



## NDE Education Section: Twitter Guidelines

Version 1.0 04/15/15

### 1. PURPOSE

These guidelines provide the steps and principles that must be considered when representing NDE online in an employee's official capacity while using Twitter.

### 2. SCOPE AND APPLICABILITY

These guidelines apply to NDE employees representing NDE online in their official capacities and to contractors working on behalf of NDE. These guidelines do not apply to employees' online activities while not on official duty; however, employees are always bound by the **Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees of the Executive Branch, the conflict of interest statutes, and the Hatch Act**. There are ethical obligations to follow even when employees are engaged in their personal capacities. For example, even in their personal capacities, employees should not misuse their NDE positions or titles.

### 3. AUDIENCE

The audience for this policy includes any NDE employee, contractor, or other person who uses social media on behalf of NDE

### 4. BACKGROUND

Twitter offers employees the chance to engage with the public in new ways. The general public has a strong interest in NDE, and they are using social media tools to share information and opinions about the Agency's activities. It benefits the Nebraska Department of Education to share content that includes anything related to NDE, the State of Nebraska, or assists your program, including interesting data visualizations, announcements of new services, job fairs, job postings, etc.

### 5. AUTHORITY

**CIO Policy 2184.0: Social Media Policy (June 20, 2011) 5 C.F.R. 2635.703 Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees of the Executive Branch (PDF).**

### 6. GUIDELINES

When employees participate on NDE's behalf in social media as part of their official duties, they are representing the Agency. They should exercise the same decorum and professionalism that they would if they were speaking on NDE's behalf at a conference or public meeting. Even online, when we are functioning in an official capacity, we are the Agency's representatives and the same managerial considerations and ethical principles apply.

- Employees must obtain their supervisor's approval before representing NDE online, and must

not opine on behalf of the Agency in areas that are outside their assigned duties.

- Any posting performed by Agency employees acting in their official capacity should be properly cited and fully supported.

Steps for representing NDE online in an official capacity:

1. **Represent your office.** The line between public and private, personal and professional can sometimes get blurred in online social networks.
  - a. It is important that you remember that you are participating in your official capacity and not in your personal capacity. Make sure that your online activities and online content associated with you while you are officially representing NDE are consistent with your job responsibilities at NDE.
  - b. If you see online errors about NDE that are not in your area of expertise or you are not authorized to represent NDE in regard to the subject matter, then pass them on to someone who is an expert in the area or who is authorized to represent NDE in regard to that issue. If you do not know whom to contact, please consult with your LC.
  - c. Postings need to be directly related to your program area.
2. **Respect your time and effort.** Consider the time and effort needed to respond and the value of your participation. Contractors should discuss and obtain approval from their NDE contract manager.
  - a. Time to research and write a posting, response, or edit.
  - b. Likely viewership and value of participating.
  - c. Importance of the issue.
  - d. Ensure that message is clear and concise.
  - e. Post regularly.
3. **Adhere to the basic Twitter account expectations.** These Twitter accounts are not specific to the person in the role, but the position. All Twitter accounts will follow the same nomenclature: @NDE\_position/team (i.e. @NDE\_eLearning, @NDE\_ELA)
  - a. Twitter Avatar must consist of an NDE provided headshot of person running account or approved program logo
  - b. Twitter Banner must consist of the NDE Team-specific logo, available from Director of Marketing, Communications, and Creative Services
  - c. The bio must describe the program that the account represents and include "RT≠Endorsement"
  - d. The webpage URL must link to 3rd party disclaimer: <http://bit.ly/NDEsmcomments>
4. **Know who to follow and who follows you.**
  - a. Following:
    - Professional organizations related to your program or team's mission (e.g. ASCD, ISTE, NAEYC)
    - International or nationally recognized experts in your program area (e.g. Sir Ken Robinson, Arne Duncan, Dave Burgess)
    - State or local individuals whose posts are relevant to your program area
  - b. Followers:
    - When blocking accounts, please refer to Moderating Third Party Comments in Administrative Memorandum #713
5. **State facts, not opinions.** Generally, when representing NDE online, do not engage in discussions of opinion about NDE's programs, because promoting ourselves instead of focusing on facts could be construed as propaganda or lobbying.

- a. Cite your sources when stating facts.
  - b. Identify supporting sources. If a supporting source is online, then provide information so that others can access it. Online support may include EPA Web pages and other materials including video and audio; offline bibliographical references are second-best. Do not edit or write without supporting citations, and include a disclaimer to clarify that references made to non-EPA information do not constitute an endorsement.
6. **Protect nonpublic information.** Social media blur many of the traditional boundaries between internal and external communications.
- a. Be thoughtful about what you publish or post online.
  - b. Do not disclose or use nonpublic information.
  - c. Pay attention to the rules about misuse of position.
  - d. If you would not say something offline or include it in a written letter, do not post it online.
  - e. When posting photos of students, it is your responsibility to obtain permission to post
7. **Ethics apply, even online.** As an NDE employee, you are bound by the Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees of the Executive Branch.
- a. Do not use your public office or EPA position, title or authority for private gain.
  - b. Do not misuse government property or government time.
  - c. Do not divulge nonpublic information, which includes any information that is exempt from disclosure that is designated as confidential, or has not actually been disseminated to the public and is not authorized to be made available to the public upon request.
  - d. Abide by the Hatch Act and do not lobby.
  - e. Contractors must follow contracting rules.
- Simply put, behave professionally, responsibly, impartially and above all ethically, and with your supervisor's approval.
8. **Attend relevant Twitter trainings provided by the NEat Team.**
- a. Attend a Twitter Basics course.
  - b. Learn about participating in Twitter chats.