

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
WASHINGTON, DC 20250**

<b>DEPARTMENTAL REGULATION</b>		<b>Number:</b> 1495-001
<b>SUBJECT:</b> New Media Roles, Responsibilities and Authorities	<b>DATE:</b> May 23, 2011	
	<b>OPI:</b> Office of Communication	

**1. PURPOSE**

This policy establishes the requirements for the implementation of new media technologies within the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). Unless otherwise specified, this directive applies to all USDA agencies, employees, contractors, interns, and partners utilizing new media technologies for official USDA purposes.

**2. BACKGROUND**

The USDA is actively developing new media assets and encourages the use of social media tools and technologies to enhance the Department’s communication efforts, for program delivery, and to provide services to the public more efficiently.

The use of new media tools and technologies enable enhanced awareness and education about the Department, its operations, and the core mission. New media facilitates improved communications that are relevant, timely, credible, and responsive to our mission and the public’s interest.

USDA encourages the use of new media to foster a more open and transparent relationship with the public. By using a variety of tools and increasing accessibility, USDA encourages greater informational awareness with stakeholders. New media programs will enhance communication, transparency, collaboration, and participation to advance the mission of USDA, its agencies and the priorities of the federal government.

All USDA agency new media efforts will support the *One USDA* approach for style, content, and engagement with the public. The *One USDA* approach seeks to provide a consistent, valuable experience for stakeholders that unify all mission areas and offices, leveraging available expertise and technologies.

When President Abraham Lincoln founded the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) in 1862, he called it “The People’s Department.” USDA continues today to play a significant role, touching nearly every American every day. From protecting our agricultural and natural resources to ensuring food safety and basic nutrition for our citizens, our mission is rooted in the spirit and heritage of America itself.

To convey this important role, the *One USDA* approach ensures consistent communications, branding and customer experience consistent with One Department, One Mission, One USDA. This approach provides the structure and consistency to all of our communications to ensure that we communicate more efficiently and effectively by adhering to a common framework. As we work within this coordinated system, our communications and civil engagement will have a stronger, more lasting impact. Our *One USDA* approach will lead to higher levels of trust and improved relationships with employees, partners and customers. Our brand is our reputation. It is the overall impression we make on the people we serve. Moreover, it carries the authority of the Department and the U.S. Government.

The Office of Communications (OC) and the Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO) will jointly evaluate new media efforts and supporting technologies to ensure appropriate and efficient use of resources.

### 3. APPLICABILITY

This policy applies to all internally and externally utilized new media sites, accounts, or profiles, including sites owned, managed, and/or contracted for USDA communication efforts.

### 4. SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS

This policy supplements the following USDA regulations:

- (1) DR 1470-001, Policy for Visual Communication Standards
- (2) DR1490-001, Broadcast Media and Technology Policy
- (3) DR 3430-001, Web Site Development and Maintenance
- (4) USDA Web Style Guide ver 2.1
- (5) DM 3525-002, Internet Use and Copyright Restrictions

### 5. DEFINITIONS

New media: Consists of a number of technologies that facilitate interactions among stakeholders using a variety of web- or mobile-based tools and technologies. “Web 2.0” and “social media” are umbrella terms that encompass the various activities that utilize digital technologies, social engagement, and content delivery. Such activities involve many technologies and communication methodologies including, but not limited to, blogs, photo and video sharing services, social networking, geospatial mapping tools, discussion forums, and wikis. These technologies may enable social tagging and bookmarking and mobile messaging. “Web 2.0,” “social media” and “new media” may be used interchangeably throughout the Directive. This policy will use the term “new media” to classify such activities.

Privacy policy: A statement made by an organization regarding why, how, and pursuant to what legal authority (if applicable) personal data is being collected at a public web site or social media site, and how the owner of the site will use any information obtained.

## 6. POLICY

- a. USDA Office of Communications (OC), Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO) and, as appropriate, the Office of General Council (OGC) will jointly evaluate agency, program, and individual requests to establish official new media accounts or activities.
  - (1) Agencies must submit a new media request (see [AD-3022](#)) and business case or strategic communication plan, as appropriate, to OC Web Communications Division. Information will be evaluated with OCIO and OGC as appropriate. Access will be approved or denied based on existing contracts and services, availability of similar tools or resources, and capacity to support new media activities or digital technologies.
- b. Content published to official new media accounts or distributed through digital media also must be Section 508 compliant and accessible to USDA stakeholders and employees on Department or agency web sites or printed materials, including but not limited to brochures or fact sheets.
  - (1) Content must be approved through appropriate communication channels before publication or distribution.
  - (2) Records must be maintained for original or unique content created or published to new media accounts or platforms, such as public comments or information posted by individuals acting on behalf of the Department.
  - (3) Each Agency or program office is responsible for maintaining records related to their new media accounts or activities.
  - (4) New media accounts and platforms do not replace official mechanisms and requirements for soliciting public comment and policy-making activities.
- c. Approved Department or agency personnel may contribute content and engage with stakeholders on new media accounts and platforms within their official capacity.
  - (1) Department personnel must first obtain approval from Department, agency, or program supervisors before creating accounts or publishing content to external new media accounts related to official duties.
  - (2) Department personnel supporting new media activities or representing the Department in an official capacity should use e-mail addresses or web sites created

specifically and solely for official duties that are separate from personal accounts for private use.

- d. Employees may access new media sites and accounts in accordance with current laws, policies and guidance that govern information and information technology.
  - (1) Personal or private users of new media websites or accounts should not claim to officially represent the Department or its policies, or use the Department or other U.S. government seals or logos. Personal or private activities may not violate federal ethics rules.

## 7. RESPONSIBILITIES

- a. The USDA Office of Communications (OC) is responsible for:
  - (1) Establishing policy for implementation of new media communication activities and digital technologies within USDA.
  - (2) Consulting with Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO) for technological capabilities for new media and communication needs, and with Office of the General Counsel (OGC) for legal considerations.
  - (3) Establishing the framework under which agencies will identify and develop appropriate new media tools within their existing capacity in support of the Department's *One USDA* initiative.
  - (4) Enforcing policy through compliance reviews, automated tools, maintaining archives, quarterly reporting mechanisms, or other technologies.
  - (5) Approving, denying, and rescinding with OCIO consultation implementations of Department or agency new media accounts or profiles.
  - (6) Providing general guidance, style, and format direction as well as content revision or modification to agencies and staff offices in planning and implementing new media technologies.
- a. The Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO) is responsible for:
  - (1) Reviewing and identifying digital tools or technologies for the Department to more efficiently support the business needs.
  - (2) Reporting to the Office of Communications (OC) the status of new media accounts or technologies, web site development, or other web-enhanced communication efforts.

- (3) Working with the OC to ensure that new media technologies comply with established USDA IT security, archival and records management requirements.
  - (4) Working with the Office of the General Counsel to ensure that new media technologies comply with established legal requirements.
  - (5) Ensuring that new media sites comply with all applicable National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), Office of Management and Budget (OMB), Federal Information Security Management Act of 2002 (FISMA), National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), USDA, and other federal policies and guidance;
- b. The Office of General Council (OGC) is responsible for:
- (1) Reviewing applicable legal documentation in the form of new media site Terms of Service (TOS) agreements.
  - (2) Providing the Department and agencies with legal guidance and advice on issue-specific situations.
  - (3) Providing enforcement justifications for the removal or deactivation of Department or agency profiles and accounts based upon agency or department staff performance or utilization, content, or other issue with legal implications for the Department or agency.
- c. Individual Agencies are responsible for:
- (1) Identifying and delegating authority to their respective Public Affairs and Chief Information Office staffs to develop plans, request permission to establish agency profiles and accounts, and develop, monitor and revise content and information about the agency through new media profiles and accounts;
    - (a) Consulting with OC and OCIO for new media approval, guidance, archiving, and technology development.
    - (b) Drafting and establishing integrated communication strategic plans for inclusion of new media efforts with existing agency communication goals and objectives.
    - (c) Coordinating the promotion and cross-promotion of agency new media profiles and accounts, and leveraging other agency or Department accounts to increase the reach and effectiveness of new media efforts.
    - (d) Supporting Department-wide new media efforts.
    - (e) Monitoring content and accounts or profiles for reach and effectiveness using available internet-based new media tracking tools.

- (2) Ensuring that new media activities are conducted in the same professional manner as other USDA communication efforts that support the *One USDA* approach.
- (3) Establishing agency-level guidance that supports agency and Department communication protocols for identifying agency content developers, and outlining the content approval process, to delineate who officially speaks for the agency and approves content.
- (4) Ensuring that agency new media support personnel are trained in all aspects of the appropriate use of the technology and comply with all relevant and applicable authorities and regulations, including those found at Appendix A.
- (5) Identifying and properly archiving record material in accordance with approved records disposition schedules.
- (6) Ensuring that records on new media web sites are copied or otherwise captured and maintained with related records, unless the site has a records management application that can manage the record throughout its lifecycle.

-END-

## Appendix A

### Authorities and References

DR3080-001 Records Management

DR3090-0001 Litigation Retention Policy for Documentary materials including Electronically Stored Information

DR3300-1-I Internet Appropriate Use

DR3430-001 Web Site Development and Maintenance

DR3450-002 FOIA Implementing Regulations

DM3515-000 Privacy Requirements

DM3515-001 Collection of Web Page Cookies and Privacy Requirements

DM3525-002 USDA Internet Use and Copyright Restrictions

DR4030-001 Section 508 Implementation - Final Guidance

DR4070-735-001 Employee Responsibilities and Conduct

DR1410-001 Publications Review/Clearance Policy

DR1440-002 Communications Coordination and Review Policy

Federal Records Act, 44 U.S.C. 2108 and 44 U.S.C. 31, Records Managed by Federal Agencies

Freedom of Information Act, Privacy Act of 1974

NIST SP 800-44 Revision 2, *Securing Public Web Servers*, September 2007

NIST SP 800-95, *Guide to Secure Web Services*, August 2007

[M-10-23, Guidance for Agency Use of Third-Party Websites and Applications](#) (6/25/2010)

Office of Management and Budget (OMB) M-10-06, Open Government Directive (12/08/2009)

OMB M-10-22, Guidance on the Use of Challenges and Prizes to Promote Open Government (03/08/2010)

OMB M-10-22, Guidance for Online Use of Web Measurement and Customization Technologies (7/25/2010)

OMB M-10-23, Guidance for Agency Use of Third-Party Websites and Applications (7/25/2010)

Paperwork Reduction Act (44 U.S.C. 3501 et seq.)

USDA Comment Policy (2/01/2010)

[http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/!ut/p/s.7 0 A/7 0 1OB?contentidonly=true&contentid=comment\\_policy.xml](http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/!ut/p/s.7 0 A/7 0 1OB?contentidonly=true&contentid=comment_policy.xml)

USDA Open Government Plan, Version 1.1 (7/1/2010)

[http://usda.gov/open/Blog.nsf/dx/USDA\\_Open\\_Government\\_Plan\\_Version1\\_1.pdf/\\$file/USDA\\_Open\\_Government\\_Plan\\_Version1\\_1.pdf](http://usda.gov/open/Blog.nsf/dx/USDA_Open_Government_Plan_Version1_1.pdf/$file/USDA_Open_Government_Plan_Version1_1.pdf)