

GUIDE

# From Tweets to Impact

8 steps to building an innovative government social media strategy



# From Tweets to Impact

8 steps to building an innovative government social media strategy

## Table of Contents

Introduction .....	3
<b>Step #1:</b> Increase efficiency by controlling account sprawl.....	5
<b>Step #2:</b> Centralize access to ensure a strategic use of resources .....	6
<b>Step #3:</b> Strengthen security with three checklists .....	7
<b>Step #4:</b> Improve customer service by mapping responsibilities .....	8
<b>Step #5:</b> Gain oversight and control with the right social governance model .....	10
<b>Step #6:</b> Empower employees to confidently serve constituents .....	14
<b>Step #7:</b> Improve results by following your social leaders .....	15
<b>Step #8:</b> Accelerate government transformation with education .....	16
<b>Next steps</b> .....	18

---

# Introduction

Social media has created new ways for governments to work together more efficiently and decrease operational costs. But innovation isn't without hurdles. In this guide, you'll discover eight steps your government can take to better manage social sprawl, maintain the security of social media accounts, and deliver efficient service to constituents.

In the early years of social media, governments could easily keep track of their social media activity and reach constituents with a few Twitter accounts or Facebook pages. But things have changed—constituents are more vocal on social, require relevant and timely information on multiple social channels, and expect governments to participate in conversations about local or federal issues and policies.

"Digital is no longer an add-on," says Stephen Hardwick, the Director of Corporate Communications at the UK's HM Revenue & Customs, in a recent blog post. "It's the core of how we now need to communicate."<sup>1</sup>

As social accounts and contributors grow, the way a government organizes its social media—how it allocates responsibilities, structures teams, and collaborates with other agencies and departments—can have a substantial impact on the effectiveness of social media.

For example, one of Hootsuite's customers is a mid-sized city with 60 social media accounts. They also have agencies and partners they collaborate with including community centers, city libraries, elected officials, and the police department.

Without the right foundation and integrated strategy, it becomes hard to maintain a unified voice.

In this guide, you'll master eight key steps to organizing your social presence. This will give you a high level view of how to create an innovative and integrated social media strategy.

These eight steps are based on what we've seen to work for our government customers around the world including the City of New York, Barcelona City Council, the City of Melbourne, the City of Boston, Australia Post, Centro, UK Trade and Investment, Ministry of Defence UK, and Scottish Enterprise.

## Why read this guide?

If you follow the eight steps in this guide, you'll gain:



### A new way to collaborate across all groups.

Social is changing how governments, agencies, and departments work together. It's enabling the civil service to become more unified, encouraging collaboration, and helping create new efficient policies and secure workflows.



### Monitor incidents and quickly share critical information.

With more collaboration and transparency, governments are reducing the time and cost of sharing critical information with constituents.



### Build secure and efficient processes.

By developing better processes and managing account sprawl, it's easier to shift from everyday updates to coordinated emergency management. You'll also secure social accounts, preventing cyber vandalism.

### A brief note about global terminology



This guide offers a global perspective on government and social media. To account for differences in terminology from country to country, we'll use a few standard terms.

**"Constituents"** refers to the people, citizens, or taxpayers that cities, government branches, and agencies are trying to reach and serve on social media.

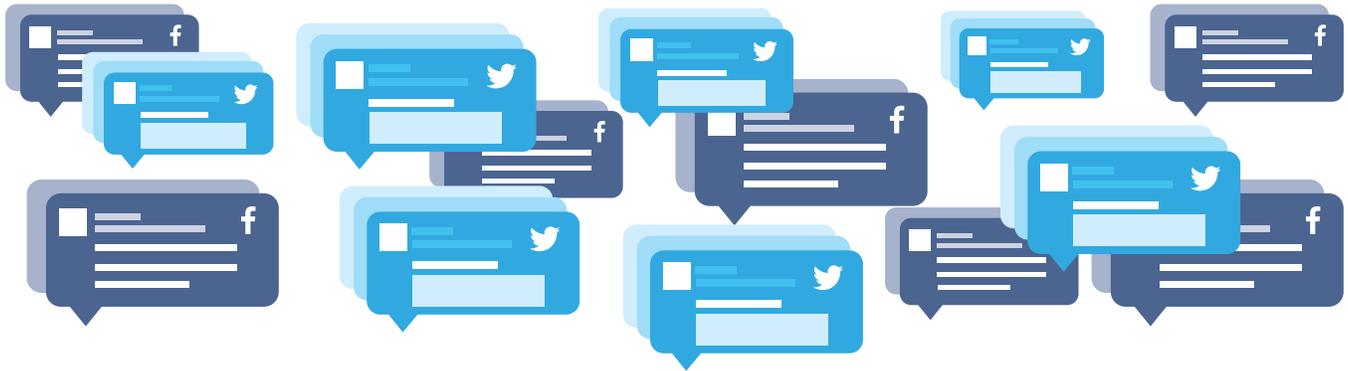
**"Federal government"** refers to national government branches such as the defense ministries, the U.K. Department of Education, or the National Treasury Board.

**"Local government"** refers to municipal and regional government branches such as county councils, district councils, metropolitan districts, and boroughs.

**"Agencies"** refers to ministries and organizations within governments responsible for specific functions such as public health, emergency response, or financial oversight, as well as federal organizations such as the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), CENAPRED, the National Environment Agency, or the British Secret Intelligence Service (MI6).

**"Departments"** refers to the divisions within federal and local government. For example, a small city might have communications, tax administration, public works, parks and recreation, police and fire departments. All of these departments will have different goals for using social media and perhaps different social accounts.

# Step #1



## Increase efficiency by controlling account sprawl

Begin with an audit to locate ineffective and inactive accounts. This is the first step to a cohesive strategy and more efficient workflows.

When the Barcelona City Council audited their social media presence, they found 600 social media accounts and nearly 100 teams and departments sharing content, often with different accounts duplicating work.

With so many accounts and voices speaking at once, it was difficult for citizens to know how to connect with their city.

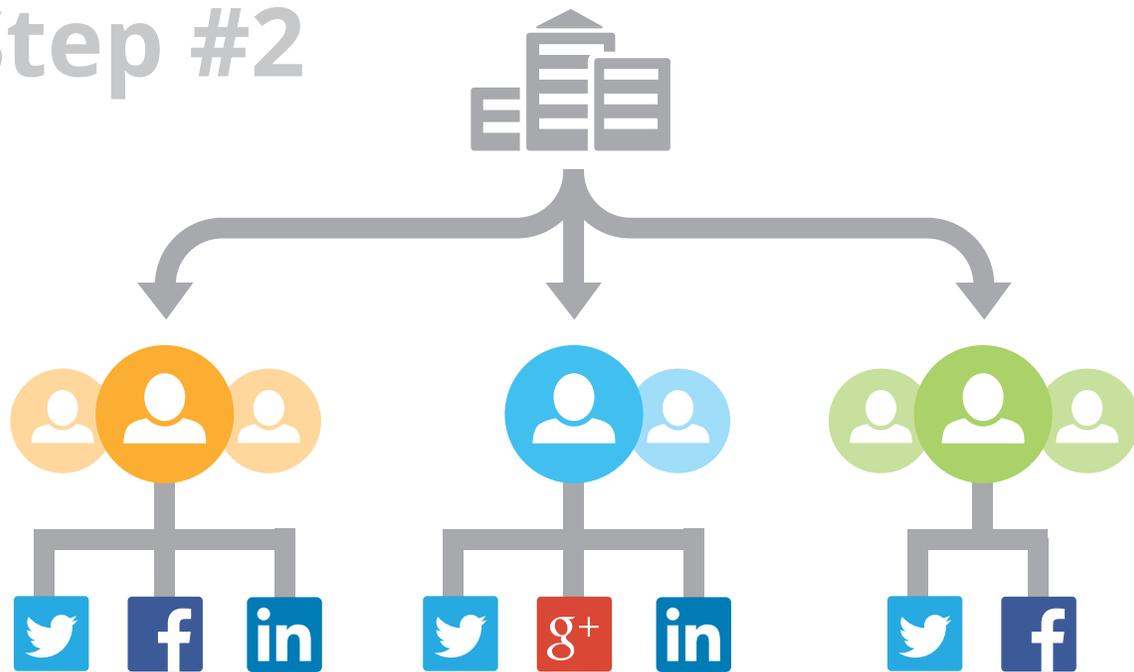
"It wasn't a matter of empowering employees to be social," says Ruiz De Alda, Barcelona City Council's Digital Marketing Manager. "The issue was whether they were thinking strategically about it or not."<sup>2</sup>

From an emergency management perspective, a fragmented presence creates risks—for example, how could the city coordinate a response with so many unconnected accounts, contributors, and groups?

### Begin by auditing your social media presence. Use these questions to start.

- How many social accounts currently represent your government or city?
- Who has ownership and access to those accounts?
- Are there duplicate, rogue, or inactive accounts you could consolidate or shut down (such as multiple public works Twitter accounts)?
- Do you have a social media policy for creating new accounts?
- What accounts are underperforming? Could these be deleted? Do the groups who own the accounts need social media training?
- Who are the social leaders across departments?
- Which social media accounts are driving the best results?
- Are there discrepancies in social media skills and education between individuals and groups?
- Are you training and educating your departments to succeed?
- What security processes are in place? Are employees sharing weak passwords?

## Step #2



## Centralize access to ensure a strategic use of resources

Your audit likely uncovered many inefficiencies. The next step is to downsize and consolidate your social presence.

For example, the Barcelona City Council downsized their social media presence by nearly half. While 350 public-facing accounts may still seem like a lot, the sheer complexity of the organization required more accounts to avoid customer service confusion.

Now that you've finished your audit and consolidated accounts, you'll want to ensure your hard work doesn't slowly erode into new accounts.

- **Establish a Center of Excellence or Social Media Steering Committee.**  
This team of stakeholders provides strategic guidance and control of digital and social initiatives. This includes governing all requests for new social accounts and formalizing social media initiatives across all departments, teams, and contributors.
- **Have departments submit a business case for new social media accounts.**  
We recommend that all social media requests be submitted in the form of a business case. This should be sent to your Social Media Steering Committee. With a formalized process for creating new accounts, you'll prevent account sprawl and ensure social media serves strategic and efficient purposes.

---

# Step #3

## Strengthen security with three checklists

Governments need to ensure they are taking the right security precautions on social media. Focus on the three things that matter: your people, processes, and platform.

### Employee Checklist

- Store passwords in a central repository or implement SSO**

Employees often use weak passwords and have lax password management habits that can be exploited by hackers. A password management tool can generate complex passwords on your behalf and store your passwords for you. This allows you to share them to other members of the team without making them public. Even better, implement Single Sign-On technology (SSO). With this secure technology, employees sign into your social relationship platform with the same username and password from their government email account.
- Educate employees about safe behavior**

Train employees on the basics of staying secure online. This training should include how to click with caution, show how malicious software works, and demonstrate just how quickly simple passwords can be hacked.

### Security Process Checklist

- Run a crisis simulation**

Employees should be trained how to respond quickly during a crisis. Plans should be simple and flexible, as crises tend to be unpredictable. Run regular crisis simulations, testing and evaluating how well departments perform in social media emergency response.
- What processes can be improved?**

Have there been any incidents or mistakes such as a junior employee not following security protocols? Is there a template or process tweak that can be created to ensure that guidelines are being followed?

### Platform Checklist

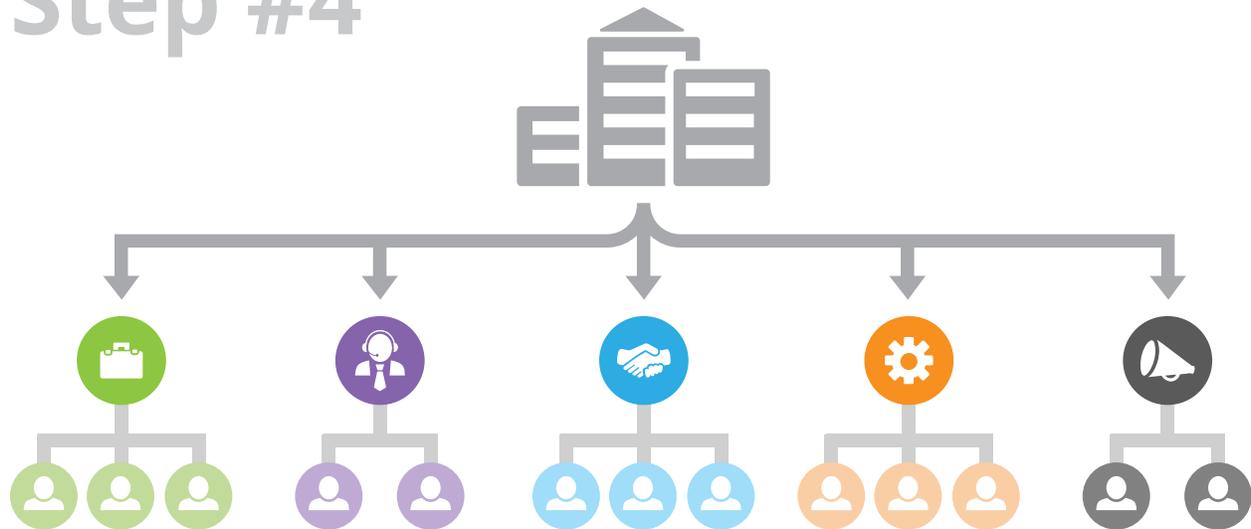
- Safeguard employees with extra precaution**

Built-in malware and spam tools can notify users when they click a suspect link. For example, Hootsuite Enterprise automatically quarantines abusive links hidden in Ow.ly URLs with a safety warning.
- Maintain central governance**

For both large and small governments, consolidating social media accounts into a central social relationship platform is one of the best steps you can take to protect against employee errors and security risks. Use one social relationship platform for the entire organization and grant department access and autonomy from there.
- Create a secure hierarchy**

With a social relationship platform, you can control the permissions of different agencies, departments, and teams. You should restrict the access to different accounts based on the needs of each team. This makes everything much more secure. For example, your city might have a health department that has a social presence to answer public questions. You can build different teams and grant appropriate access. One team may need access to your Facebook Group but they don't need access to the agency's main Facebook Page. You can also assign permissions based on experience and role. For example, a junior employee can review Tweets and draft responses but only a senior employee has the ability to publish and schedule messages.

# Step #4



## Improve customer service by mapping responsibilities

The next step is to create clear processes and set common goals. Without ownership and accountability, it's difficult to provide relevant and timely customer service.

Effective social media risk management requires internal coordination across agencies, departments, and teams. But before you can collaborate, you need to unite around a common purpose. What are you trying to achieve?

In a recent study by Altimeter, only 16% of organizations feel confident in their social media governance model, especially as more and more employees are communicating with social channels. This has a direct impact on speed, efficiency, and results.<sup>3</sup>

"Strategy and governance are natural partners," says Altimeter. "Strategy lays the groundwork for new opportunities while governance ensures safe execution, managing the risk of change."

For example, the UK Government has very clear reasons for adopting digital and social technology:

"[The UK Government] needs to do things faster, be smaller and to provide more services online. It needs to be more open and less bureaucratic so that civil servants are trusted to get things done and are accountable for what they achieve. The civil service needs to be more unified so that departments work better together. Finally, we also need to make sure that civil servants have the right skills for the future."<sup>4</sup>

### A few key questions to get you started:

- How will social media fit into your existing emergency processes? Which departments will be responsible for what?
- Who will be responsible for managing access and permissions to social media accounts? Will you have a central strategy that is owned by a small team? Or will you have more autonomy between departments?
- How will workflows between different agencies and departments be defined? For example, will you allow anyone with access to the account to post?
- How will you route messages and collaborate with agencies, departments, or teams?
- How will you conduct reputation management? For example, if a medical rumor begins to spread, how will you respond and provide constituents with the correct information?
- Will you track social chatter about emerging incidents? How will the appropriate agency be notified—for example, finding a conversation about a public threat or crime?

This might seem like a lot of work. But it becomes a lot less daunting when you establish a social governance model.

### Expert perspective:

## How can social media unify governments and increase collaboration?



We asked Ben Cathers, a senior strategic solutions consultant at Hootsuite, about how collaboration can help governments increase efficiency. At Hootsuite, Ben provides technical and subject matter expertise to the world's largest government organizations. He is an expert in social relationship management infrastructure, enterprise social media security, and social media management strategy.

"There is always talk of having better alignment and internal communication, but we're finding social is the only tool that's actually driving ways to collaborate and bring different groups together.

This new collaboration is changing the mindset of governments. For example, I remember how a government client realized that two minute videos performed better than 10 minute videos. But changing internal policy to allow for two minute videos required collaboration across many groups to change contracts and rules and so on.

Social was the driving force that allowed that to happen. It's leading to a big change in a lot of smaller governments."

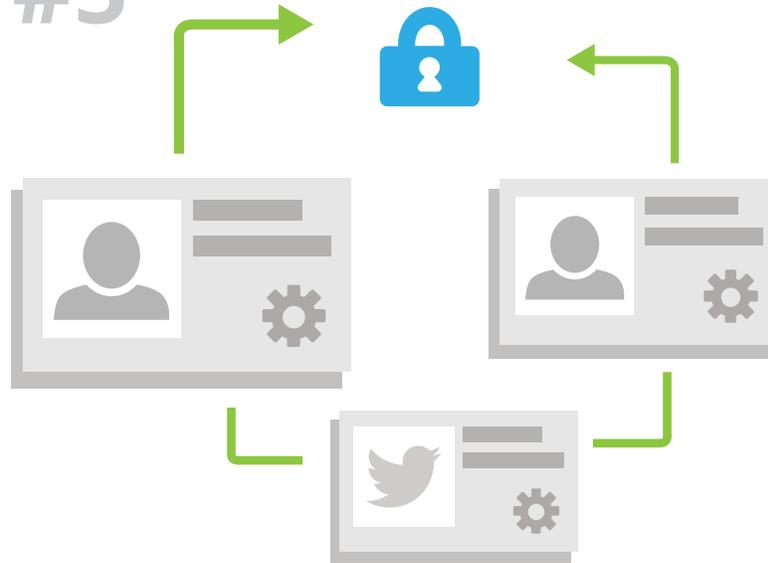
## Use social media analytics to improve service and measure activity

Hootsuite Enterprise includes social media analytics to help governments measure social media activity.

- Measure all social media activity from one dashboard
- Localize search results and monitor geo-targeted streams (such as neighborhoods during a crisis)
- Monitor conversations and proactively identify risks or emerging incidents (such as a health rumor)
- Filter results by keyword to highlight action items



## Step #5



## Gain oversight and control with the right social governance model

You've consolidated accounts and set common goals. This leads us an important decision: which social governance model will you select?

Any successful social media strategy needs a foundation. That foundation is a social governance structure. The governance structure is often determined by the head of social media, leading a working group made up of representatives from Communications, Management, IT, Legal, and Human Resources.

The social structure needs to explain who is responsible for what and should also address items like the scope of your social media efforts, branding guidelines, approval processes, continuity planning, training and education.

On the following pages we present three different models we've found to be effective for governments. You can customize your social relationship platform to support these models.

## Model #1

### Maintain central control and oversight

Federal governments tend to use a central organization to control access, manage all permissions, and gain oversight of all activities.

Hootsuite recently helped a federal government organize their social media strategy with this central structure. The government had multiple national agencies including the defense agency, national health agency, tax and revenue, and a national police force.

They needed one central organization. Underneath this organization, there were other independent organizations (such as the defense agency).

Each user and account must access social media accounts through Single Sign-On. This is an extra security measure that controls all permissions through a central management system.

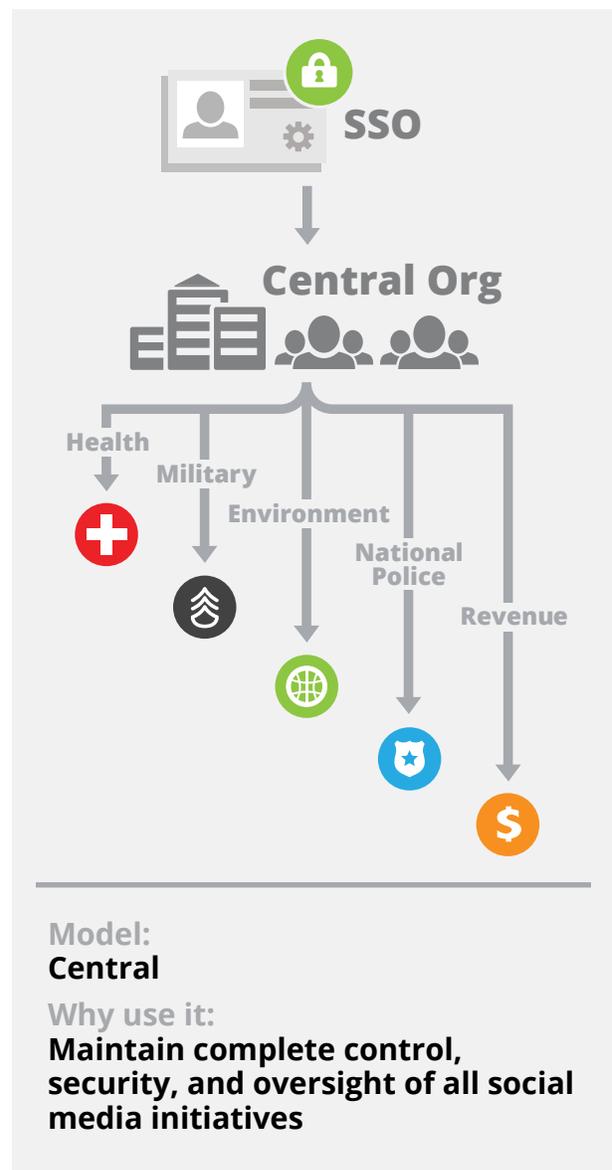
In other words, if the national health agency wants to add a new Twitter account, the central organization must first approve that request.

While accounts and permissions are controlled by the central organization, posting and engagement is not. Underneath the central organization, different organizations (such as the national police force or the national health agency) have their own control. This allows each agency to conduct and manage their own day-to-day activities.

But the central organization retains global control over everything. They also can track and archive all social media activity.

With this model, the central organization can also use pre-publishing review. This means they can review social messages written by different agencies before they are published on social channels.

For example, the defense agency can draft a message about a new highly sensitive security bill and have the central organization approve or edit the message before it is sent out to the public.



#### Benefits of this model

- Mirrors the existing infrastructure of a federal government
- Makes it seamless to shift into crisis management
- Agencies remain independent (for example, the national health agency doesn't need to interact with the defense agency on a daily basis)
- Oversight and security control of all activity

## Model #2 Collaboration and control

The central model offered tight control and oversight. In contrast, a hub and spoke model offers both control and collaboration.

For cities and local governments, we typically recommend a hub and spoke model. This still gives your central organization control and oversight but also opens up more opportunities for different agencies and departments to collaborate.

In federal governments, for example, the revenue and tax agency will rarely need to collaborate with the national defense agency. That's why federal governments benefit from a central model. With a hub and spoke model, the central organization (such as the local government office) still retains control but also allows different agencies and departments to work together.

For example, the parks department won't often collaborate with the police department. But the police and fire department will regularly need to work together. Likewise, if there is a flood then the parks department will need to quickly coordinate with other departments.

### Benefits of this model

- Allows central strategy and oversight—with flexibility and collaboration
- Increases efficiency and collaboration between different government agencies, departments, and teams
- Unifies responses and enables multiple departments to switch immediately from everyday engagement to emergency management
- Improves data: see what works across many different channels and accounts



Which social governance model is right for your organization?  
Reach out to us and we can give some more examples of how different governments structure their social media initiatives.

## Model #3 Control and autonomy

This model is similar to the first central model. It offers a high level of oversight and central control.

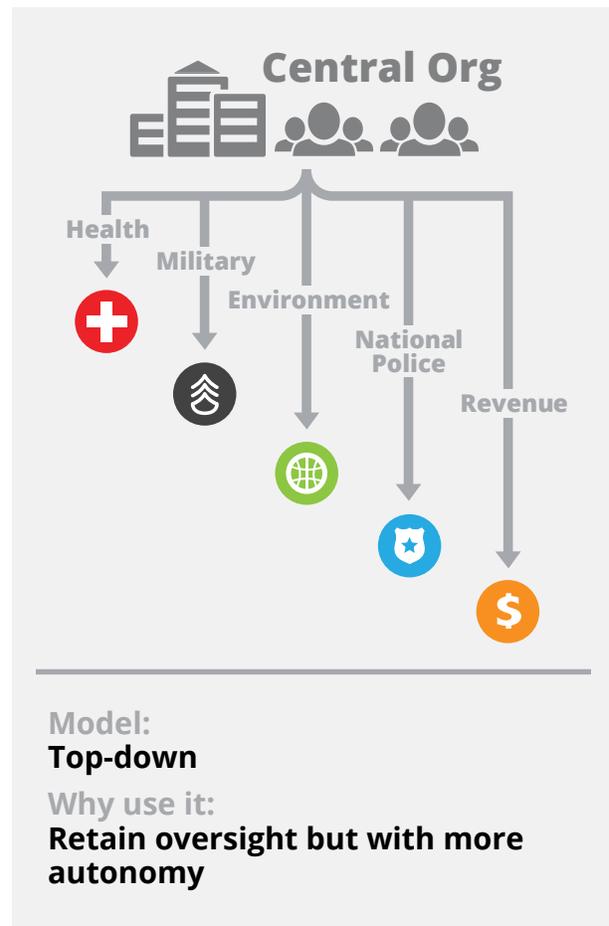
The difference here is that the central organization has less of an active role in governing permissions and activities. This model works well if different agencies and departments require autonomy.

### Benefits of this model

- Offers centralized management and oversight
- Offers mobilization and unified response
- Allows different agencies or departments to operate with autonomy

Which social governance model is right for your organization?

[Reach out to us](#) and we can give some more examples of how different governments structure their social media initiatives.



## How We Help

### How to structure government social media teams

Building the most effective structure for your government or city can be daunting. Hootsuite has helped governments around the world including the City of New York, Barcelona City Council, the City of Melbourne, the City of Boston, Australia Post, Centro, UK Trade and Investment, and Scottish Enterprise build and execute implementation plans.

- Tell us your challenges and we'll offer best practices
- Get recommendations specific to your government size
- Learn the key steps for integrating social into government infrastructure



Speak to a government specialist

---

# Step #6

## Empower employees to confidently serve constituents

To ensure strategy doesn't stall at the frontlines, you'll need a social media policy. This empowers civil servants to confidently serve constituents and establishes a credible, unified voice.

A social media policy (or set of policies) that provides guidance for employees and protects the organization and constituents from risk should come right after selecting your governance model. It also ensures that employees adhere to compliance standards when engaging on social media channels.

It's relatively easy to draft up a social media policy. But what really matters is how well employees understand it in terms of their day-to-day communications.

**Not sure where to start? Here are a few examples to inspire your policy.**

The [U.S Department of the Interior's Social Media Guidebook](#) combines their policy and guidelines into one clear document. It also has helpful tips and best practices for different social channels.<sup>5</sup>

The [U.S Air Force Social Media Guide](#) blends policies with practical tips. For example, they include templates for effective Tweets as well as best practices for using geo-tagging during military operations.<sup>6</sup>

The New Media and the Air Force Handbook does a good job of detailing policy, strategy, and practical rules of engagement.<sup>7</sup>

The [UK Civil Service takes a more philosophical approach](#), offering principles and high-level overviews of expected behavior by civil servants.<sup>8</sup>

**Here are a few guidelines:**

1. Be clear in the policy's purpose
2. Explain how frontline use of social media connects to the larger strategic goals of the government
3. Align social media policy to compliance or industry regulations
4. Offer specific use cases and rules of engagement—for example, if a threat is received on Facebook, how should this be handled? How should employees respond to arguments or hostile comments?
5. Be written in plain language and not legalese. Legal language will bewilder employees instead of empowering them to represent the government on social media
6. Have the input and buy-in from all departments
7. Be as short as possible
8. Include training sessions to help employees understand the policy (via webinars or in-person)
9. Add policies to employee education programs

## Step #7



## Improve results by following your social leaders

Every department has social leaders that can help other agencies and departments of governments. Find these leaders and share their best practices.

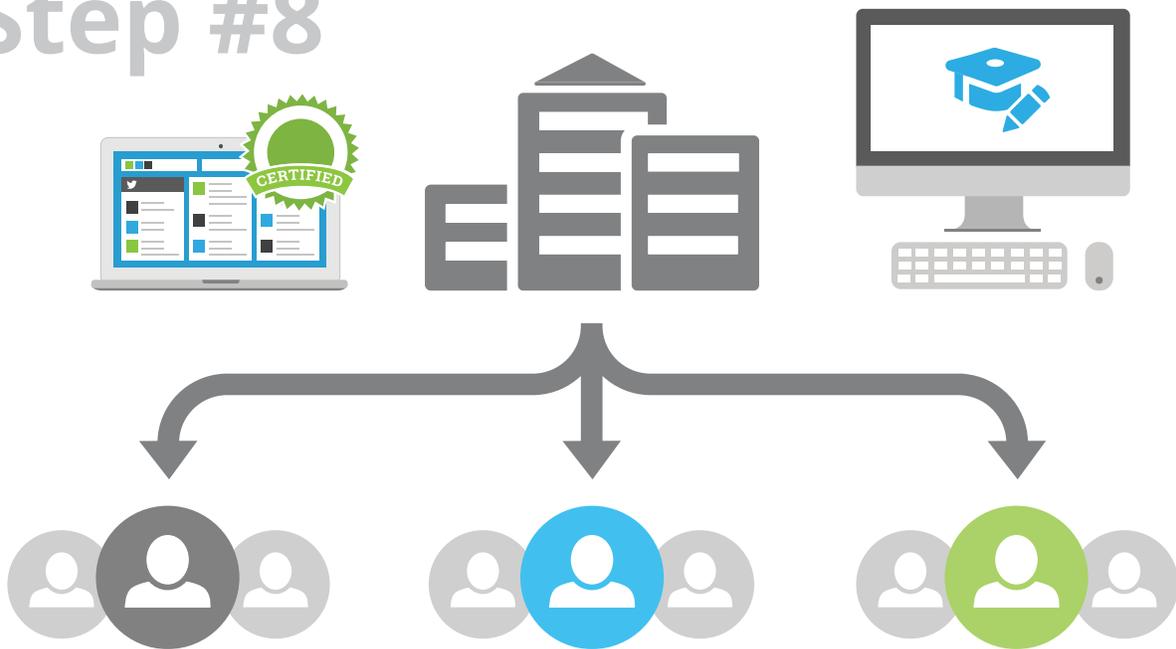
During their audit, the Barcelona City Council uncovered employees who were already listening and engaging and thinking strategically on social. Those social media experts and executives formed a Social Media Steering Committee.

This Social Media Steering Council is a core group of employees who brainstorm best practices, brand guidelines, and strategies for content marketing, customer service, and engagement.

We recommend that you identify these experts and then schedule a regular meeting.

- **Assemble your core group.** Reach out to different departments or agencies and ask them to nominate passionate social advocates to represent their department or agency.
- **Meet and discuss processes and best practices.** Once every 60-90 days, have the core group meet to make decisions and strategize around infrastructure, process, policy, best practices, education, and training. This brings together different functions of government in new ways.
- **Share and train departments and teams on best practices.** From your audit, you've identified accounts or departments that need help on social media. Give these contributors the tools for success. Offer training to these groups either in-person or via a webinar.

# Step #8



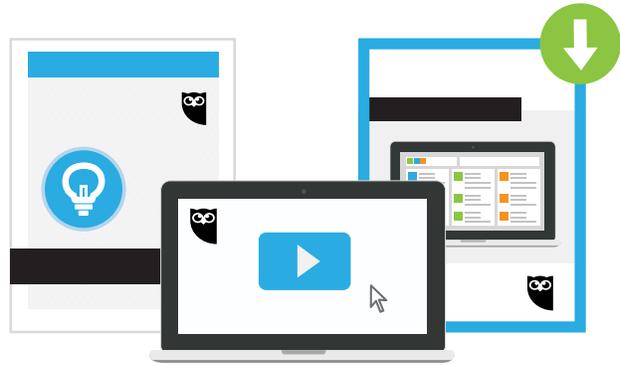
## Accelerate government transformation with education

Education both speeds up digital transformation and helps to guard against errors. Here are some simple ways to quickly build social media skillsets across groups and departments.

One of the barriers to effective engagement on social media is the confidence of employees. Employees may be unsure whether they have permission to respond to different issues, don't feel trusted by their superiors, and are unclear of how they can better serve constituents on new social networks.

Employees need clear guidance and education. At Hootsuite, we have three pillars of social media education: custom education, social media practitioner training, and social leadership development.

- Custom education ensures a baseline of digital skills, helping frontline employees understand your social media policy, guard against mistakes, master basic techniques, and engage safely on social channels.
- Social media practitioner training gives your strategists and digital managers new skills and professional education.
- Social leadership development (which typically has leaders complete our [Advanced Social Media Strategy Certificate](#)) helps strategists connect social media back to cost savings and ensuring proper governance and oversight.



## How to put this theory into practice

### Accelerate with top-down education

Identify the social media practitioners and other key professionals who are currently driving social communications. You can accelerate your government's digital transformation by targeting these individuals for advanced education.

Their leadership will create integrated strategies that deliver significant efficiency gains and cost-savings. By training leaders, best practices and new knowledge will trickle down to frontline employees.

### Share regular success

A simple quarterly internal newsletter or collaboration platform such as Yammer can help to align activities and help share best practices across groups and departments.

### Retain digital talent with social media practitioner training

Ensure that your strategists and managers get the education and professional development that helps them develop best practices. Encourage them to attend industry webinars, conferences, or create custom education programs. Their new knowledge will better guide social media initiatives.

### Launch a 101 course for frontline staff

The entire organization needs to understand your strategy and policies. All employees should also have a baseline of digital skills. This is done best with an on-demand video course.

You can create your own, use existing courseware in Hootsuite University, or work with Hootsuite to develop a custom education program that includes best practices, policy training, and content specific to your goals.



## Next steps

You've gained a high-level view of the steps needed to organize and consolidate your social media presence.

While these tasks can't be completed overnight, they do produce lasting returns and ensure that social media efficiently improves the level of service for stakeholders, constituents, and taxpayers.

## Endnotes

1. Hardwick, S. "The future of digital and social media in government comms." 2015. <https://gcn.civilservice.gov.uk/blog/2015/03/23/the-future-of-digital-and-social-media-in-government-communications/>
2. Hootsuite, "Barcelona City Council grows digital presence." 2015. <https://hootsuite.com/resources/case-study/barcelona-city-council-case-study>
3. Altimeter Group, "The 2014 State of Digital Transformation." 2014. <http://www.altimetergroup.com/2014/07/the-2014-state-of-digital-transformation/>
4. GOV.UK, "Civil Service Reform." 2013. <https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/creating-an-exceptional-civil-service-less-bureaucratic-and-more-skilled-digital-and-unified>
5. The U.S. Department of the Interior. "Social Media Guidebook." 2015. <http://www.doi.gov/notices/upload/Social-Media-Guidebook-Official.pdf>
6. Air Force Public Affairs Agency. "Air Force Social Media Guide." 2013. <http://www.af.mil/Portals/1/documents/SocialMediaGuide2013.pdf>
7. Clavette, L.; Faggard, Capt. D.; Bove, P.F.; Fordham, J.S. "New Media and the Air Force." 2013. <http://www.af.mil/Portals/1/documents/socialmedia/social-media-and-the-air-force.pdf>
8. GOV.UK. "Social media guidance for civil servants: October 2014." 2014. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/social-media-guidance-for-civil-servants/social-media-guidance-for-civil-servants>

# About Hootsuite Enterprise

Partner with Hootsuite to accelerate your social transformation



Hootsuite Enterprise empowers organizations to execute business strategies for the social media era. As the world's most widely used social relationship platform, Hootsuite Enterprise enables global businesses to scale social media activities across multiple teams, departments, and business units. Our versatile platform supports a thriving ecosystem of technology integrations, allowing businesses to extend social media into existing systems and programs.

We help organizations create deeper relationships with customers and draw meaningful insights from social media data. Innovating since day one, we continue to help businesses pioneer the social media landscape and accelerate their success through education and professional services.

Request a custom demo today by visiting [enterprise.hootsuite.com](http://enterprise.hootsuite.com)

## Trusted by 744 of the Fortune 1000

