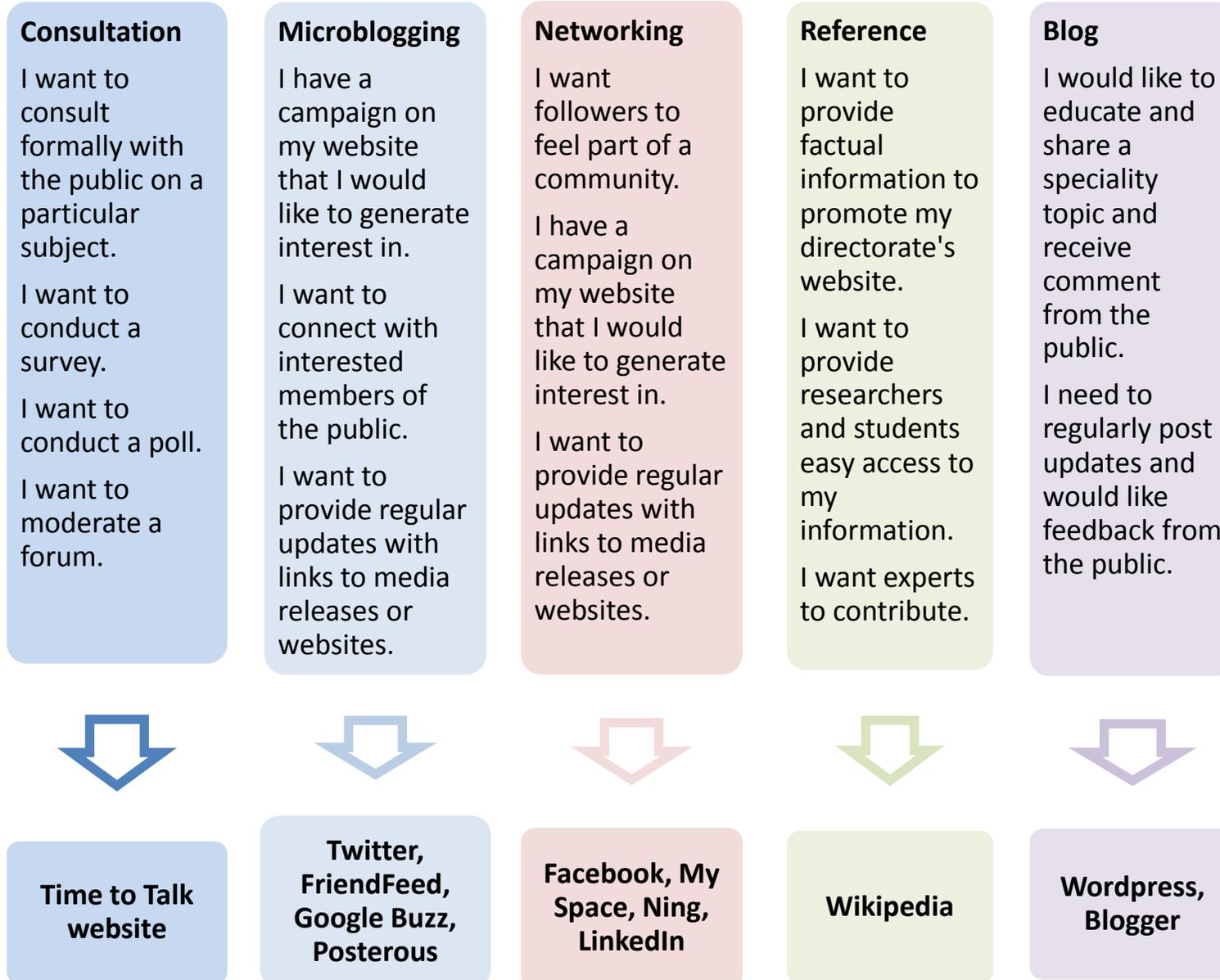
[Figure 1](#) provides guidance on how to choose suitable social media tools.

Figure 1 – What social media tools should you use?

Image and Video Sharing
I would like to provide content via video or images.



YouTube, Flickr, Vimeo



Hosting social media sites

When operating social media accounts:

- listen to other participants in the space. ‘Follow’, ‘Like’, ‘add’ are appropriate connections according to resourcing and be active observers
- spark conversations – it is acceptable to begin a discussion topic to help kick-start ideas from others
- maintain contact with group members
- monitor for inappropriate content – comments that contain extremely offensive e.g. hate speech, illegal (e.g. defamatory) or other inappropriate content (such as pornographic images) should be removed. This is not applicable to Twitter where other users cannot publish onto your page. This doesn’t mean that you should remove negative comments, criticism of the ACT Government or complaints
- respond appropriately to negative criticism
- don’t censor discussion
- avoid ‘stooge’ postings
- don’t post comments via another user and
- avoid using the membership list for unrelated purposes.

Aligning social media with other channels

It is to be expected that official social media accounts will be relied upon as authoritative sources of Government information. Accordingly, it is vital that social media content aligns with that available through other official channels. However, social media platforms may be the first points of publication of Government information in certain circumstances e.g. emergencies.

It is preferable that social media is not the primary information source. Instead, social media broadcasts or discussions should be based on, or direct users to, an Directorate-managed point of truth.

Directorate websites or customer service points are the preferred single point of truth and social media posts relating to specific information should reflect or direct users to the best source of truth.

Where possible, ensure content exists on directorate websites or customer service points prior to announcing on social media accounts. Avoid using social media channels in isolation to release information to the public or any other stakeholder which has not already been released publicly on a ACT Government website or customer service point.

However, immediacy and ‘real time’ publication are hallmarks of social media and a communications strategy designed to prioritise social media as a place of first publication may be appropriate in certain situations.

Similarly, in emergency events social media users who subscribe to services like Twitter will use official Government feeds as priority information channels (like emergency broadcasts) and they expect constant, immediate updates. In these circumstances, such an account

could be used as a live feed of Government information providing timely updates. It would be a mistake to wait for a media release or a media conference before tweeting an evacuation notification, for example.

Further, while not every post will necessarily contain a link to verifying content, every account should contain a link to an official ACT Government website in an easily identifiable space e.g. Facebook information section or Twitter bio page.

Refer to the following fact sheets at the back of this document, to help you decide which social media tool to use in which circumstance.

Establishing meaningful, manageable social media sites

Directorates should avoid the establishment of social media presences for narrowly defined subject areas such as campaigns instead strategically build a social media footprint with a focus on general customer groups and ongoing relationships. However, in certain cases, e.g. a youth oriented campaign suited to Facebook, such campaign-specific sites may be considered.

Social media accounts should complement other channels used for major or core activities of the directorate and allow business areas to clearly identify which social media accounts are intended to broadly reach the audience sought for engagement.

Specific activities are then able to be presented within a broader framework and audience, supporting potentially longer term ongoing relationships based on broader interests that can be transitioned to other activities.

The social media presence can be built over time to have an established audience who know and have confidence in that presence, and are readily accessible when new activities are supported via the account.

Committing to ongoing relationships

Establishing an official social media account creates an expectation of an ongoing dialogue and engagement with Government. Before establishing social media accounts, Directorates should assign appropriate resources in preparation for the continuing relationship expectations of the community.

Officers with access to official social media accounts should be appropriately skilled in the use of social media and briefed on their role and responsibilities. Officers should be provided with appropriate training in areas such as social media, media relations, code of conduct, privacy, defamation law and intellectual property.

Ideally they should also have the subject matter expertise and delegated authority necessary to represent the Directorate in that field.

The immediacy with which social media content is distributed challenges hierarchical approval methods and it is recommended that social media officers be appointed with

delegated authority to represent the Directorate and supported by appropriate reporting and escalation processes.

Officers representing the Directorate through official social media accounts must comply with the Code of Conduct for the ACT Public Service and be made aware how the Code is relevant in an online context.

Using social media successfully requires successful relationship management. Successful relationship management requires a consistent approach in the way in which a directorate conducts itself through its social media account.

This means having an understanding of the directorate's reputation, always presenting the same persona and using a consistent voice when speaking on behalf of Government. When multiple officers are using the same account, it is advisable that they share an understanding of the organisation's reputation online and adhere to a common style. Areas operating high traffic accounts could consider humanising their presence by using official team tweeters.

Managing expectations

When considering the establishment of a social media presence Directorates should define the ways in which it will and will not be used. For example:

- if an account will be used to respond to individuals who contribute messages consider, how will this be managed outside of business hours
- what expectations does this raise and how will they be managed
- will you respond to all messages? If not, how does that affect the relationship with others who observe that
- If an account is not used to respond to individuals, how will this impact upon the credibility of the account, and how can this be managed?
- Should you simply use an RSS feed for news alerts and information services

Be clear with those using the social media presence through both actions and statements. Some things to consider in managing expectations include:

- be timely and consistent with responses
- where individual responses on the social media presence are not made, develop standard responses directing people to other channels such as a phone number, complaints process, contact us page or feedback form
- develop standard responses supporting moderation, for example: 'Posts containing offensive language are deleted as they breach the terms and conditions of this service. View the terms and conditions.'
- use account settings that limit the opportunities for contributors to submit offensive materials
- develop customised disclaimers or terms and conditions accessible from the social media presence
- develop complaints handling procedures for complaints filed via social media. Citizens will likely use these channels as a way of 'going direct'. You need to develop a system to respond, even if that system is simply a referral to Canberra Connect's online form.

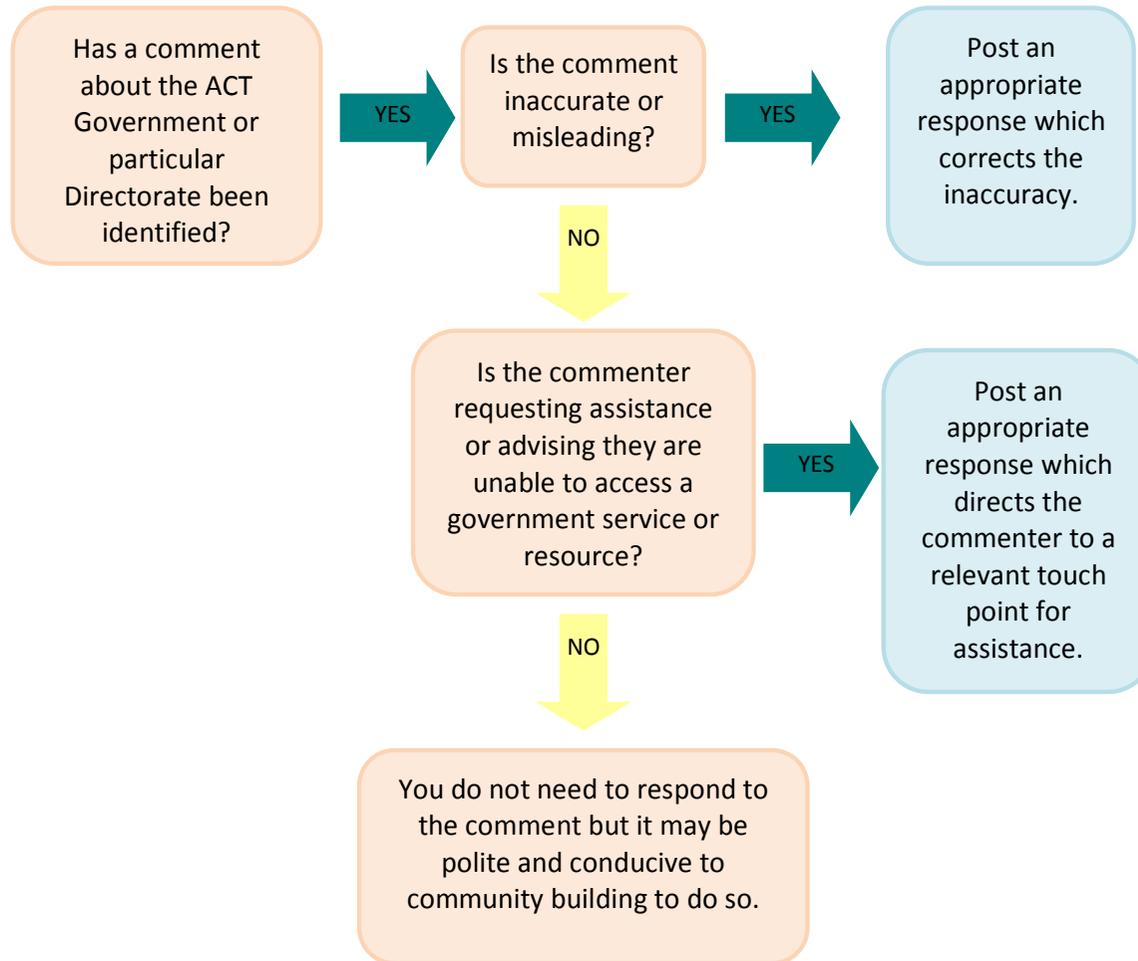
Responding within social media

Responding to others within social media from an official ACT Government account is an official communication from the Directorate, and the choice to respond should be based on deliberate decision making that considers the expectations of users of the service, as well as the risks associated with individual instances and issues.

In addition to considering the risk of responding, Directorates should also consider the risks of not responding.

Social media is an interactive channel, and users' initial expectations may be high in terms of responsive access to Government via social media. Whilst through statements and actions these expectations can be mitigated to some degree, the emergence of a significant issue on a social media presence is an opportunity to engage early and directly with those already talking about it to deliver messages that can clarify and defuse.

Figure 2 – Should you respond



Monitoring and moderation

Moderating social media

Directorates have a responsibility to moderate content or messages submitted through social media applications to protect against issues like offensive language and behaviour that may breach service terms and conditions or the law. (Note: some social media sites are not able to be moderated, e.g. Twitter, which prevents users posting content to others' accounts).

Directorates also have a responsibility to ensure social media is used genuinely, meaning that where users are enabled to publish content or comments they should not be edited where valid criticism or an alternate point of view (e.g. political or ideological) is expressed.

Directorates should appoint a moderator to review comments either pre or post publication where moderation is possible (it is not possible to pre-moderate Facebook comments, for example).

When using social media to seek online comment, Directorates should have an acceptable use policy that is clearly displayed on the site that makes it clear that:

- contributions should be relevant, non-threatening, respectful of views of others, and avoid insulting, obscene and defamatory comment
- where necessary, the moderator will remove any posts that do not comply with the acceptable use policy.

The moderation process must:

- be objective and impartial and avoid any perception that posts are being censored for political reasons
- be sensitive to the diversity of the community and avoid any perception that it is being applied in a discriminatory manner
- inform posters why their post has been rejected and give them an opportunity to resubmit.

Directorates should develop disclaimers accessible via the social media presence that account for social media and advise users on how they manage their social media presence. The disclaimer should be hosted on the official Directorate website and linked to/from relevant social media accounts.

Monitoring social media

Responding in a timely manner, particularly to critical issues, requires that Directorates monitor the activities on its accounts as well as third party social media accounts, tools and websites (similar to the way mainstream media is monitored).

While this may seem a daunting task, customer research and analytics will help inform the selection of sites, tools and terms that warrant the most attention. It is also recommended that Directorates establish an incident reporting process for the documentation of significant issues and the action taken.

As part of a risk-managed approach it is advisable that the directorate consider scenarios that may occur through social media and document the response as a guide for official social media officer/s. This will help pre-empt and ensure a consistent response to the community should critical incidents occur.

Even if official Government accounts do not exist, monitoring what is said about an issue, Directorate or topic is an advisable source of information for Government. Monitoring social media pertains not only to the activities on an official Government account but also third party accounts, networks and groups.

Monitoring can also be applied by third parties observing the interaction with the community. This is advisable for those responsible for the reputation of the Directorate, incident reporting or records management.

Several tools and services exist to assist in the monitoring of individuals, accounts or terms, such as <http://www.contextoptional.com/products/> for Facebook. Directorates should explore options for moderation management that balance risk and value for money in terms of the activity the social media presence supports.

Success measures

As with other organisational activities, social media accounts should be subjected to measurement to assess whether or not they are achieving business objectives.

Those who are carrying out social media activities on behalf of the organisation are responsible for gathering those metrics which have been agreed for their specific channel and providing that data on a regular basis.

Factsheet – Research and monitoring tools

Monitoring social media is an intrinsic part of having a social media presence. Monitoring what is said about an issue, Directorate or topic is an advisable source of intelligence for Government. Monitoring social media pertains not only to the activities on an official Directorate account but also third party accounts, networks and groups.

Alerts

Google Alerts are email updates of the latest relevant Google results (web, news, etc.) based on your choice of query or topic. These can be emailed to your Gmail address or added to your Google Reader: www.google.com/alerts.

Yahoo alerts offer a similar service: <http://alerts.yahoo.com>.

Keyword searches

The following tools search across social media applications.

- Social mention <http://socialmention.com>
- Day mix <http://daymix.com/>
- Who's talkin <http://whostalkin.com/>

Social media specific tools

Many tools have been created to help research and monitor specific social media tools. These may be useful for monitoring particular activities on single social media presences. Examples are highlighted in the Choosing a social media tool section of these guidelines.

RSS feeds

Subscribe to RSS feeds in Twitter for keywords relating to your Directorate or campaign.

It is recommended to use Google Reader to track RSS feeds. Instructions on using Google Reader can be found online.

- Mashable – how to use google reader <http://mashable.com/2008/12/07/how-to-use-google-reader/>
- Google reader in plain English video http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VSPZ2Uu_X3Y&feature=related

Analytics

Analytics software can provide details of websites linking to your Directorate website. This information can help discern where traffic is coming from, including official social media presences or other web and social media sources. By identifying these and reviewing the sources of traffic you can analyse the nature of the links and potentially address issues and engage audiences in ways that meet the needs identified from social media chatter at the source of existing traffic.

Google search

View the Google search instructions to improve search results and especially your ability to search within websites to monitor relevant online content.

<http://www.google.com.au/support/websearch/bin/answer.py?answer=136861>

Factsheet – Social media success measures

Social media is measured in several different ways. Here are some of the metrics commonly used to determine the success of your social media account.

Activity Metrics

- bounce rate – number of visitors who enter your site but exit before viewing anything other than home page
- brand mentions – how often your ‘brand is mentioned’
- comments and trackbacks
- connections (between members)
- numbers contributors
- interactivity (with other media)
- members, friends, followers – number of people who have ‘signed’ up to the site
- number of groups (networks/forums)
- page views – number of times a page has been viewed
- referrals – links to your site posted elsewhere
- tags/ratings/rankings
- time spent on site
- virility – spread of posts
- visitors/unique visitors. – number of times a site is viewed and number of individuals

Activity Ratios

- frequency: visits, posts, comments by time period
- ratios: member to contributor, posts to comments, active to passive contributors

Customer service metrics

- quality and speed of issue resolution
- relevance of content, connections
- satisfaction.

Return On Investment Measurements

- cost per lead or cost per prospect
- lead conversion
- lifetime value of customers
- number of leads per period
- number of new product ideas
- number of qualified leads per period
- ratio of qualified to non-qualified leads
- time to qualified lead.

Results

- number of mentions (tracked via web or blog search engines)
- positive/negative listing ratios on major search engines
- positive/negative sentiment in mentions.

Factsheet – Privacy and security tips

While most sites have privacy settings you can adjust to control others' access to your profile and the information you post, the default setting is usually set to open access. If you only want your profile to be accessible to those you have registered as 'friends', make sure you adjust it.

Consider the implications of limiting access to Directorate accounts. Openness and transparency should be the defaults, meaning blocking users on Twitter and locking Facebook groups designed for public interface is not advisable

Remember that it's hard to control the information once it is out there

In the online environment, privacy once lost can be extremely hard to retrieve. You can update your profile, but the comments you publish on your space or on someone else's will always exist, even if you delete your profile.

Guard against identity theft

Don't assume that anything you post online is completely private or limited to certain groups, or that password protection will be enough. Even basic information, such as an address, birthday, photo, or mobile number can be coupled with other public information, enabling someone to steal your identity.

Respect the privacy of others

Remember that everyone has different comfort levels when it comes to their privacy. Ask permission before posting information, photos or videos, and respect the choices people make.

Stay safe

In the vast majority of cases, people's experiences of social media are positive and fun-filled. But be very cautious about organising meetings via social media with people you don't know and report inappropriate communications from users to your supervisor. As a personal user of social media sites, if you feel threatened or harassed by a contact, you can remove that person as a friend, preventing them from interacting with you. If the matter escalates, you can report persistent or unwelcome contact to the police.

Use the most appropriate method of communication

When you want to communicate with a single contact or select group of people only, it may be better to communicate directly by email.

Understand the site's privacy policy

Consider the strength of assurances given about security on the sites you visit, and the conditions of acceptance. You might find that you are being asked to consent to wider commercial uses of your information.

Report abuse or misuse

All websites have 'Contact Us' sections. Use these details to report abuse or misuse.'
(From the Victorian Privacy Commissioner Website, *Privacy and Security Tips*)

Fact Sheet - Read, Learn, Do

Social media tools and the ways in which they are used change rapidly. New tools become available, change their offering, or lose favour with the community. As market penetration increases, new support services emerge such as monitoring, aggregation or management of social media accounts.

As part of establishing and maintaining your official social media presence it is recommended that you conduct research and gain practical experience in the tools available, the value they offer, how they are best used and even trialling them on a personal basis beforehand. The references below provide a starting point.

Read

Sign up to the following blogs via Facebook, email, RSS, Google Reader, follow on Twitter or your preferred application.

- <http://www.mashable.com>
- <http://www.techcrunch.com>
- <http://www.guardian.co.uk/technology>
- <http://www.news.com.au/technology>
- <http://www.smh.com.au/technology/>
- <http://www.pbs.org.au/mediashift>

Learn

- what is social media http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_media
- social media in plain English <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MpIOCIX1jPE>
- Twitter in plain English
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ddO9idmax0oandfeature=channel>
- social media in plain English
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6a_KF7TYKVcandfeature=channel
- Wikis in plain English <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-dnL00TdmlYandfeature=channel>
- the social media guide <http://thesocialmediaguide.com.au/>

Do

Set up your own personal social media accounts and get involved!

- social media <https://www.facebook.com/>
- microblogging <https://twitter.com/signup>
- Blog <http://en.wordpress.com/signup/>
- Google Reader <https://www.google.com/accounts/>

Fact Sheet – Microblogging

Microblogging is a form of blogging. A microblog differs from a traditional blog in that its content is typically much smaller, in both actual size and aggregate file size. A microblog entry could consist of nothing but a short sentence fragment, or an image or embedded video.

Examples of microblogging:

- Twitter
- Google+
- FriendFeed <http://friendfeed.com/>
- Posterous <http://posterous.com/>
- Tumblr <http://tumblr.com>

Twitter

Twitter is a free social networking site where users send and read messages known as tweets. Tweets are text, images, video and links of 140 characters or less and appear on the author's profile page and within the feed of all followers to the author.

Read and learn more about Twitter

- About Twitter <http://twitter.com/about#about>
- Getting started forum <http://help.twitter.com/forums/10711/entries>
- Twitter blog <http://blog.twitter.com/>
- Twitter Guidebook <http://mashable.com/guidebook/twitter/>

Getting started

If dedicated Directorate Twitter account is the best option, consider the following suggestions.

- Develop a plan as part of your communication strategy before starting to tweet.
- Plan what your message is and how much information should be tweeted. Twitter is no different to a media release or advertisement and should be treated with the same preparation. (The users of Twitter do expect a more conversational and rapid response approach).
- Decide if you are going to respond to tweets, once you answer one you will be expected to continue. Twitter users expect the same level of service that would be received via phone or email if you decide to set the precedent to respond to tweets.
- Prepare to engage through Twitter, you are tweeting with real people who don't like to be talked at or 'spammed'. This makes taking the above approach of only limited value – engagement is what builds community.
- Write guidelines for your campaign or Directorate on what content should be promoted and how the account should be monitored.

Checklist – Microblogging

Responding and monitoring resources (Daily)

- Set up RSS feeds for keywords relating to the Directorate or campaign, monitor daily.

- Review @ mentions and respond where possible/appropriate. Avoid ignoring replies.
- Post new relevant updates frequently.
- Check saved searches for comments not in your @ mentions. Also check automatic re-tweets which will not register in @mentions.

Limited monitoring resources (Weekly)

- Set up RSS feeds for keywords relating to the Directorate or campaign, monitor daily.
- Scan @ mentions.
- Post and schedule new relevant updates.
- Scan saved searches for comments not in your @ mentions.

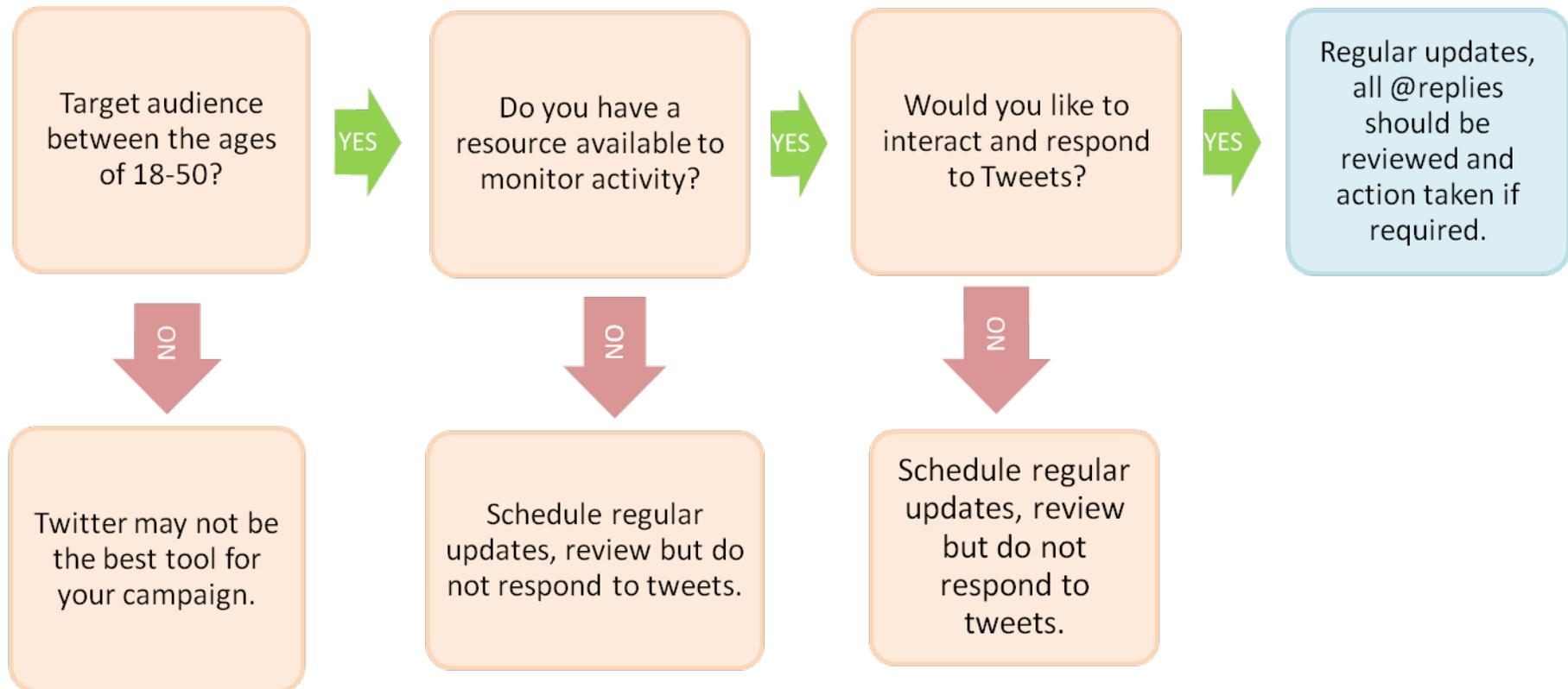
Removing content from Twitter

Creators of Twitter accounts do not have the ability to remove 'tweets' from another Twitter account which they may deem to be inappropriate; only Twitter has administrator access and therefore the ability to remove inappropriate tweets. But comments directed at a user are not actually published on the recipients Twitter 'page'.

All Twitter users agree to abide by the Twitter 'Terms of Services' <http://twitter.com/tos> ('Twitter Terms'). The Twitter Rules <http://help.twitter.com/forums/26257/entries/18311> form part of the Twitter Terms ('Twitter Rules'). The Twitter Rules set out minimum standards for use of Twitter and the content of tweets.

Any breaches of the Twitter rules can be reported to Twitter by submitting a 'ticket request' or reporting the content to Twitter <http://help.twitter.com/entries/15789-how-to-file-terms-of-service-or-rules-complaints>. As a result Twitter may (but it is not obligated to) remove the offending tweet.

Figure 3 – Use of Twitter



Fact Sheet - Social Networking

Social networking sites focus on building online communities of people who share a common interest or interested in exploring the interests and activities of others. For example:

- Facebook <http://www.facebook.com/>
- Myspace <http://www.myspace.com/>
- LinkedIn <http://www.linkedin.com/>
- Facebook is the most popular social networking tool as of June 2010. It is recommended to investigate other options available.

Facebook

Facebook's mission is to give people the power to share and make the world more open and connected. Millions of people use Facebook everyday to keep up with friends, upload an unlimited number of photos, share links and videos, and learn more about the people they meet.

Facebook <http://www.facebook.com/facebook?ref=pf#/facebook?v=infoandref=pf>

Read and learn more about Facebook

- About Facebook <http://www.facebook.com/facebook?ref=pf>
- Using Facebook <http://www.facebook.com/help.php?ref=pf>
- Facebook business accounts <http://www.facebook.com/help.php?page=721>
- Facebook pages vs. groups <http://mashable.com/2009/05/27/facebook-page-vs-group/>
- Apps for Facebook <http://mashable.com/2009/05/13/facebook-brand-apps/>

Getting started

- Develop a plan as part of your communication strategy before starting setting up a Facebook page or group.
- Plan what your message is and how much information should be shared. Facebook is no different to a media release or advertisement and should be treated with the same preparation.
- Decide if you are going to respond to comments, once you answer one you will be expected to continue. Facebook users expect the same level of service that would be received via phone or email if you decide to set the precedent to respond to comments.
- Prepare to engage through Facebook, you are sharing with real people who don't like to be talked at or 'spammed'.
- Write guidelines on what content should be promoted and how the account should be monitored.

Government and Facebook

A Facebook group has been created titled Facebook and Government

http://www.facebook.com/Government?fb_noscript=1#/Government?v=wall

which advises on the best ways for Government to use Facebook.

Checklist - Social networking

Business hours monitoring (Daily)

- Monitor wall and discussions regularly.
- Turn off wall comments after hours (set status to inform) (Explain in 'information' section when and why this happens).
- Respond or comment where possible/appropriate.
- Post new relevant updates.

24hr monitoring (Daily)

- Monitor wall and discussions regularly.
- Respond or comment where appropriate.
- Post new relevant updates or generate discussions.

Limited monitoring resources (Weekly)

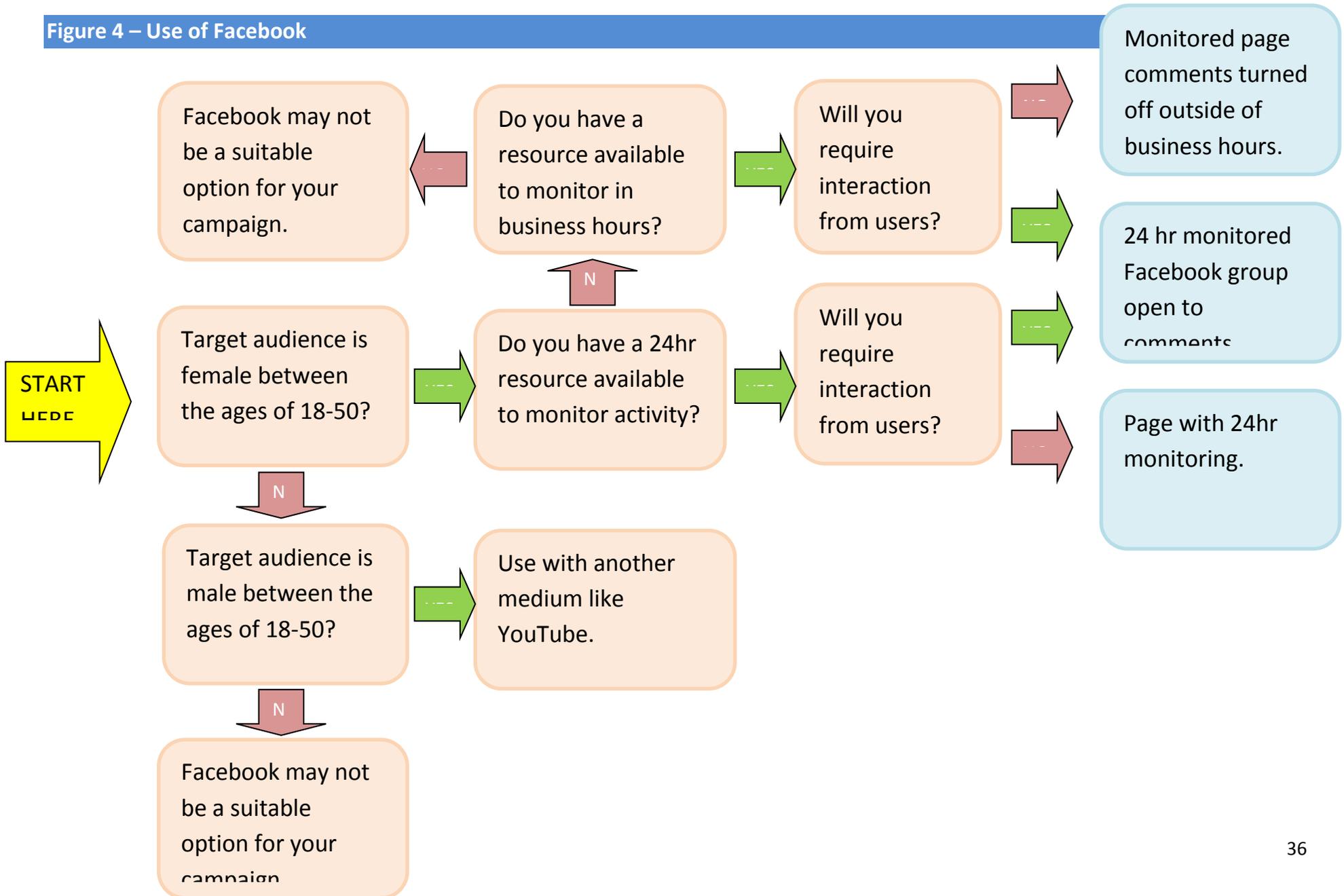
- scan comments and updates
- post and schedule new relevant updates
- scan saved searches for comments or new related pages and groups.

Example disclaimer – Facebook

Creators of Facebook pages have 'administrator' access to that page and the ability to remove comments and content posted by other Facebook users. The same is true for Facebook groups hung off Facebook profiles.

The conditions of use for Facebook, the 'Statement of Rights and Responsibilities' can be found at <http://www.facebook.com/terms.php?ref=pf>

Figure 4 – Use of Facebook



Fact Sheet - Reference

A wiki is an online Content Management System with access rights to allow users to easily create and edit web pages within a browser. Wikis are often used to create collaborative websites or corporate intranets. For example:

- Wikipedia <http://www.wikipedia.org/>
- wetpaint <http://www.wetpaint.com/>
- pbwiki <http://pbworks.com/>

Please note there are many wiki options available to you. Wikipedia have been chosen as it is a strong resource to promote your Directorate's research and work. Please review the Read, Learn, Do section to begin researching other wiki options if Wikipedia is not suitable for your Directorate's needs.

Wikipedia

Wikipedia is a multilingual, web-based, free-content encyclopaedia project based on an openly-editable model. The name 'Wikipedia' is a portmanteau of the words wiki (a technology for creating collaborative websites, from the Hawaiian word wiki, meaning 'quick') and encyclopaedia. Wikipedia's articles provide links to guide the user to related pages with additional information.

Wikipedia <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:About>

Getting started

Recommended use of Wikipedia is as support for the content already available on your Directorate's website. Wikipedia is a great resource to boost your search engine optimisation (SEO) and improve results in searches. Single point of truth is your Directorate's website, Wikipedia is a secondary medium to find the information.

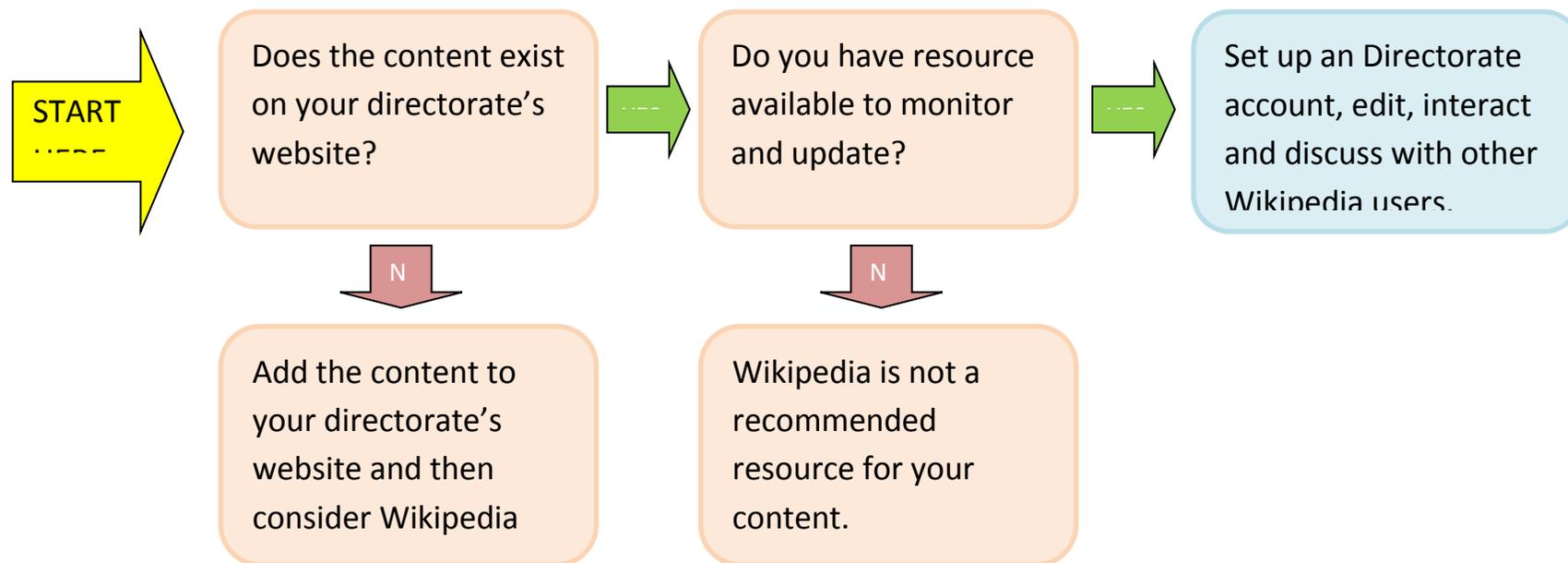
- Develop a plan as part of your communication strategy before editing pages.
- Plan what your message is and how much information should be updated. Wikipedia is no different to a media release or advertisement and should be treated with the same preparation.
- Write guidelines on what content should be promoted and how the account should be monitored. Ensure to include regular monitoring of updates as part of your guideline.
- Participate in the discussions when changes are made so you can become part of the community.
- Wikipedia editors are passionate and actively involved in maintaining and ensuring the integrity of content. Read their comments under the 'Discussion' tab before making edits.
- Wikipedia editing tool is not intuitive, you may need support from your web team to edit content.

- Other users will edit your content, often their edits will be correcting referencing and reordering of information and may improve the content. Always check changes to ensure accuracy of content.

Review of content (Daily)

- add relevant pages to your watch list
- review any changes made to pages
- add relevant content
- participate in discussions if making changes.

Figure 5 – Use of Wikipedia



Fact Sheet - Blogs

There are many options available for blogging, this guideline is not focusing on a particular tool, please research and determine the best option for you.

A blog is a personal diary. A daily pulpit. A collaborative space. A political soapbox. A breaking-news outlet. A collection of links. Your own private thoughts. Memos to the world.

Your blog is whatever you want it to be. There are millions of them, in all shapes and sizes, and there are no real rules.

In simple terms, a blog is a website, where you write stuff on an ongoing basis. New stuff shows up at the top, so your visitors can read what's new. Then they comment on it or link to it or email you. Or not.

Adapted from Google - Blogger, http://www.blogger.com/tour_start.g

What are blog posts?

To get slightly more technical, the 'stuff' that the Google explanation above refers to is better described as posts. Think of posts as entries you might make in a traditional diary or articles that you would find in a magazine.

Blog posts are displayed in reverse chronological order so that the very latest post will appear at the top and the earlier posts will appear underneath it.

What makes up a post?

There are some common characteristics that make up a blog post:

- a post will have a title or a headline, similar in format to newspaper articles or the subject field of an email
- the main body of the post, the core 'blog' content, appears under the title – your content depends upon your particular blog and is limited only by your imagination, e.g. you may upload a photograph to your post. The title would relate to the photo and the content would be the actual photo and any other content you might want to include
- the post will more often than not have a date and time stamp so that readers will know when you put the post online
- usually posts will have comments, this is where readers can respond to the post – it should be noted that not all blogs have comments despite the value that they can add
- you may also find categories and tags which are ways of describing the post through keywords and themes.

What's the difference between a web log and blog?

Nothing at all, the term blog comes from web-log, they are the same thing except very few people still use the term web-log.

Getting started

- Develop a plan as part of your communication strategy before starting setting up a blog.
- Plan what your message is and how much information should be shared. Blogs are no different to a media release or advertisement and should be treated with the same preparation.
- Decide if you are going to respond to comments, once you answer one you will be expected to continue. Blog users expect the same level of service that would be received via phone or email if you decide to set the precedent to respond to comments.
- Prepare to engage through your blog, you are sharing with real people who don't like to be talked at, or 'spammed'.
- Write guidelines on what content should be promoted and how the account should be monitored. Ensure to include regular monitoring of updates as part of your guideline.
- Blogs are a great resource to boost your search engine optimisation (SEO) and improve results in searches.
- Single point of truth is your Directorate's website; blogs are a secondary medium to find the information.
- Link information back to your website.
- Requires daily monitoring and regular updates (fortnightly at least)
- Creating a personal blog will help in your understanding of the level of commitment required to start, maintain and respond.

Participation

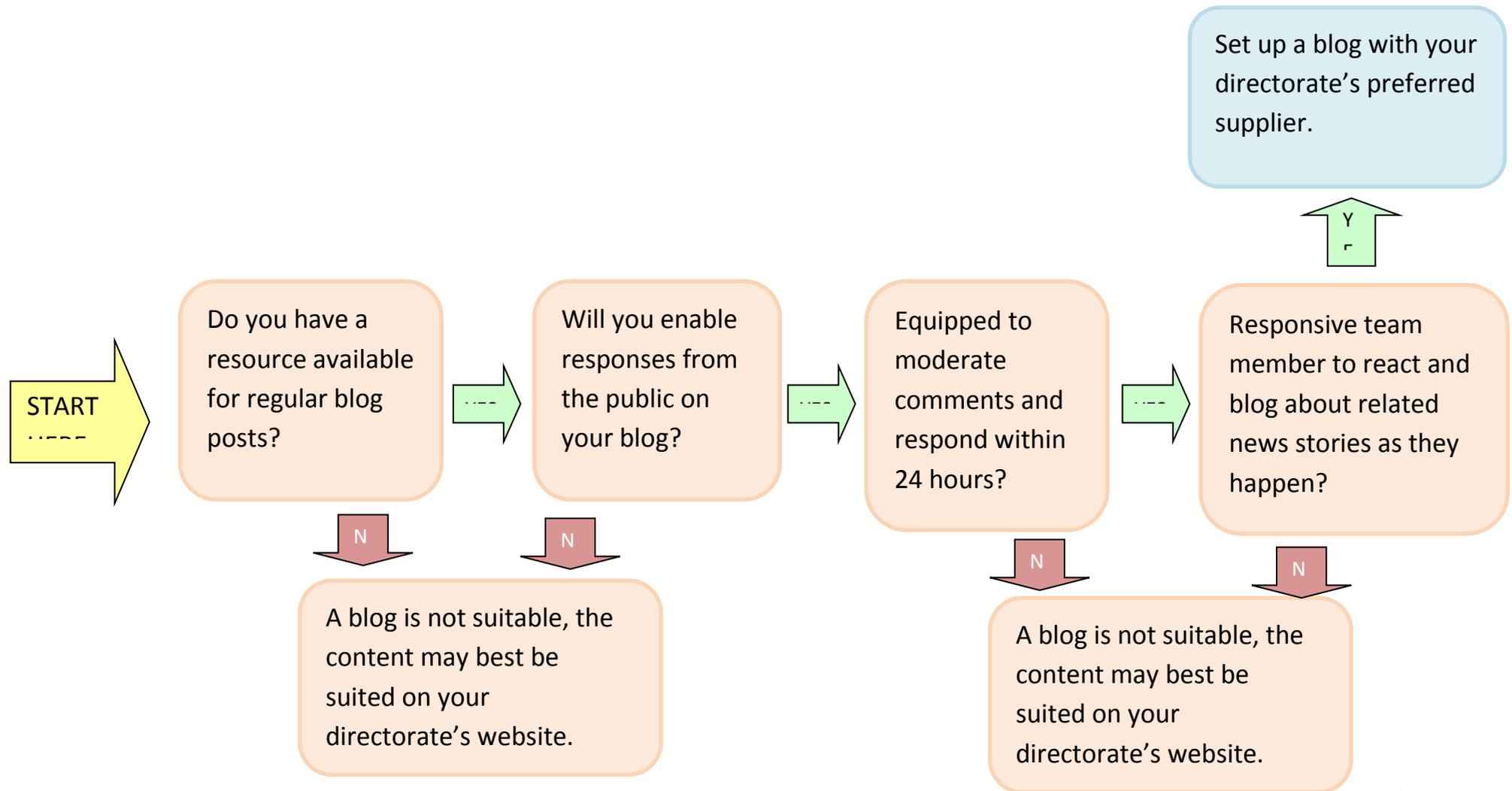
Setting up a blog may not be suitable for your Directorate or campaign, but think about actively participating in existing blogs as a means of:

- interacting with a community of interest
- setting right any rumours or incorrect information
- being a face for your Directorate or research project.

Set up a personal blog

Create a personal Blog on Wordpress or Blogger and start discussing a personal topic of interest. Follow other blogs of interest, read and interact with these blogs. View comments and interactions from readers and understand what is expected by the blogging community.

Figure 6 – Use of Blogs



Fact Sheet - Video and image sharing

Video and image sharing sites allow users to upload video clips and images to a website for the purpose of allowing others to view the content. For example:

- YouTube <http://www.youtube.com/>
- Flickr <http://www.flickr.com/>
- Vimeo <http://www.vimeo.com/>

This guideline focuses on YouTube and Flickr, but it is recommended that Directorates investigate other options available.

Accessibility

Use of online video and image sharing websites should comply with accessibility standards which require accessible alternatives for media.

Copyright, permission and ownership

Be aware of potential loss of copyright or permission required by participants to appear on online video and image sharing websites.

Online video – YouTube

YouTube is an online video sharing site which enables users to upload their own videos or watch others. Users are able to comment, rate and share videos from YouTube.

Using YouTube

- Video toolbox http://www.youtube.com/video_toolbox
- Get advice from professionals on preparing your videos for online use
- YouTube help centre
http://www.google.com/support/youtube/bin/static.py?p=andpage=start.csandhl=en_GB
- YouTube community forums
<http://www.google.com/support/forum/p/youtube?hl=en>

Getting started

- Develop a plan as part of your communication strategy before starting setting up a YouTube account.
- Plan what your message is and what videos should be shared.
- Decide if you are going to respond to comments, once you answer one you will be expected to continue. Review the moderation of comments section of this Guideline for assistance.
- Write guidelines on what content should be promoted and how the account should be monitored.

Read and learn more about YouTube

‘Don’t make these mistakes with your Online Brand’ from Harvard Business Review
http://blogs.hbr.org/cs/2010/05/dont_make_these_mistakes_with.html

Example disclaimer - YouTube

Creators of YouTube channels have ‘administrator’ access to that channel and the ability to remove comments by other YouTube users posted on the channel. The conditions of use for YouTube <http://www.youtube.com/t/terms> do not restrict administrators of YouTube channels from disclosing the types of comments they will remove from the channels.

Image sharing - Flickr

Flickr is an online photo management and sharing application.

- Upload photos to an account via a browser, email or camera phone.
- Edit your photos online to remove red-eye, add text, crop and add effects.
- Organise your photos.
- Share with adjustable privacy controls.
- Mark where your photos were taken on maps.

Using Flickr

- How to get the most out of Flickr http://www.flickr.com/get_the_most.gne
- Flickr forum <http://www.flickr.com/help/forum/en-us/>
- Flickr is not for commercial use. Flickr is intended for personal use.

Getting started

- Develop a plan as part of your communication strategy before starting setting up a YouTube account.
- Plan what your message is and what videos should be shared.
- Decide if you are going to respond to comments, once you answer one you will be expected to continue.
- Review the moderation of comments section of this Guideline for assistance.
- Write guidelines on what content should be promoted and how the account should be monitored.

Follow three simple rules to maintain a good Flickr account:

- think before you post – is the photo ok for the world to view
- keep photos relevant
- always have a signed consent form for people in the photo.