

SOCIAL MEDIA USE IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT AGENCIES:
AN IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE FOR PUBLIC OFFICIALS

A Thesis

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by

Kathryn Anne Cardenas

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by

Kathryn Anne Cardenas

Approved by:

_____, Committee Chair
Mary K. Kirlin, D.P.A.

_____, Second Reader
David E. Booher, M.A., M.S.P.

Date

Student: Kathryn Anne Cardenas

I certify that this student has met the requirements for format contained in the University format manual, and that this thesis is suitable for shelving in the Library and credit is to be awarded for the thesis.

_____, Department Chair
Robert W. Wassmer, Ph.D.

Date

Department of Public Policy and Administration

Abstract
of
SOCIAL MEDIA USE IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT AGENCIES:
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Due to the popularity of social media among the general populous, there is potential for it to be a useful tool for local government agencies. This thesis provides local government officials with a concise stand-alone social media implementation guide that will help public officials assess their organizations and stimulate questions like if they should pursue social media while defining the process for developing policies, strategies, and assessment tools. Agencies need to reflect on organizational limitations, potential benefits and possible concerns throughout the process and experts generally believe that these steps will improve the likelihood of successful social media implementation. This thesis discusses the existing research on social networking use by public agencies and my experience interning with the Yolo County Public Information Officer. My findings are summarized in the social media implementation guide. With regular assessment and reevaluation of the successes and failures agencies will be better prepared to realize the benefits of social media, mitigate concerns, and define their role in the digital community.

_____, Committee Chair
Mary K. Kirlin, D.P.A.

Date

DEDICATION

My Grandma Viola Madden Means would have graduated from high school in 1942, but she was unable to because when she was in eighth grade, in the midst of the Great Depression, she had to quit school to help her family tend their farm in Nebraska. Similarly, my Granddad Willard Means received his diploma only because his sister Hazel helped to support him through school, in spite of the will of their parents who thought he should work. He graduated in 1941 and was drafted into the Army where he was a soldier in France during World War II.

My Dad Terry Cardenas also worked extremely hard in pursuit of his degree. I will never forget attending his community college graduation when I was 13 and being so proud of what he accomplished. He inspired me to take my first college class with my Mom, Nancy Means Cardenas at the age of 15. With my mom's help and that of my family, friends, teachers, and counselors, I was able to enroll in night classes, which allowed me to attend high school during the day and college in the evening. I graduated from both in spring 2009.

At the age of 22, I will graduate with my Master's Degree only because of the knowledge and inspiration of my grandparents and parents. They have always been so supportive of everything I have done. From reading the newspaper with Grandma, to playing Cribbage with Granddad, to working through tough math problems with Dad, and studying for finals with Mom, together they built my educational foundation. This accomplishment is not only mine, but also theirs. It is a reflection of their support, love, and faith in me.

To conclude, I would like to congratulate my Mom who completed her Bachelor's Degree this semester as well! I worked hard to get my Master's, but what I do fades in comparison to what she does every day. I am so proud of her and it is an honor to have her for a Mom. Now it is Dad's turn to get his Bachelor's! Thank you for everything and I love you all!

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Social media has transformed the way people from all over the world communicate and it is continuing to grow in popularity creating an incentive for public agencies to take advantage of the new technology. Social networking provides a venue for direct, instant, unfiltered, two-way communication between individual users, groups, and organizations. Moreover, seventy-seven percent of all Americans use the internet and of those users, sixty-nine percent log onto social media, equaling more than 165 million unique social technology consumers in the United States alone (Brenner, 2012). Federal, state, and local governments have begun to meet the public's new demand for greater communication and transparency through social networking by utilizing social media tools to share information with residents, promote public programs, increase intra-agency collaboration, and engage constituents (Mergel, 2012). As the use and capabilities of social media continue to grow and transform, public employees now question the technology's ability to create citizen-led networks, opening up a new era of electronic or e-democracy (Livingston & Markham, 2008). Nonetheless, as Thomas Jefferson (1815) said, "A republican government is slow to move." Our democratic system requires that new programs, such as social media campaigns, be considered in the context of organizational goals and efficiency while following all existing laws and procedures (Hrdinova et. al., 2010). For this reason, the implementation of social media is rarely a creation of individual employees, but instead a reflection of organizational priorities put forward by changing policies. Overall, social networking offers a great opportunity for government to connect with residents and may prove the second half of Jefferson's quote, "Yet once in motion, [democracy's] momentum becomes irresistible."

The use of social networking by public agencies raises organizational and legal concerns, which governments often attempt to mitigate through policy (Zimmer, 2012). However, in a review of social networking policies, I found many governments simply copy and paste policies put forth by previous agencies, instead of revising them to fit their own organizational needs. Ideally, the implementation of social media should not only contain formalized written policy, but also considerations as to if the agency will actually benefit from a social media presence. Moreover, it should include strategies for implementation and assessment tools for judging the effectiveness of the social media campaign. Thus, the purpose of this thesis is to provide local government officials with a concise implementation guide that will help them decide if they should pursue social media, what they should consider when developing policies and strategies, and a framework for social media assessment. While social media use is continuing to grow across demographic groups in the United States, public agencies still need to account for both the benefits and costs of implementation. Overall, experts generally believe that implementation of social media is more successful if well thought out policies, strategies, and tools for assessment are developed.

Social Networking

Social networking is difficult to define because it is constantly changing as technologies grow and transform. Webster's Dictionary (2013) defines social networking, social media, or social technologies simply as, "Forms of electronic communication through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, messages, and other content." I will frequently refer to the implementation of social media as a campaign because it represents a connected series of operations designed to reach a set of specific goals (Webster, 2013). Each social media platform, such as YouTube, Twitter and Facebook, offer users different tools for sharing information and ideas through news articles, photos, videos and information or personal posts

with friends and online communities. Moreover, with the invention of mobile applications, people have increased social networking involvement because they are able to connect from any location using their phone. A mobile application, or app, describes internet websites that are formatted to run through smart phones (Webopedia, 2012). A recent survey found that forty percent of all cell phone owners are using social media applications and twenty-eight percent use them daily (Brenner, 2012). Thus, social networking offers a useful tool for individuals, agencies, and groups to connect with their followers on an ongoing basis.

Social networking is also different from traditional forms of media because it allows for instant two-way communication (Nielsen, 2012). Written, radio, and television mediums are all limited because there is usually a delay, if only slight, in communication (Cambell et. al, 2006). In addition, while users may consume information, the opportunity for response is rarely afforded. For this reason, users are liberated through social media because they can share their outlook with businesses, news sources, government, and their friends (Heaney & McClurg, 2009). For public agencies, this poses concerns related to First Amendment rights and maintaining a social networking profile that is professional (Ferber & Foltiz, 2006). Social media also requires employee maintenance to ensure that comments remain appropriate (Mergel, 2012).

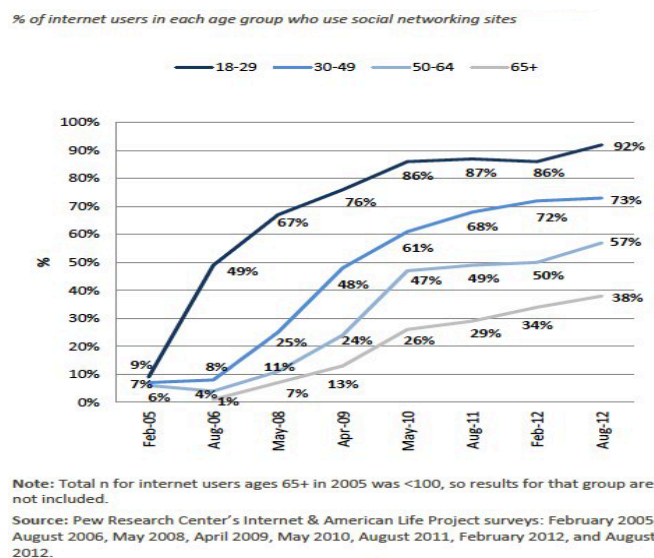
The top three most widely used social media websites are YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook and each offer the user a set of unique tools to reach a distinct audience (Boyd & Ellison, 2008). For example, YouTube is a video sharing website where people post professional and homemade videos for informational and entertainment purposes (YouTube, 2013). Forty-eight hours of video is posted to YouTube every minute equaling eight years of content being uploaded daily. In contrast, Twitter allows users to find information, news, and opinions in real time related to subjects they are interested in by searching popular hashtags or the keywords or topics in a 'tweet' (Twitter, 2011). On Twitter, an average of 140 million tweets, defined as 140

character status updates, are sent and 460,000 new accounts are created every day. However, Facebook reigns supreme as the social networking site where an individual, group, or agency can use multiple media tools including content, video, and photo sharing to advance information (Zimmer, 2012). In October 2012, Facebook had officially registered one-seventh of the world's population when they hit their one-billionth user (Vance, 2012). Furthermore, one study found that of all of the time that Americans spend on personal computers connected to the internet, seventeen percent is spent using Facebook (Nielsen, 2012). Thus, while I will frequently mention other social networking sites in this thesis, I will primarily focus on government use of Facebook to promote their agencies, because of the website's many networking tools and growing public attractiveness.

Social Media Demographics

Social media popularity is also changing social networking demographics in the United States. The statistics below are all from a recent PEW survey on social media use in the United States (Brenner, 2012).

Figure 1.1- Social Networking Site Use by Age Group, 2005- 2012



Users who are 18-29 continue to be the most popular age demographic with 92 percent of those who can access the internet logging on as illustrated in Figure 1.1 on the previous page (Brenner, 2012). The age group that is least likely to participate in social networking is those who are sixty-five and older. However, their participation has increased from thirteen percent in April 2009 to thirty-eight percent in April 2012. Generally, women (41%) are slightly more likely to have a social media presence than men (39%). Hispanics (49%) and African Americans (48%) log on more frequently than Whites (36%) and those in the middle class (40%-48%) have slightly higher usage rates than the upper class (45%) and significantly higher rates when compared to those in lower income brackets (38%). Considering that social media sites, like Facebook, were developed for college students, it is not surprising that those with some education (42%) or a college degree (43%) use social networking more frequently than high school graduates (37%) or those with no high school diploma (33%). Overall, social media users are most likely to be female, Hispanic, middle class, and educated. However, more than a third of each age, racial, income and educational level demographic group now utilizes social media, meaning that the medium provides a great resource for organizations to reach diverse clients.

Government Use, Benefits, Risks, and Costs

Government agencies justify social media use as a way to disperse information quickly to constituents to advance internal and external goals (Bryer & Zavattaro, 2011). Social networking use is most commonly justified in the context of emergencies, giving agencies a way to communicate with residents in a quick and efficient manner (Purser, 2011). In natural disasters and public safety situations, social networking allows government agencies to collect information from users and give emergency updates quickly to a broad population. There are many examples of effective use of social media by local governments to provide information about floods, hurricanes, tornados, missing children, and other public safety conditions (Chavez et. al, 2010).

For example, prior to Hurricane Sandy, which happened in October 2012, local, state, and federal agencies were sharing info about disaster preparedness via social networks (Ben-Yuhada, 2012). During the hurricane, social technologies were used to alert emergency managers, served as a venue for the public to communicate with government and each other, and supplemented 911 emergency system lines. Throughout the recovery period, social media has been used to mobilize individuals, help those in need, and raise money.

Social media also serves as a public relations and education tool, allowing government employees to inform residents about programs and services (Newman, 2009). Moreover, some agencies use social networking sites to provide better customer service to residents, increase government transparency and accountability, link users to the agencies main webpage, and release job announcements (Bertot et. al, 2010).

Finally, social technologies have proven to be a useful tool for inter-governmental and inter-agency collaboration (Zhang & Chia, 2006; Mossberger & Wu, 2012). Government agencies across localities can mutually advance their goals by sharing each other's information. Some agencies have also used their social networking sites to encourage public service and involvement through providing users connections to relevant non-profits by sharing their pages. Thus, there are many potential uses for social networking in the context of public agencies.

Benefits

Research has identified four transformative properties of the internet and social media that represent the benefits government gains from using social networking (Jaeger & Thompson, 2003). First, social media eradicates distance because it gives individuals the ability to communicate with their government from their personal computers, laptops, mobile phones, or tablets (Nielsen, 2012). Therefore, instead of communication taking place in person or over the phone, an individual can express their opinion or request assistance from the comfort of their

electronic device, which can increase convenience and personal involvement with government (Brodalski et. al, 2011). Second, social media use by government broadens the reach of the agencies message (Mergel, 2012). As stated above, many Americans now log onto social media and if government agencies can build a base, then they can broaden the reach of their message. By continuing to use traditional methods of outreach paired with social networking, agencies can better connect with residents. In addition, social networking maximizes speed because the message is instant. Finally, because social media websites are free to individual users and organizations, there is a perception that they are cheaper to use than traditional mediums, such as public service announcements in the newspaper, on television, or the radio (Newman, 2009). It is not clear if this is the reality because there are resource costs to implementing and maintaining a social media presence as well.

Risks and Costs

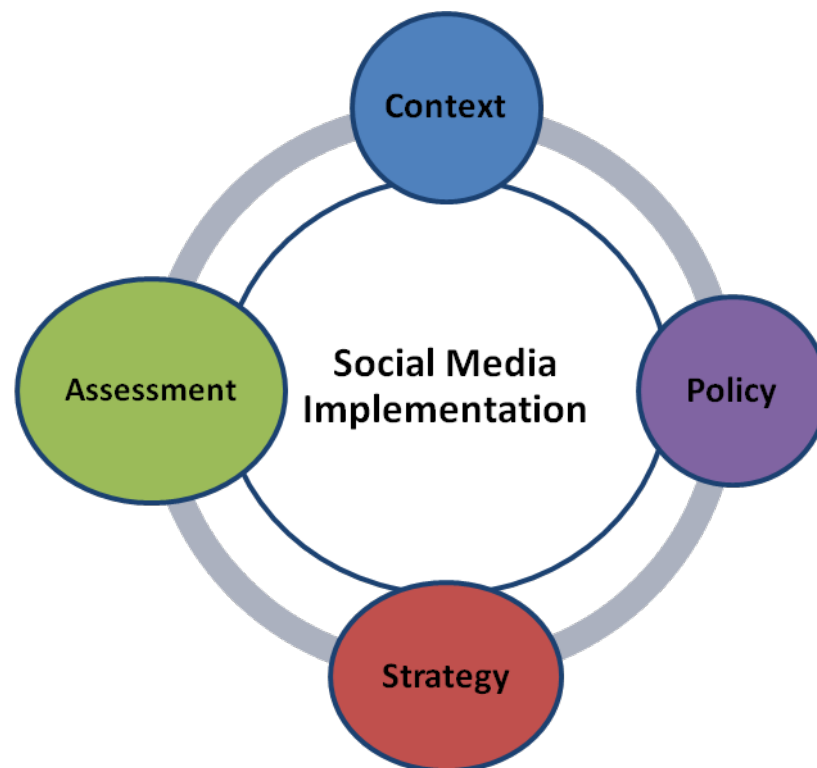
There are benefits that incentivize governments to use social media campaigns, but there are also risks and costs. Since social media is unfiltered, the largest challenge for public agencies is honoring First Amendment rights while censoring their pages to keep them appropriate and professional (Godwin, 2008). While it is easy for agencies to delete comments that are vulgar, off-topic, contain personal attacks, are discriminatory, or contain spam, governments must question to what extent they can remove comments that are critical of programs or elected officials (Ferber & Foltz, 2006). Governments must also follow other laws including privacy laws, accessibility laws, records management, terms of use, and copyright laws (Newman, 2009). Failing to follow any of these laws or accompanying procedures puts the agency at risk of a lawsuit. Moreover, there is a common perception that since social networks are free to use, they are therefore cheap for government agencies to establish (Zimmer, 2012). However, starting a social media campaign presents opportunity costs for agencies because they could focus their

energy on performing core tasks (Fuguitt & Wilcox, 1999). Opportunity costs are defined as the loss of potential gain from the next best alternative regarding time and resources. Additionally, not only do the accounts need to be maintained for inappropriate comments, but they also require that employees create and regularly post new content (Bryer & Zavattaro, 2011). This is why individual agencies should consider the costs and benefits of social media campaigns before developing policies, strategies, and tools for assessment.

Policies, Strategies, and Assessment

Successful social media implementation should include considering the governments context and if social networking is in the public agencies' interest. Afterwards, they should develop policies, strategies, and assessments discussed in the section below. Figure 1.2 below illustrates this relationship.

Figure 1.2- Social Media Implementation Cycle



Social networking policies are important because they allow government agencies to mitigate organizational, legal, and security challenges (Zimmer, 2012). A good government policy is tailored to the agency's mission, vision, goals, and values. Organizationally, these policies usually include stipulations regarding access and management of the account as well as a definition of acceptable use, appropriate employee conduct, and the expectations of resident conduct (Mergel, 2012; Hrdinova et. al, 2010). These stipulations, definitions and expectations are often similar across agencies, but differ in that they should reflect the limitations, culture, and organizational structure of a particular agency. It is also important that policies address legal and security concerns, such as freedom of speech limitations, engaging citizens via social media, and using mobile phones to update government pages (Newman, 2009). While social networking policies provide a public agency guidance for launching social media campaigns by addressing who will be responsible for maintaining the social media pages and the level of public engagement deemed appropriate, it is also important that governments develop strategies to ensure their campaign is successful.

Social media strategies give public agencies an opportunity to consider how to implement social networking campaigns (Newman, 2009). First, a strategy should contain organizational considerations, such as integrating goals and defining success (Hrdinova et. al, 2010). A public agency should also understand how to use the technology to its greatest capabilities considering target audience, message development, and practical social media tools (Brodaski et. al, 2011). In addition, to promote intra-governmental and intra-agency collaboration, it is beneficial to find potential partners, like non-profits, and advance mutual goals. This can help the agency increase their presence in the community. Finally, a social media strategy should include an assessment of risks, including how the campaign will affect resources, employee productivity, and reputational concerns (Mergel, 2012).

Lastly, establishing performance measurements for government programs is important because it improves accountability, communication, support for planning, and a tool for program evaluation (Ammons, 2007). In relation to social media, assessment allows public agencies to consider the quality of their message, and if the campaign is advancing their mission, goals, and objectives (Brodalski et. al, 2011). Once the policy and campaign is established, it will also be more obvious if the benefits of social media outweigh the costs. While employees can reach some of these conclusions by looking at internal evidence, Facebook Insights and Google Analytics provide external data that tracks how many people like and view web pages and posts (Newman, 2009). Public feedback is also an important indicator of success and the public may have good suggestions as to how the agency can improve communication (Mergel, 2012).

Organization of Thesis

Overall, this project thesis will consist of five chapters that will describe and analyze my process for developing a social networking implementation guide for local governments. Chapter 1 introduced social networking and the process for beginning government social media campaigns. Chapter 2 provides a brief background discussing the shift from e-Government to Government 2.0, justification for social media implementation, and a review of academic research on policies, strategies, and tools for assessment. Chapter 3 explains in brief how I developed my implementation guide, mostly describing my work with Yolo County and my review of other government policies. Chapter 4 introduces the stand-alone project of my thesis, the implementation guide found in Appendix D that includes five sections: context, policies, strategies, assessment, and social media tools. Finally, Chapter 5 concludes my thesis by discussing overall findings, implications for public organizations, and future research opportunities.

Chapter 2

RESEARCH ON PUBLIC AGENCY USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Technology has grown and expanded faster than government can adapt to it, creating as Lieutenant Governor of California Gavin Newsom phrased it, a new digital divide between the private sector, online residents, and their government (Newsom & Dicky, 2013). However, public agencies are slowly moving from simple online integration of their services to expanding communication with residents via the internet. Academics have described this shift as a move from e-Government to Government 2.0 (Mergel, 2012). For the purpose of this paper, e-Government is defined as “government activities that take place over electronic communications including: acquiring and providing products and services, placing and receiving orders, providing and obtaining information, and completing financial transactions” (Fang, 2002). In contrast, Government 2.0 is defined as “the use of social technologies to increase participation, transparency, and inter-agency collaboration in the public sector” (Mergel, 2012). Due to the expanded utilization of technology in the Government 2.0 movement, researchers are now questioning if social technologies are appropriate for all agencies. Because of limited research on effectiveness of social media by government, especially at the local level, this is difficult to discern. With so much uncertainty in changing technologies, government needs to consider the benefits and costs of social media and develop policies, strategies, and tools for assessment that will help ensure successful implementation. Therefore, in this literature review, I discuss the public sectors shift from e-Government to Government 2.0, examine how the context of a local agency’s operations might affect their decision to use social media, and cover existing academic research on social media policies, strategies, and assessment tools.

e-Government to Government 2.0

Government agencies have always provided multiple avenues for citizens to receive information and interact with public employees and elected officials. Traditionally, these venues included attending public meetings, being able to access public records, contacting information desks, receiving public notices, and reading about government services, programs, and hearings in local newspapers (Magro, 2011). The e-Government movement took many of these communication methods and began offering them online. For example, many local governments put videos of their public meetings online, public records and information available at information desks are now searchable on some local government web pages, and e-mail subscribers can receive public notices and service announcements directly to their inbox (Baker, 2008; Fang, 2002). Moon (2002) categorized potential e-government services by information dissemination, service and financial transactions, inter-governmental integration, and political participation. Early research found that governments were putting necessary forms and requests, guides to receiving services, employee resources, and voter resources online (Moon, 2002; Reddick, 2009; Reyes et. al, 2012). For this reason, the e-government movement has both external and internal applications, servicing government to citizens, government to businesses, and government to employees (Moon, 2002).

While early research on e-Government found that it was not as successful as intended due to citizens not knowing or having a hard time accessing the information online (Moon, 2002; Magro, 2011; Kaylor et. al, 2000), today, improved technologies and an expectation from citizens that information will be digitally available has likely improved the effectiveness of the technology (Reddick, 2009, Mergel, 2012). However, while there is extensive research on how governments are using new technologies and ways to establish measurements for e-government success (Scott, 2006; Strieb & Willoughby, 2009; Baker, 2008; Fang, 2002), there is little reliable

research on the effectiveness of e-Government campaigns from a citizen perspective (Magro, 2011). Anecdotal evidence shows that in some cases e-government is unsuccessful in initiating civic participation because governments have limited resources (Strieb & Willoughby, 2009), but in other instances, it can be effective in increasing accessibility and convenience of public agencies (Jaeger & Thompson, 2003). The only recent study, which surveyed 112 United States cities with a population of 75,000 residents or greater, found that management capacity and collaboration were the greatest indicators for e-Government effectiveness (Reddick, 2009). In this study, management capacity refers to local governance leadership, IT capacity, and employee outreach. In turn, collaboration refers to inter-governmental partnerships. The limited amount of research on e-Government is partially due to the academic focus on implementation, the swift changes in technologies, and public agency's differing levels of technological involvement (Magro, 2011; Mergel, 2012).

Presidential technology initiatives have, to some extent, set the tone for large-scale change (Bertot et. al, 2010b). In 1993, Vice President Gore launched the Reinventing Government Initiative and in 2002, George Bush created the Office of E-Government and Information Technology. The shift from e-Government to Government 2.0 correlates to the Obama Administrations Open Government Initiative, which is guided by the three principles of transparency, participation, and collaboration (Orszag, 2009). Among improving government use of technology in general, this initiative has challenged government agencies to use social media as appropriate.

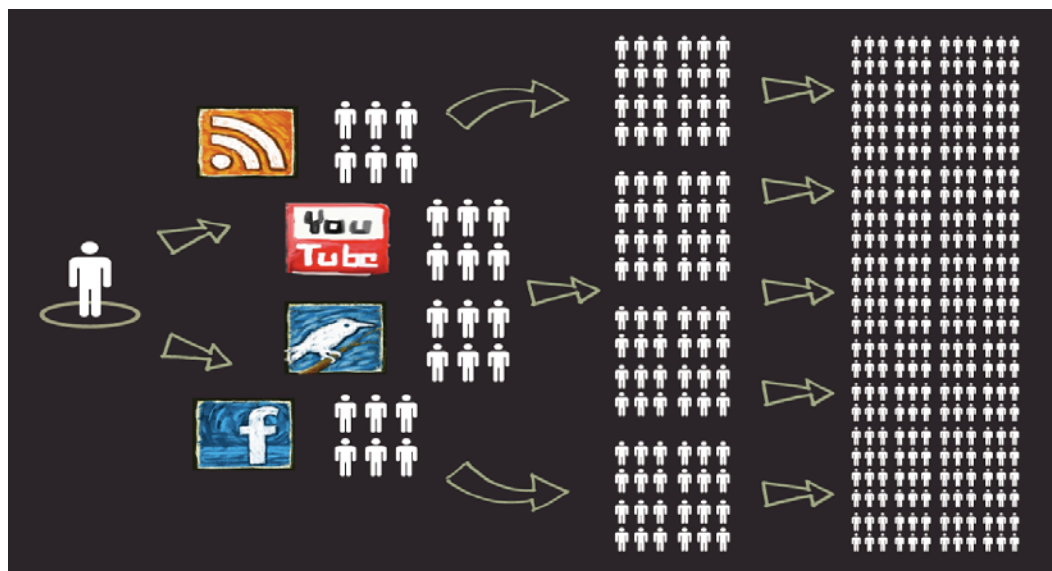
The shift from e-Government to Government 2.0 has expanded communication methods and the groups that communicate through the usage of new social technologies. The e-Government movement is largely unidirectional in that agencies moved to administer services online, but remained content providers, only allowing citizens to be passive information receivers

(Stewart & Pavlou, 2002). In contrast, Government 2.0 campaigns move agencies towards using social technologies and two-way communication methods, thus creating more communication, and potentially collaboration, between one government to another and between citizens to their government (Pina et. al, 2010). In addition, the connections made in e-Government campaigns are strengthened, making Government 2.0 an extension of previous technological advances because social media sites used by government often link users back to the main webpage where they can receive more information and utilize online e-Government services (Magro, 2011).

There are also very few studies on the effectiveness of social media campaigns implemented by government agencies. Many studies recognize that successful implementation should increase information sharing, transparency, accountability, and collaboration between government, citizens, and businesses (Bryer & Zavattaro, 2011; Hand & Ching, 2011; Mergel, 2012; Magro, 2011), but there are no studies that measure these factors across multiple agencies. However, there are many case studies about the success and barriers experienced by individual agencies, especially at the Federal level, but these are to an extent, limited because they only apply to the context of that agency (Godwin et al, 2008; Mergel, 2012). Studies about the effectiveness of Government 2.0 are inconclusive (Moon, 2002; Scott, 2006). One study found web functionality was correlated with populations in large cities (Moon, 2002) while another found that medium size cities provided the most opportunities for public involvement via social media (Scott, 2006). Moreover, local government agencies face different challenges than Federal agencies concerning social media campaigns. This is because organization pages gain popularity with an increase of users because of how information on social networks is shared, as seen in Figure 2.1 on the next page (McCosh, 2011). For example, if a local government shared a news story and five of the agency's fans shared it, the reach of that article extends to the friends of those fans. Thus, larger governments, like federal, state, and populous municipalities have an

advantage because they have the ability to attract a bigger audience due to having a larger base (Baek et. al, 2011; Lasica, 2011). It is assumed that the more people an agency can attract to their page, the more effective their social media campaign will be. This is why measuring the effectiveness across agencies is so difficult - it is hard to discern between the impact of the quality of posted content and the success of both intentional audience outreach and that gained through the nature of the network (Mergel, 2012).

Figure 2.1- The Nature of the Network (McCosh, 2011)



Justification for Social Media Implementation: The Organization's Context

The organization's context is important to consider because it will help an agency decide if they should move forward with a social networking campaign and this analysis will shape their policies, strategies, and assessment framework. Mergel (2012) recently released a textbook that may well become a seminal piece of research on the implementation of social media in public agencies. She analyzed interviews with communication experts in the Executive Branch of the federal government, information- technology professionals at the state and local levels, and private social media start-up entrepreneurs. Mergel (2012) has made many observations about

government use of social media and she simply concludes that the key considerations for organizations that want to adopt social media policies are related to the organizational framework and the limitation of resources. Organizational framework considerations include remaining mission focused, addressing responsibilities within the organizations hierarchy, and defining an audience (Mergel, 2012; Hrdinova et al., 2010). Resource needs relate to potential costs and benefits of social media described in detail below.

Organizational Framework

Mission Focused

While the research on effectiveness is limited, there is a common belief among professionals and experts in public administration that ensuring social media policies, strategies, and assessments are mission focused will increase social technology success (Mergel, 2012; Mergel & Greeves, 2013; Hrdinova et. al, 2010; Wilson et al, 2011). Mangold & Faulds (2009) analyzed private sector social media techniques and concluded, “Social media strategies should remain mission focused and contribute to the fulfillment of the organization’s performance goals” (p. 357). Goal achievement is especially important in public agencies to ensure efficiency and proper usage of taxpayer dollars (Rainey, 2009). Moreover, in an article that surveyed private sector businesses, the authors state that a mission based approach tends to reduce uncertainty around implementation (Wilson et. al, 2011). In addition, because different organizations have unique missions, goals and objectives, they will need to utilize distinct social media tools and strategies (Bryer & Zavattaro, 2011). Finally, the mission and purpose of some agencies may not warrant the use of social media at all (Mergel & Greeves, 2013).

Hierarchy & Organizational Complexity

In the public sector, at the local level, counties and cities may choose to implement system-wide social media pages and/or allow individual agencies to develop their own unique presence (Zimmer, 2011). However, within government agencies there are varying methods of social media control across public information and IT departments. At the federal level, Mergel (2012) found that either the IT department or the public information department might implement social media depending on where the idea was initiated. She also found that because social media has developed and changed so quickly, none of the social technology directors she interviewed had received formal guidance through the existing hierarchy in their agency (Mergel, 2012). Instead, policies and strategies were often developed and adopted retroactively after behavior online had been observed. Overall, because of the need for inter-agency collaboration, social media strategies defy and challenge most organizations existing hierarchical structures (Mergel, 2012; Mergel & Greeves, 2013; Spenner, 2010).

Government agencies can learn from how the private industry has handled these organizational challenges. A study of forty mid-sized to large companies found that social technologies force companies to develop a more holistic approach to communication because the IT departments share responsibilities with branding and advertisement (the private equivalent to public affairs) (Spenner, 2010). Further, for a company to promote the message of many separate departments effectively, like customer service and human resources, there must be a single individual who aggregates and determines the best way to disseminate information. This person, who Spenner (2010) titles the “new-media ringmaster,” has three capabilities that distinguish them from traditional brand-managers: they use integrative thinking, collaborative skills, and work in short time frames constantly adapting to new technologies.

Mergel and Greeves (2013) recommend that government take a similar approach and appoint an individual who can serve as the point of contact with the administration, legal counsel, information technology departments, public information, marketing, human resources, workforce development, economic resources, citizens, and businesses. Moreover, a case study on the United Kingdom's Home Office, which provides immigration control, security, counter terrorism, crime reduction, and passport services, found that across the multiple agencies there was too much concentration on designing and implementing individual technologies and not enough focus on working within a complex organization (Rooksby & Sommerville, 2012). Consequently, to apply these findings to the local level, if it is a countywide or citywide page, the social media point of contact would likely need to work to promote programs across departments and agencies (Mergel & Greeves, 2012).

Defining the Audience

Finally, analyzing an agency's mission statement, tasks, activities, and objectives will help them identify their social media audience (Mergel, 2012). For a county or city government, this is often local residents; however, an individual agency may choose to tailor their message to their customers. To identify an audience, an agency should consider their core tasks, activities, and objectives and who is involved or receiving services (Mergel & Greeves, 2013). Thus, agencies may tailor messages to unique communities. Mergel (2012) gives an example from the Federal Department of Agriculture - they aim to inform the general public about food safety, provide legal guidance to communities, businesses, unions, and other government agencies by sharing new regulations, provide scientific data to researchers, and supply educational support to teachers (Mergel, 2012). She points out that some of these communication needs may not benefit from social media at this time because there is no audience.

Benefits & Concerns

Before deciding to embark on a social media campaign, public administration experts recommend that local agencies consider potential benefits and concerns (costs or risks) (Mergel, 2012; Hrdinova et. al, 2010). This will differ between agencies due to their varying resource capabilities (Bryer & Zavattaro, 2011; Mergel, 2012). A report, which measured perceived benefits of social media, summarizes the results from two workshops held with twenty-three New York state government professionals from sixteen state agencies and forty local government representatives from twenty-five counties (Center, 2009). During the first workshop, professionals from the state government compiled and listed perceived benefits and issues, ranking the issues in order of most concern. At the second workshop, local officials discussed and ranked benefits and issues; the results are in Table 2.1 on the next page. An additional survey of California city government officials found that information exchange, contacting constituents during emergencies, engaging citizens, and marketing programs were the most commonly cited reasons why cities decided to develop social media (Zimmer, 2012). This data is summarized in Table 2.2 on the next page.

In the following sections, I describe these issues in further detail as well as other potential benefits from the literature including reaching digital natives (Newsome & Dickey, 2013; Mergel & Greeves, 2012) and improving transparency and accountability (Reddick, 2009; Mergel, 2013; Pina et., al 2010). I summarize the benefits of social networking as the reach of social media, information sharing and collaboration, transparency and accountability, public safety, and internal and external improvements. I then divide the costs between internal concerns (governance, security, and resources) and external concerns (legal ramifications, perception). However, I refer the reader back to the previous section on organizational framework for governance concerns.

Table 2.1- Social Media Benefits and Concerns; Results from Local Government

Exploratory Social Media Project: Phase 1			
Ranking of social media benefits by local government workshop participants			
Rank	Benefit Value		Number of Votes
1	Information Dissemination and Exchange		40
2	Enhanced Public Safety		34
3	Enhanced Collaboration		30
4	Instantaneous Information Sharing		27
5	Improved Training Capabilities		10
6	Coolness Factor		9
7	Cost Savings		7
8	Greater Competiveness in Employee Recruiting		6
9	Enhanced Access for the Disabled		5
10	Creation of Virtual Communities		3
11	Documentation		1
Ranking of social media areas of concern by local government workshop participants			
Ranking by local government professionals	Ranking by state agency professionals	Areas of Concern	Number of Votes
1	3	Governance	32
2	2	Legal and Regulatory Ramifications	24
3	7	Perception	23
4	5	Security	22
5	1	Resources	18
6	8	Information Overload	5
7	4	Making a Business Case	1
8	6	Accessibility	0

Table 2.2- Why Governments Pursue Social Media

<u>Social Media Use in Local Public Agencies: A Study of California Cities</u>	
Questions: What reasons did the city consider when deciding to use social media (check all that apply)?	
Answer Options N=62 Cities	Response Percent: Response Count
Information Sharing	93.5%: 58
Marketing city programs, services, or events	87.1%: 54
Updating constituents during emergencies	50%: 31
Engaging constituents	62.9%:39
Providing an additional method for contacting the city to ask questions and resolve issues	37.1%:23
Marketing local business or commercial interests	14.5%:9
Recruitment and hiring	9.7%:6
Networking	9.7%: 6

Perceived Benefits

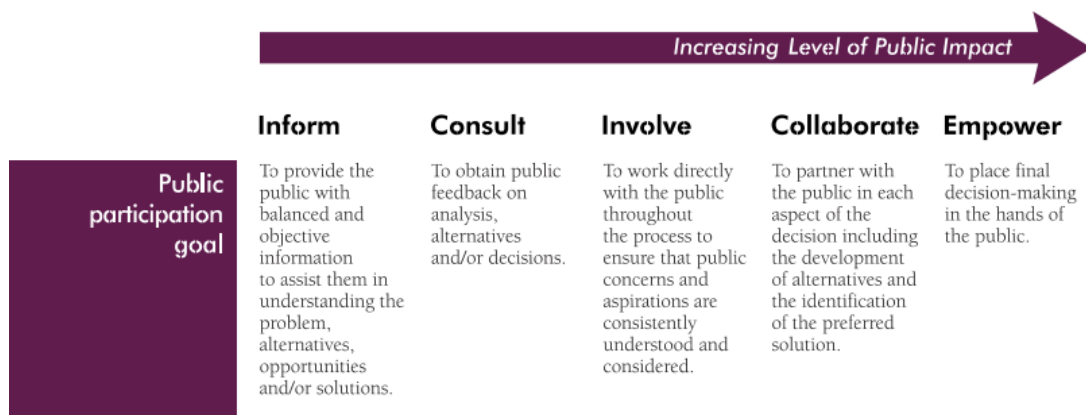
Expand Reach

The first perceived benefit of social media is that it allows government to expand their reach and connect with residents, like young people, who do not use traditional forms of communication as often, but spend a significant amount of their time online (Mergel, 2013). In 2001, Prensky coined millennials (those born between 1980 and 2000) digital natives because they grew-up in a world immersed in rapidly changing technology. This idea is justified by data that shows that ninety-two percent of Americans who are from the age of 18-29 have social media accounts (Brenner, 2012). There are implications to high social technology use among younger generations. Tapscott described the “net-generation” as a group that “wants a different approach and has a very different view of government” (Newsome & Dickey, 2013, p. 128). Moreover, a survey of 1,057 young American leaders (the sample was derived from participants at the National Student Leadership Conference, Americans for Informed Democracy, and Washington D.C. internship students) found that millennials expect to have the ability to communicate with the private and public sectors online (Singer et. al, 2011). Because so many young people spend a significant amount of time online and receive information through social networks, it makes sense that government would want to expand their online presence (Brenner, 2012). However, especially in rural counties and small cities, the base for a social media campaign may not be as large or as digitally involved (Livingstone & Brake, 2008). Thus, local governments should consider the demographics within their area and the availability of internet before expending resources on a social media campaign. If governments perform an analysis of their potential audiences before implementation, they can reach a rough estimate on the extent of their reach (Mergel & Greeves, 2012).

Participation 2.0

One of social media's greatest advantages is that it provides an avenue for governments to inform, consult, involve, collaborate with, and empower residents, known as Participation 2.0 (Mergel, 2012). These abilities are also reflected in the International Association of Public Participation's (2007) spectrum of public participation, seen in Figure 2.2 below, which connects public participation goals to the level of public impact. Many of the techniques provided can be implemented via social media technologies (Mergel, 2013; Boyd & Ellison, 2008). For example, government social networking pages share websites, fact sheets, and information. In addition, social media provides tools that facilitate a new avenue for public comments, surveys, workshops, and polling. Moreover, with further innovation, government IT professionals believe that technology could be used to connect citizens to government for consensus building and provide online ballots (Newsom & Dicky, 2013). In reality, while the technology offers government the ability to advance these initiatives, many governments still utilize social networking only for information purposes (Zimmer, 2012; Hand & Ching, 2011).

Figure 2.2- IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation



Transparency & Accountability

Transparency and accountability are the next two perceived benefits of social media because the venue offers government an avenue to share important information with individuals and to direct people back to their main web pages (Reddick, 2009; Mergel, 2011; Pina et. al, 2010). These benefits can be realized through improving the quality and publishing more government information online (Orszag, 2009). Studies have shown, in relation to the e-Government movement, while transparency and accountability were frequently explicit goals of public agencies, consumers were often unable to navigate websites and find the information they were looking for (Reddick, 2009). In some ways, social networking can improve on these issues because communication is streamlined to a few commonly used social media tools (Brenner, 2012). In contrast, it can make finding information even more difficult. For example, Facebook pages organize information based on when it is posted (Boyd & Ellison, 2008). For someone who is looking for recent news or upcoming events, this venue can be extremely helpful. However, if an individual is attempting to look into a specific topic, then finding information is not as easy because Facebook does not offer a search engine within organization pages. Thus, in relation to transparency and accountability, it is beneficial for a public agency to have a well-organized website as well as a frequently updated social media presence so that residents have multiple venues for finding information (Hrdinova et. al, 2010).

Emergencies

Public agencies also justify social media campaigns because of their case-by-case success in emergencies including natural disasters and public safety situations (Chavez et. al, 2010; Jaeger et. al, 2010). A review of relevant literature found that studies have repeatedly demonstrated the importance of coordinating responders, residents, government agencies, businesses, volunteers, and relief organizations (Jaeger et. al, 2007). Social media facilitates a

new way of sharing information that is instantaneous between multiple entities. Table 2.3 on the next page summarizes some local government case studies that describe social media use related to emergencies. Moreover, direct participation from citizens is also highly valuable in many emergencies because it allows for increased speed in response and recovery (Jaeger et. al, 2007). Social technologies can increase citizens' preparedness and involvement, before during, and after an emergency (Chavez et. al, 2010). A presentation from the United States Department of Education illustrates the promising practices related to social media use in crisis seen in Figure 2.3 below (U.S, 2012). Ultimately, when social media information leads to citizen action it provides tremendous benefits to the community and public agencies (Ben-Yehuda, 2012; Chavez et. al., 2010).

Figure 2.3- Social Media Use in Emergencies



Table 2.3- Local Government Use of Social Media in Emergencies

<i>Local Government in Emergencies: Summary of Case Studies/ Surveys</i>		
<i>Title (Citation)</i>	<i>Case Study/Survey of; Social media use for</i>	<i>How social media was used or General Findings</i>
The New Way to Communicate with Residents: Local Government use of Social Media to Prepare for Emergencies (Chavez et. al, 2010)	City of Evanston, Illinois; Share information about natural emergencies and beach closures	Used Twitter to announce emergencies. It provided the largest benefit because people can receive tweets via text message.
	County of Johnson, Kansas; Share information about severe weather alerts, tornado preparedness, and health awareness	Used Facebook and YouTube to communicate emergency preparedness. Twitter and Facebook are used during emergencies to share critical alerts.
	City of Moorhead, Minnesota; Share information about flooding	Used Facebook and Twitter for real time flood updates and instructions.
	County of Fort Bend, Texas; Used to share H1N1 health information and updates	Used Facebook, Twitter, and blogs to discredit speculation and communicate County actions. .
	City of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Share crime, traffic, and health alerts	Uses integrative services such as text messages, e-mail, Twitter, Facebook, and electronic newsstands to warn people of emergencies. Currently has more than 10,000 subscribers.
	City of Alexandria, Virginia; Used to share H1N1 information and snow storm updates	Uses social media, text messages, television, radio, flyers, and website facilitated e-updates
Backchannels on the Front Lines: Emergent Uses of Social Media in the 2007 Southern California Wildfires (Sutton et. al, 2008)	Survey of 307 respondents affected by fires that burned in the following counties: Santa Barbara, Orange, San Diego, Los Angeles, San Bernardino, Riverside, and Ventura	-92% of residents had mobile phones and 70% owned laptops with wireless internet. -76% got information online during the emergency; 38% used blogs; >10% used Twitter. -Best uses were the Orange County Fire Authority and the San Diego Emergency Management website.
Social Media Emergency Response (Hoot Suite, 2012)	Morris County, New Jersey Hurricane Sandy Social Media Response	Used Twitter and Facebook to share info during the hurricane and to address citizen questions/ concerns after the hurricane.

Internal and External Improvements

Finally, the majority of research on social media use in government has focused on the topics listed above, but as noted in the graphs at the beginning of this section, there is also the potential for internal and external improvements. Internal improvements include improved training capabilities, cost savings, greater competitiveness in employee recruiting, and sharing government documents and data. External development includes increasing the coolness factor, enhancing access for the disabled, and the creation of virtual communities. These advantages are sparsely mentioned in other research articles, and since many of them are somewhat self-explanatory and they had low ratings of importance in both articles that provided quantitative data, I will not discuss them further.

Concerns- Costs & Risks

Security Risks

Since governments must use social networks developed by third parties and some agencies have access to the private information of citizens, there are security risks in using social media (Mergel, 2013). Reuters reported that this threat has become more obvious as cyber attacks by international hackers continue to rise (Finkel & Menn, 2013). In his 2013 State of the Union address, President Obama called for better protection of the country's technological infrastructure. For these reasons, security concerns related to protecting secure information and keeping government social media pages free from spam are valid and IT departments should provide support to mitigate threats (Mergel, 2012).

Costs

While social media is frequently marketed as being a cheap media solution for broad outreach, there are direct costs and opportunity costs. First, the direct costs stem from the time and resources it will take to establish, monitor, and maintain a social media campaign (Mergel & Greeves, 2013). These costs will differ across localities depending on the level of use of social technologies and the amount of planning before implementation. Further, there are also opportunity costs (Zimmer, 2012) or the value of the next best, but forgone alternative (Fugitt & Wilcox, 1999). Critics of social media campaigns question if expanding the government's digital presence is taking them away from core tasks of the agency (Mergel & Greeves, 2013). In addition, with many local governments experiencing budget cuts in recent years, it is questionable as to whether employee time and organizational resources are best spent starting and maintaining a digital presence. Ultimately, each individual agency will have to consider their resources and employee workload and estimate if the investment is less than the benefits of a social media campaign before implementing one (Fugitt & Wilcox, 1999; Mergel & Greeves, 2013).

Legal Uncertainty

Another potential cost is the possibility of legal cases or issues taking up more government resources than initially intended (Zimmer, 2012). Due to a lack of legal precedent regarding social media sites, governments are uncertain as to how First Amendment rights, records retention, accessibility laws, terms of use, copyright laws, and privacy laws relate to their use of social networking. Zimmer (2012) found that strong policies are the best way for an agency to mitigate these uncertain legal risks. In addition, the Federal government has slowly been passing Acts and Memoranda's addressing some of these issues. For example, the Social Media, Web-Based Interactive Technologies, and the Paperwork Reduction Act of 2010 offers agencies guidance on how new media fit in with older laws, specifically the Paper Reduction Act

of 1995 (Office, 2010). For many agencies, these uncertainties will only be addressed with the addition of new laws and the precedent developed by court cases.

Public Perception

Local governments are also especially concerned with how their social media page will be perceived by the public, meaning they often strive to control their agency's message (Center, 2009). With traditional communication methods, government agencies usually have control over messaging because it is unidirectional, but in the social media landscape, media consumers are active participants that respond and create their own message feeds (Mergel, 2013). For example, Hand and Ching (2011) concluded from a survey of local government agencies in the Phoenix metro area, that municipal governments are more likely to use social media as a one-way communication method. A study of police department interactions with citizens found similar evidence of social media being used as a unidirectional communication tool (Brainard & Derrick-Mills, 2011). Ultimately, authors from both studies concluded from their surveys that local government is reluctant to give up control of their message (Hand & Ching, 2011; Brainer & Derrick-Mills, 2011). Bryer (2011) considered this issue theoretically and justified the concerns of local government that participation on behalf of the public may not be high in quality. Consequently, the government would invest time and resources into a communication medium that provides few benefits. Furthermore, agencies also worry about keeping their pages professional, meaning there is appropriate language and discourse remains civil between citizens and government officials. This expectation has been coined "netiquette" (Mergel, 2012)

Social Media Policies

Policies establish expectations that help ensure that responsibilities are clear and that behavior is consistent across the organization (Bolman & Deal, 2008). They institute organizational responsibility, procedures, rules, values, and they mitigate legal and security risks. Moreover, the Center for Technology in Government stated in an article about developing social media policies, that they are an important first step for governments looking to expand their online communications because they enable responsible and effective implementation (Hrdinova, et. al, 2010). However, many governments do not have social networking policies or develop these policies after starting a social media campaign (Mergel, 2012). For example, in his review of eighty-one large California cities, Zimmer (2012) found that forty-six percent had an official social media policy, while fifty-two percent did not. In this section, I will discuss the importance of social media policies and review the limited research on what they should or often do include.

Why Social Media Policies are Important

Social media policies provide guidance on how public employees should use social technologies as “official communication mechanisms for public engagement” (Mergel & Greeves, 2013, p. 109). This requires an organization developing a social media policy to assign responsibility and accountability systems throughout the hierarchy, combining support from County or City boards, with the guidance from public affairs, and coordination among various levels of general staff with the IT department. Depending on the agency, social media can be established at the grassroots or can be an initiative sparked by the administration (Mergel, 2012). Mergel (2012), observed in her examination of social media at the Federal and State level that policies were often written after social media was implemented if implementation was a bottom-up effort. However, when social media campaigns are mandated from the top-down, it is usually due to the creation of a new policy. Mergel (2012) found that there are limitations to both

approaches because social media effectiveness essentially requires cooperation and buy-in from multiple agencies within the organizational hierarchy to be effective. Responsibilities include over-seeing social media use, providing guidance and training, being responsible for maintaining profiles, responding to citizen questions and concerns, managing security and legal issues, and assessing effectiveness to ensure organizational efficiency and accountability. These responsibilities could occur at multiple levels of the organization. Therefore, they require some coordination and inter-agency collaboration.

Social media policies are also important because they help local governments mitigate legal and security risks. However, Zimmer (2012) found that California cities that had social media policies placed a greater emphasis on internal controls, like the administration and management, than external threats, such as legal and security issues, detailed in the concerns section. These external threats can be difficult to predict and prepare for, especially because the technology, policies, and legal opinions are all developing.

What Do Social Media Policies Contain?

Academic research on what social media policies contain is extremely limited. Three research articles discuss broadly, what social media policies contain from analyzing surveys, interviews and social media policy documents. First, Hrdinova et. al, (2010), studied federal government agencies and identified eight essential elements of social media policies; employee access, account management, acceptable use, employee conduct, content, security, legal issues, and citizen conduct. Secondly, Mergel & Greeves (2013) conclude from surveying and interviewing federal agencies, that social media polices should define organizational responsibility, create and require a brand to be used across platforms, and list platforms that are acceptable. Moreover, they should establish a content and information approval process, ensure accessibility of social media content, generate a process for records retention, and write a social

media commenting policy for residents. Finally, a survey by Zimmer (2012) asked large California cities what their policies included. He found that ninety percent of policies contained a statement of purpose, eighty percent included definitions of social media and employee conduct, seventy-six percent had stipulations regarding what is considered inappropriate from citizens, and seventy-two percent of policies included employee authorization and limits the type of information that can be posted (Zimmer, 2012).

Social Media Strategies

Social media strategies are important because they allow an agency to consider how they will use social technologies to reach their audience and advance their mission and goals. However, there are two ways to think about social media strategies; in terms of engagement and resources as well as in relation to organizational tactics. Further, two articles discuss what should be contained in strategies.

Mergel (2012) recognized three engagement strategies utilized in government, often not intentionally. First, the push strategy refers to when agencies use social media as a tool for promotion where the quantity of information posted is highly valued. On these pages, she noted that public commenting was usually blocked. Second, is the pull strategy where social media is used to bring users to the organizations' main website. Pull strategies require greater involvement with the audience and more care in choosing what information is posted. Finally, the networking strategy places the greatest amount of value on online communities made up of diverse constituencies. This strategy is more difficult than the other two because it requires an intimate understanding of the audience and information sharing. Implementing each of these strategies, from push to pull to networking, entail increased public engagement and greater costs.

Individual departments may use social media to achieve unique objectives, which means their strategies will be created around those goals (Mergel & Greeves, 2013). These 'tactics'

include using social media for information, promotion, education, as well as increasing citizen participation, networking, and engagement. A department may choose to use multiple tactics to achieve their goals. Moreover, it is important that agencies recognize that some social technology tools are more appropriate in helping them to meet their objectives.

Two articles discuss what should be included in a social media strategy. First, Mergel & Greeves (2013) recommend that strategies include ideas that will advance the organization's mission with messages tailored to an identified audience. The only article that expanded on this was a worksheet from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention that requires agencies to develop a target audience, determine objectives, define audience needs, integrate goals, develop a message, consider resources and capacity, identify appropriate social media tools, define activities, and identify key partners (Brodalski, 2011).

Social Media Assessment

Local governments need to develop assessment tools that will help them evaluate the effectiveness of their social media campaign and decide whether social technologies are helping them advance their mission (Mergel, 2013). This is difficult because there is not a clear understanding as to how governments should define and measure effectiveness, which is why the research on social media assessment in the public sector is extremely limited.

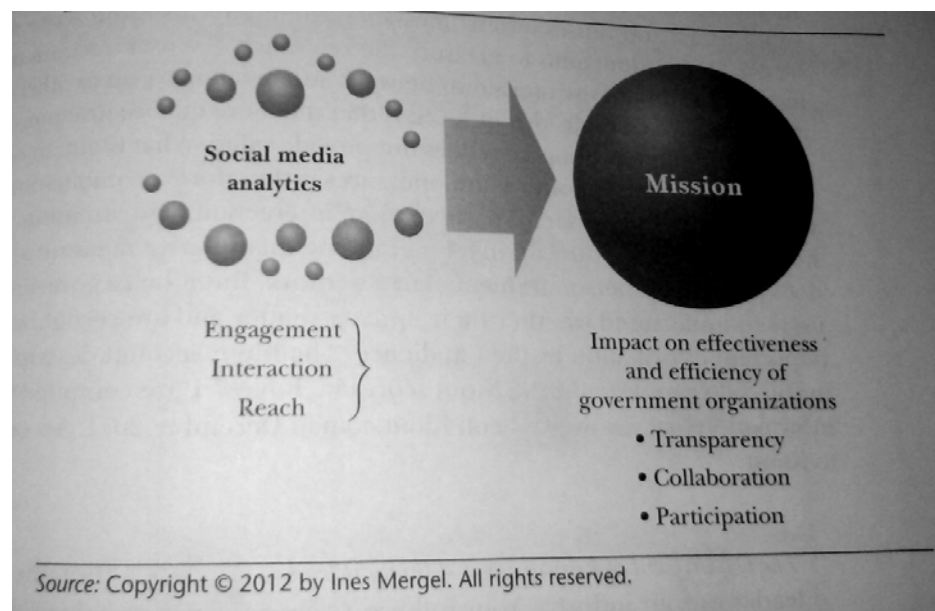
In contrast to the private sector, social media in the public sector cannot be measured by sales and online traffic alone (Souza, 2012; Mergel, 2013). In the private sector, calculating profit is simple; outputs minus inputs (Burchett, 2010). In contrast, in the public sector measurement must also include a consideration of outcomes. This is because government programs and services, the public equivalent to private sector sales, often have positive externalities beyond their initial benefits (Hill & Myatt, 2010). For example, improving communication before and during emergencies by using social media could potentially improve emergency response and

save property and lives, which will ultimately have spillover benefits into the community after the emergency. Moreover, measuring success based on the increased use of programs and services due to social media use can be complicated. Correlation is not causation as demonstrated in this example; the increased use of flu vaccination programs may be because of a bad flu season and not because of increased social media promotion. Overall, government programs and services provide spillover benefits that are difficult to measure and many factors are likely contributing to the ultimate output or outcome as it relates to the success of programs and services.

Online traffic is also not a complete measurement of social media effectiveness because these quantitative measurements do not capture the quality of communication or determine if social media use is helping to fulfill the agencies mission (Mergel, 2013). Quantitative data programs like Google Analytics and Facebook Insights provide demographic information like age and location. Moreover, Facebook tracks the number of likes, people interacting with your page, and your total reach, or the number of unique people who have seen any content from your page (Facebook, 2012). This extensive quantitative data accurately tracks who is using your page and what posts they are reacting to, but it does not tell you how they are reacting (Mergel, 2013). For public agencies, usually the quality and content of comments is more important than the quantity of users. By implementing a social media page, governments are essentially lowering the barriers of entry for communication with the public because for social media users, social technologies are more convenient than calling, attending meetings, or writing letters (Mergel, 2013). Therefore, many people may like your page and comment on posts, but their comments may not always be productive because they are off-topic, factually inaccurate, or lack content. In contrast, in emergencies the quantity of users is of greater value because it helps to ensure that messages can reach a large audience.

Social networking effectiveness should be measured by the mediums ability to move the agency towards fulfilling their mission. Mergel (2013) summarizes social media analytics as a measurement of public engagement, interaction, and reach as they relate to an agencies mission with considerations toward if social technologies are improving effectiveness, efficiency, transparency, collaboration, and participation as illustrated in Figure 2.4 below. Determining if social media is helping an agency fulfill its mission will require that employees consider qualitative data, like public feedback and comments as they relate to programs and services. Agencies will need to consider questions like if the public is sharing information that is improving service delivery, if they are responding to public questions and feedback, and if promotion and information in the digital world is producing real world outcomes (Mergel, 2013). However, to reiterate, determining the quality of engagement, and interaction is much more difficult than measuring the quantity. Moreover, measuring the impact of social media alone is also a challenging process (Mergel, 2013).

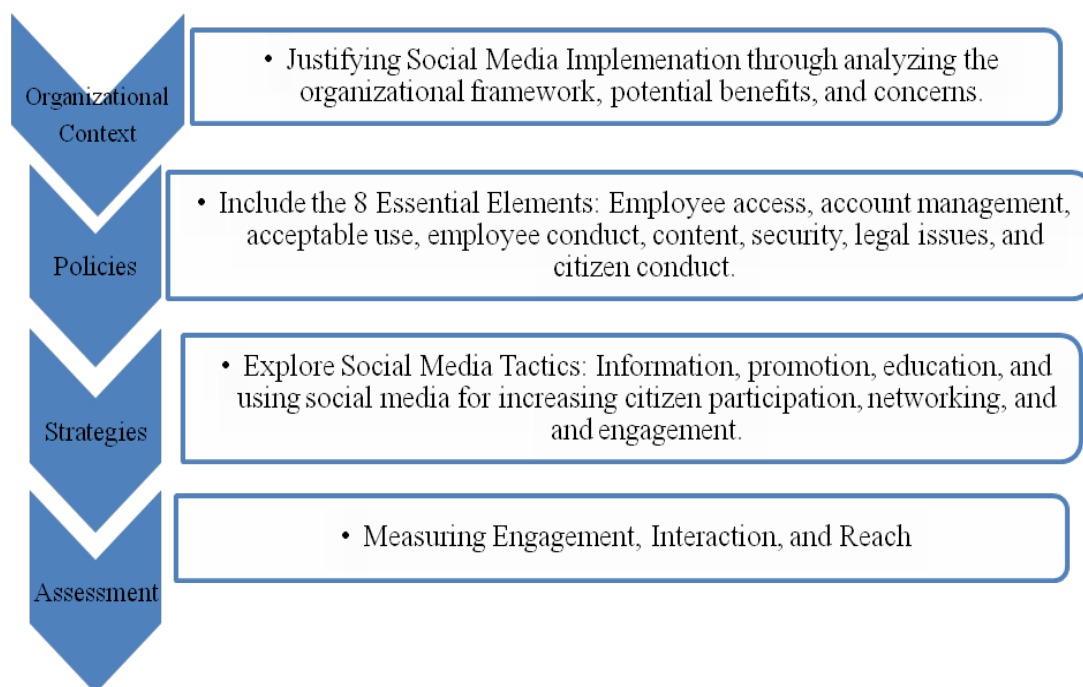
Figure 2.4- Assessment: Social Media and Supporting an Agency's Mission



Summary

In this literature review, I discussed the shift from e-government to Government 2.0, which provides background for developing social media campaigns. In developing campaigns, public agencies justify the use of social media by considering benefits and concerns and their ability to build an audience. If they proceed with social networking implementation, then they should develop policies, strategies, and tools for assessment. Social media policies are important because they provide an agency organizational guidance, assign responsibility, create rules, and mitigate risks. Strategies help an agency direct their efforts towards reaping social media benefits by deciding how they are going to share information. Assessment tools measure success and may require agencies reconsider their policies or strategies. This chapter provided what we know about this topic. In the next chapter, I discuss my work in Yolo County analyzing their use of social media technologies and developing policies, strategies, and assessment tools using the framework outlined in the graph below.

Figure 2.5- Social Media Analysis: Framework Applied in Next Chapter



Chapter 3

SOCIAL MEDIA IN YOLO COUNTY

Considering that the research on local government use of social technologies is extremely limited, I reviewed what was available and then used the frameworks in the literature to analyze Yolo County's current use of social media to create a social media policy, strategy, and framework for future assessment. Through an internship with Yolo County Public Information Officer (PIO) Beth Gabor, I had the opportunity to learn more about the priorities of the County as they related to the interest of expanding the use of social networking.

I began by analyzing social media use in Yolo and the documents that governed it. Then working with the PIO, I used the available research to rewrite the County's social media policy, which was adopted by the Yolo County Board of Supervisors on January 29, 2013. Moreover, I created a strategy for the County Public Information Office, and a framework for future assessment that can be applied to the County or individual departments.

This chapter discusses that process through providing background information on Yolo County, reviewing their use of social networking, and concluding with the details of my internship with them and my final products. I use the framework illustrated in Figure 2.5 at the end of Chapter 2 to discuss the County's organizational context, policies, strategies, and future need for assessment. This section also includes a brief review of other social media policies and strategies that are being used by government agencies.

Yolo County

Yolo is a largely rural county in Northern California that contains the four urban centers of Davis, Woodland, West Sacramento, and Winters (Yolo, 2012). Yolo County is a medium-sized county with a population of 201,071 residents, (California Department of Finance, 2013), who reside in 1,021 square miles. Davis, the largest city, has 71,408 residents including the

students who live on campus at the University of California Davis (UC Davis, 2013). The University reported that 31,732 students were enrolled in 2012. Woodland, the second biggest city, has a population of 55,646. West Sacramento has a population of 49,292 and Winters has a population of 6,839. The largest employer in the county is the University of California Davis and the largest industry is agriculture.

Figure 3.1- Map of California & Yolo County



The county government provides countywide, municipal, and statewide services on a budget of \$334,786,668 in fiscal year 2012-2013, employing 6.4 government workers for every 1,000 county residents (Yolo, 2012). Differing county services illustrate the organization's three distinct roles as a provider of regional government, as a supplier of municipal services in unincorporated areas, and as a political subdivision of the state. These services generally include planning and public works, health and human services, law and justice, and general government, as seen in the left pie chart in Figure 3.2 on the next page. Moreover, usually distinct revenue

sources pay for programs and services; revenue is categorized in the pie graph on the right. In recent years, Yolo has seen a decline in revenue, with a resulting thirty percent decrease in employees, while in some cases providing an increased level of service as illustrated in Figure 3.3 (Yolo, 2012). It is important for them to find innovative ways to provide programs and services.

Figure 3.2- Yolo County Expenditures and Revenues

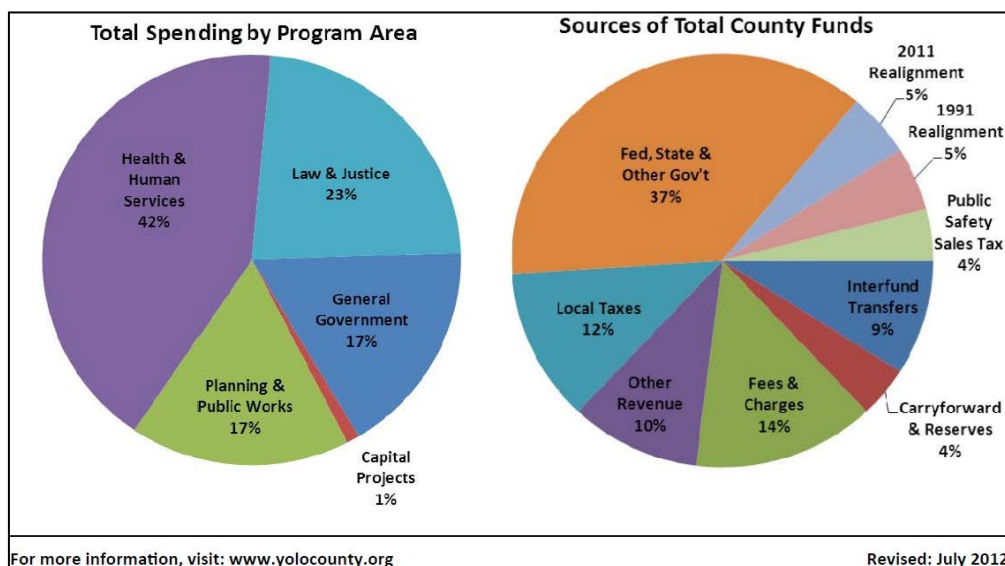
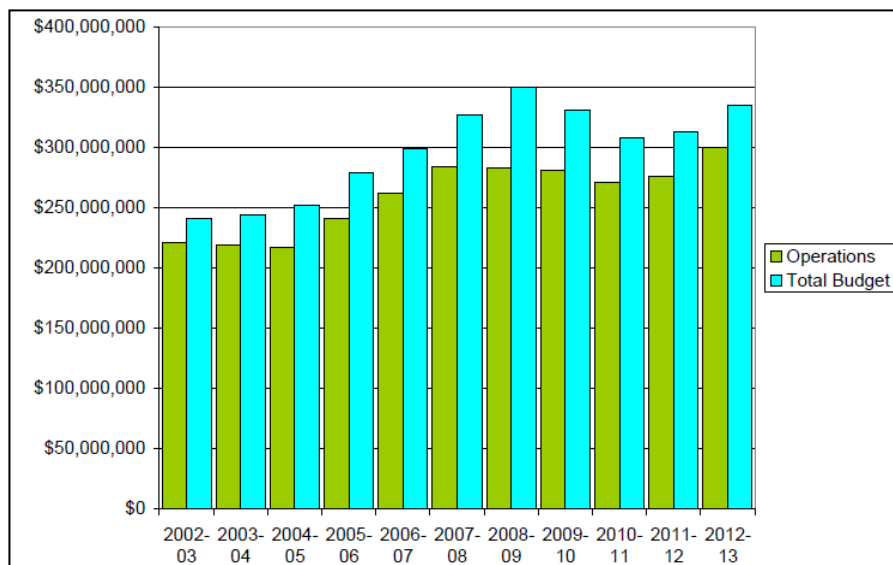


Figure 3.3- Total Budget versus Yolo County Operations



Yolo County's Use of Social Media

Agencies and departments in Yolo County established a social networking presence before the first Yolo County social media policy passed as seen in Table 3.1 on the next page. The first agency to utilize social media was the Health Department in March of 2009 followed by the District Attorney's Office in July of the same year. The County passed their first social media policy in April 2010. Currently the Health Department, the District Attorney, Yolo Library, Planning and Public Works, and the Animal Services Shelter use social media. Moreover, a Facebook page administered by the Manager of Public Affairs, titled Yolo County, shares countywide information. County departments and public officials also use Twitter and YouTube.

On March 3, 2013, I collected data given by Facebook analytics on Yolo County's various Facebook pages and summarized them in Table 3.1. Overall, Planning and Public Works had the fewest likes at 10 and the Animal Services Shelter had the largest amount of likes at 1,312. The most common age range was 18-35 year olds and most agencies had only posted one or two posts during their most popular week. It should be noted that this data is limited because I do not know how Facebook calculates average age and most popular week and they offer no data to compare the extent or range of difference in these measurements.

Table 3.1- Yolo County Social Media Data Summary Collected March 3, 2013

Profile	Launched Facebook On	# of Likes	Most Popular Age	Most Popular Week	Post(s) During Most Popular Week
Health Department	March 18, 2009	100	35-54 years old	January 6, 2013	Flu levels across the country are rising. Visit the Health Dept. website for links and tools to help you stay flu free this season. www.yolohealth.org (3 shares)
District Attorney	July 9, 2009	215	25-34 years old	November 4, 2012	-New hires at Yolo DA's Office speak many languages ~ http://tinyurl.com/baddh3a (3 likes, 2 shares) -"Domestic Violence happens behind closed doors..." http://tinyurl.com/bz3pdyx (2 likes by the same person, posted twice)
Yolo County Social Media Policy Passed on April 10, 2010					
Yolo Library	July 29, 2011	254	25-44 years old	December 9, 2012	"California Indian" Showing at the Davis Branch Library [With Flyer] (3 likes)
Yolo County	November 4, 2011	315	18-24 years old	November 25, 2012	NONE In the news: Comedian, Kat Williams drove his three-wheeled motorcycle on sidewalks, was chased by police officers, and arrested in Yolo County.
Planning and Public Works	November 17, 2011	10	No Data	No Data	No Data- Facebook does not track data until you get 25 likes
Animal Services Shelter	April 14, 2012	1,312	18-34	January 20, 2013	-Had 14 posts including 4 posts about adoptable animals, 4 posts sharing stories of adoptions, 4 posts promoting events, and 2 posts sharing employee success Statistics of posts were as follows: -79% of posts had pictures -Totals Likes = 701; Average of 50 per post; Range of 12-164 -Total Comments = 134; Average of 9.5; Range of 0-32 -Total Shares = 455; Average of 32.5; Range of 0-211
Data Collected on March 3, 2013					

Ultimately, the most popular page, the Animal Services Shelter, had fourteen posts during their most popular week with 701 total shares. While collecting this data I observed that the Animal Services Shelter had a larger variety of posts than the other Yolo County agencies because they frequently shared pictures, videos, articles, and information. In addition, because a large part of their core task is promoting pets for adoption, social media is an extremely useful tool for them as they are able to connect to a large network using pictures and often emotional stories about the animals. For example, in one post they wrote, “This is a rather desperate plea for your help with my beloved friend Sassy. I have not received one offer of help and her life is now on the line” (Sassy was adopted). In contrast to the sad posts are “happy tails” or pictures of adopted animals with their new owners. Moreover, because they have taken advantage of community partners like the Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, they have been able to grow their page at a much faster rate than any other county agency.

Departments that have implemented social media within the County demonstrate the opposite extreme as well. In contrast, Planning and Public Works (PPW) only has ten likes while the Animal Shelter has more than 1,000. To put this into context in the year that PPW has had a Facebook account they have shared twenty-one posts. In comparison, the Animal Shelter shares that many, on average, in a week and a half. Another point of comparison is that while PPW mostly provides information about highway closures, the Animal Shelter shares pictures and videos of animals, which are more entertaining and emotionally stimulating than road updates. These observations about Yolo County’s current use of social media demonstrate why thinking about social media before implementing it is important. I expand on these ideas below using Yolo County as an example case.

My Internship in Yolo County

In January 2012, for a project in our Public Management and Administration class in the Master's of Public Policy and Administration Program at Sacramento State, Yolo County Administrative Officer (CAO) Patrick Blacklock asked a group of students including myself to develop innovative solutions for managing the County Parks Division. After analyzing the small division we came to the conclusion that the only way they could remain sustainable is if they increased user-ship and collaboration with community organizations in the County (Bravo, et. al, 2012). We made five recommendations including that they strengthen and build relationships with local non-profits, increase awareness about responsible user-ship, and start a "Support Your Parks" fundraising campaign. Our final recommendation was to facilitate, educate, and promote these new ideas and programs through social media.

Upon the conclusion of the group project, I was interested in the potential for social networking in local government. Therefore, in September 2012 I began working with the PIO to develop a new social media policy for Yolo County that would take into consideration the relevant literature and the contents of other local government policies. The Yolo County Board of Supervisors adopted the new policy I drafted on January 29, 2013. In February, I began working on a strategy for the Yolo PIO that addresses organizational hierarchy, mission, goals, and resource allocation. The final document is included in Appendix C. Further, I recommend the County use the framework for future assessment that is included in the implementation guide in Appendix D.

Yolo County's Organizational Context

In this section, I describe Yolo County's context including its mission, organizational complexity, and potential reach. Then I compare the benefits and costs of social media for Yolo.

Organizational Framework

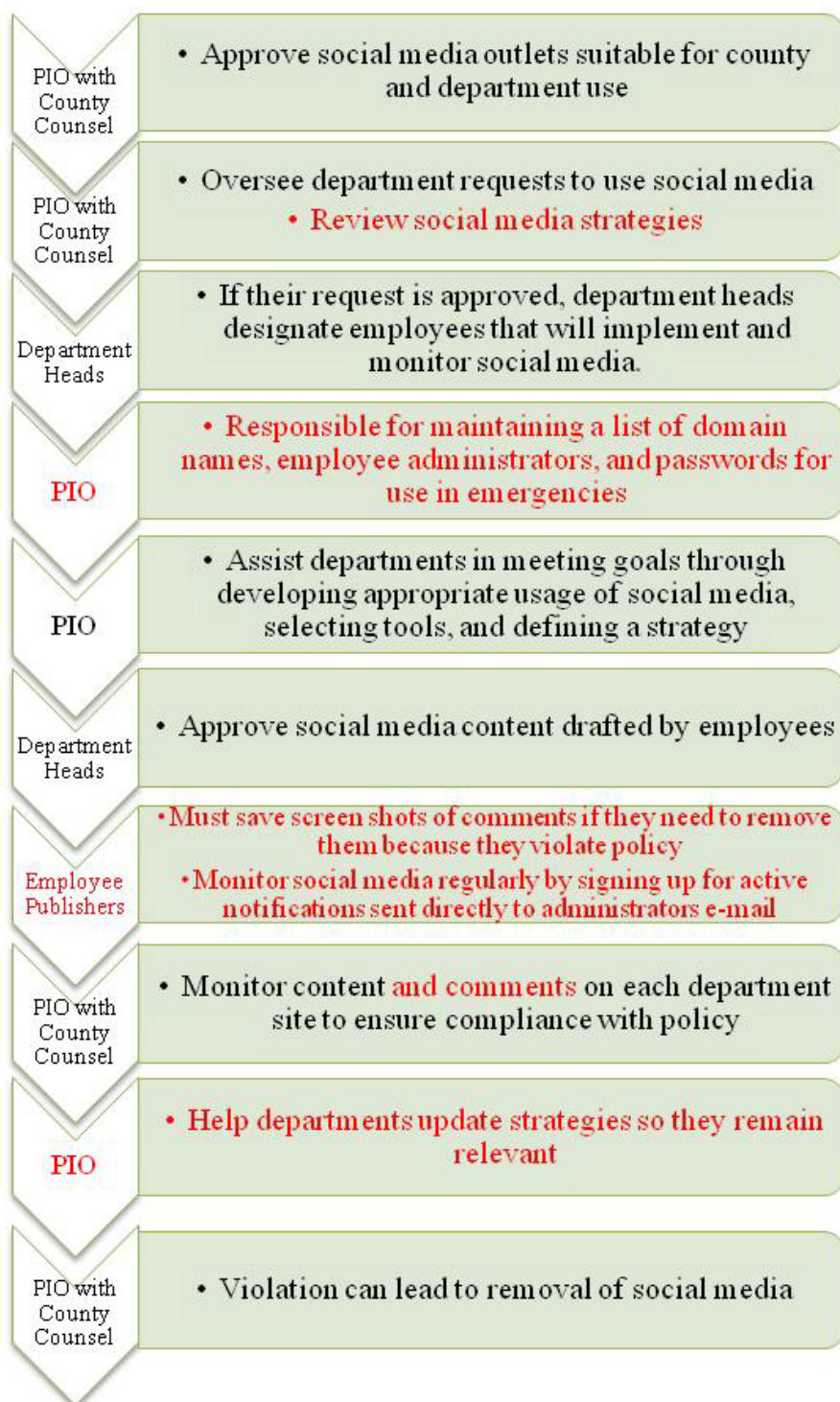
Mission Focused

Public administration experts believe that if social media implementation remains mission focused and aims to fulfill the organization's goals, then it will be more effective. Yolo County does not have an official mission, but the Board of Supervisors has approved nine strategic goals. They are to advance innovation, champion job creation and economic opportunities, collaborate to maximize success, enhance and sustain the safety net, preserve and ensure safe and crime free communities, preserve and support agriculture, protect open space and the environment, and to provide fiscally sound dynamic and responsive services (Yolo, 2012). Social media can advance each of these goals as discussed in Appendix C.

Hierarchy & Organizational Complexity

As observed by multiple researchers, social media implementation is often a grassroots effort, where formal policies are passed after the implementation of social technologies (Mergel, 2012; Zimmer, 2012). This happened in Yolo County where the Health Department and the District Attorney's Office launched Facebook pages in 2009 a year before the County's social media policy was adopted in April 2010. When I began working on writing the new social media policy, the County and six agencies were utilizing social technologies already. Therefore, I had to take into consideration the existing structure and what I thought needed to be added to ensure efficiency, improve effectiveness, and mitigate associated risks without creating an unnecessary bureaucratic burden. The two process systems developed by the old and new policies are in Figure 3.4 on the next page, with what I added in the new policy illustrated in red.

Figure 3.4-Yolo County Social Media Process Chart with Additions



It is obvious from analyzing Figure 3.4 that social media implementation requires coordination between County Counsel, the PIO, department heads, and employee publishers. Moreover, in some circumstances it will be necessary to include the IT department. Yolo County's policy is developed to insert hierarchical authority into a process that requires various levels of communication and coordination between at least two employees within departments and the County PIO, occasionally in coordination with County Counsel.

Defining an Audience

Defining an audience requires that public agencies consider their tasks, who utilizes their services, and the populations who would benefit from their services. Then they must estimate whether these populations are online. Moreover, they should determine if there are opportunities for inter-agency collaboration or partnerships with non-profits. I provide an example in the Table 3.2 below.

Table 3.2- Defining an Audience for the County Public Information Office

Core Tasks	-Represent the public and provide information.
Who Utilizes Department/Agency Services?	-The general public -Local journalists -Those who have an interest in a specific county issue
Who Can Benefit from Department/ Agency Services?	-The general public
Are These Populations Online?	-The Animal Shelter and UC Davis have successfully created large online networks, so there is a local digital audience.
Is Inter-Agency Collaboration Necessary?	- PIO needs to reach out to other departments. The PIO will need to attempt to post relevant county information from multiple departments, as it is available.

Benefits & Concerns

Benefits and concerns related to social media are extremely hard to measure because there is so much uncertainty. Therefore, I do not recommend that local governments use resources to try to determine the financial worth of the benefits and costs. Instead, based on what I have learned, I recommend agencies perform a qualitative analysis. They should compare and contrast the scope and likelihood of potential benefits and concerns within their organizational context. To provide an example I have summarized the benefits and concerns for Yolo County in Table 3.3 on the next page.

The possible benefits and concerns are not “guaranteed.” The outcomes of Yolo County’s social media activities could be better or worse depending upon many factors unknowable today. However when discussing social media with the PIO, it was clear that she believes that the benefits outweigh the concerns, in light of social media’s success in emergencies. She has repeatedly made it clear that emergency preparedness, response, and recovery are the potential benefits that outweigh other concerns. Moreover, within Yolo County there is potential for varying emergencies throughout the year detailed in Table 3.4 on the next page. While the county does recognize the costs and risks of potential emergencies, and takes an active role in mitigating them, the benefit of efficient information sharing during an emergency can result in saved lives due to a more effective response and a faster recovery. Thus, the County uses social networking to increase participation 2.0, transparency, and accountability because they are good government goals and so that users will find value in their social media profiles. The overarching goal, from the perspective of the PIO, is to expand outreach and access so that a person within every neighborhood in the county could be reached in case of an emergency.

Table 3.3- Yolo County Summary of Benefits and Costs

Potential Benefits	Concerns
<p><u>Expanding Reach:</u></p> <p>In Yolo there seems to be an opportunity to connect to the local digital community judging by participation on the Animal Shelter and UC Davis Facebook pages. The data from looking at County Facebook pages also shows that popular ages range from 18-54.</p>	<p><u>Security:</u></p> <p>Due to public agencies, using third party servers there is a possibility that the system will be compromised. However, there are best practices that help mitigate behavior that can lead to these risks. Moreover, when these problems occur agencies are directed to coordinate with IT.</p>
<p><u>Participation 2.0:</u></p> <p>There is potential to increase communication, collaboration, and information sharing with residents. Social media is currently successfully promoting programs and services provided by the Library and other agencies. There is potential to expand promotion, with the goal of increasing participation, for other County programs like Parks.</p>	<p><u>Direct & Opportunity Costs:</u></p> <p>Direct costs are equal to employee time and resources related to Yolo County pages. These costs would need to be estimated for each department and will correspond to the frequency of social media use. Opportunity costs would be the value of the next best alternative (ex. PIO sharing information through a press release).</p>
<p><u>Transparency and Accountability:</u></p> <p>The Yolo County page can increase transparency by sharing more press releases, public notices, and general information online. Social media can increase accountability through sharing events and programs, posting public meeting video links, data, and organizational information.</p>	<p><u>Legal</u></p> <p>The potential for legal challenges is uncertain, but it is important local government mitigate risks. Clear policies that address legal issues, employee conduct, resident conduct, and processes are important. These are outlined in Yolo's policy in Section 7.</p>
<p><u>Emergency Preparedness:</u></p> <p>Providing emergency public information is one of the priorities of county government. Disaster management was cited as the most important reason for social media by the PIO and there seems to be a large local online population that could disseminate information during an emergency. Yolo can experience a variety of public safety emergencies throughout the year including, but not limited to, floods, earthquakes, and fires.</p>	<p><u>Perception:</u></p> <p>Local governments are understandably concerned about losing control of their message, which may negatively impact their reputation. Establishing employee and resident conduct guidelines is important as well as posting the comment policy in a place where it is accessible. Expanding the use of "netiquette" is the best way to mitigate this risk. Moreover, ensuring that pages are maintained so that posts can be corrected or deleted as necessary.</p>

Table 3.4- Possible Yolo County Emergency Issues

Natural Hazards		
I	Earthquake	Seismic events
II	Flood	Flash and rate of rise flooding
III	Severe Storm	Severe temperatures, high winds
IV	Environmental Emergency	Drought, air pollution, fog incidents
V	Volcanic Eruption	Direct and indirect impacts
VI	Epidemic/Public Health	Epidemics, plagues
VII	Cosmic Hazards	Space object impacts
Technological Hazards		
VIII	Hazardous Materials	Fixed site, transportation, pipeline releases
IX	Dam Failure	Partial and catastrophic failure
X	Fire & Conflagration	Urban and wildland conflagrations and fire storms
XI	Transportation Accident	Air, rail, highway accidents involving mass casualties
XII	Critical Infrastructure Emergency	Energy, water, food, sanitation, communications
Human Conflict Hazards		
XIII	Public/Civil Disorder	Riots, disturbances
XIV	Terrorism	CBRNE & Weapons of Mass Destruction
XV	Enemy Attack/State of War	Conventional and nuclear warfare

Policies

Chapter 2 provided an analysis of the existing research on what public agency social media policies should include. I expanded on this information by performing a review of existing government policies and found a variety of ways that governments develop policies. Almost all of them include purpose statements and most discuss legal and security concerns as well as organizational responsibilities. I reviewed social media policies that were available online and found that most are ‘copy and paste policies’ meaning they are only moderately changed from other jurisdictions models. Some of them are expanded, meaning parts of the original policy are found and extensive information is added. For example, Yolo County’s old policy is almost identical to two policies in Virginia. Only the names and titles are changed. Other cities used much of the language in the policy and expanded it adding comment policies, definitions, restrictions on personal use and more, summarized in Table 3.5 on the next page.

Table 3.5- Social Media Policy Review

Organization	Date Established	Policy Details
Wythe County, Virginia	No Date	Almost identical to Yolo
Roanoke County, Virginia	No Date	Almost identical to Yolo
City of Chandler, Arizona	June 8, 2009	Added definitions, limiting personal use
City of St. Louis Park, Minnesota	March 19, 2012	Policy itself is identical, but it is included in a packet of documents that changes the roles and responsibilities in other policies to address implementation of social technologies.
Orange County Public Schools, California	(2012-2013) Faculty Handbook	Added section on personal use by employees and ethics.
City of Pacific Grove, California	September, 2012	Includes some language from Yolo policy and they added goals, monitoring information, comment policy, and ownership
City of Bloomington	No Date	Added social media standards
Lyndhurst Township, New Jersey	July, 2012	Added prohibited content and applicability.
Borough of Roselle, New Jersey	April, 2012	

After reviewing many local government policies, I decided to approach writing Yolo County's new policy using the Eight Essentials Elements discussed in Chapter 2 and developed by the Center for Technology in Government: they include employee access, account management, acceptable use, employee conduct, content, security, legal issues, and citizen conduct (Hrdinova et. al, 2010). This framework allowed me to address potential benefits, concerns, and issues described in the literature review as they applied to Yolo County, as well as to incorporate relevant language from many other existing policies. Overall, the new Yolo policy adds requirements related to development of department social media, guidelines for emergency

preparation, and processes for deleting comments. I also added a comment policy for residents, social media values, a mitigation section for mobile phone use, and a resident conduct section.

The old policy is in Appendix A and the new policy is in Appendix B.

These extra sections were added in response to what the county had discussed with me or their prevalence in other policies detailed in Table 3.6 below. Ultimately, I added a section from another policy if I thought it could increase benefits, improve efficiency or mitigate a significant risk. Then, the PIO and I edited the policy document so it would reflect Yolo County's specific needs. During these edits, we had to consider current use of County social media, resource restrictions, and the County's mission and goals. She then took the policy to County Counsel where it was approved after minor edits.

Table 3.6- Additions to Yolo County's Policy with Justifications

<i>Example of New Language</i>	<i>Justification</i>
<i>Account Management</i>	
The PIO will review social media strategies. Strategies should broadly include a discussion of target audiences, objectives, goal integration, message development, resources...	The literature discussed how social media strategies improve the efficiency of social media implementation, therefore it is required that all Departments develop them.
Department management shall conduct a formal assessment that shall include an analysis of risks mitigation strategies involved in utilizing social media websites including employee productivity, reputational risk...	A risk assessment will help departments be proactive in avoiding cost related, legal, security, and reputational concerns.
The PIO will be responsible for maintaining a list of all social media domain names in use, the names of all employee administrators of these accounts, and the associated passwords.	It is important that the PIO have access to this information the sites can be effectively monitored, utilized during emergencies, and deleted if necessary.
All social media content and postings must be coordinated with the PIO as part of emergency support functions. The PIO reserves the right to publish content directly to any official County social media site.	During emergencies, it is imperative that the information being sent to the public is consistent and accessible. This requires that all County communication networks are used in conjunction with each another.

<i>Examples of New Language</i>	<i>Justification</i>
Acceptable Use	
Social media use is for official agency communication. Personal use is not acceptable.	This language is important so employees understand the boundaries of official use.
Employee Conduct	
Key principles of ethical social media conduct are as follows, customer protection and respect are paramount; we will use every effort to keep our interactions factual and accurate...	These principles provide guidelines for employees that will help the County have a factual and accurate page. If followed they should provide validity to the County's page.
Content	
The PIO will monitor content on each social media site to ensure adherence to this policy, appropriate use, messaging, and branding consistent with the goals of the County.	This language ensures that the policy will be followed and assigns responsibility to the PIO to monitor sites for compliance.
County-created social media forums must be structured narrowly to focus discussions on a particular interest of Yolo County.	In contrast to the first policy, which restricted two-way communication, this policy allows for narrowly aimed discussions with residents.
All social media sites that allow comments must publish the following text on the site: The purpose of this site is to communicate matters of public interest in the County. This is a moderated online discussion site and not a public forum. This site will not be used for political purposes. The County reserves the right to delete submissions that contain...	The comment policy was common in other government documents. It sets expectations for residents and gives the County a premise for deleting inappropriate comment or comments that are off-topic, in factual, etc.
Security	
The PIO may prevent unnecessary functionality within social media websites, such as instant messaging, file exchange, and "friends", to reduce the risk of exposing a government user to a link that leads to inappropriate or unauthorized material.	Preventing these functionalities is a proactive practice to prevent security risks such as spam, inappropriate links, and conversations. It should be noted that many of these functionalities are already restricted on Facebook organization pages.
Authorized employees can manage official County social media sites from personal mobile devices. If you are the publisher and use a personal mobile device, then you must protect County information by using a pass code. If you lose your phone, the PIO must be notified immediately so that administrative rights can be temporarily removed.	The use of mobile phones to update social media pages is common practice among individuals and apps are being created for organizations. Considering that they are so convenient it is important that they are available for use, but for public agencies, access to them must also be protected.
Legal Issues	
An employee should only engage residents if their responses can be short and factual. An employee can address resident by posting written policy, sharing meeting dates, and/or providing links to further information.	These guidelines will help employees understand what is acceptable and if they are followed, they should proactively prevent potential legal concerns.

<i>Examples of New Language</i>	<i>Justification</i>
<i>Legal Issues Continued</i>	
Employees are not required to respond to residents' comments or questions. A response that provides useful information to other social media followers is encouraged.	Due to resource constraints, it would be unrealistic to require employees to respond to all posts. Therefore, they should only respond to those that will benefit other users.
<i>Resident Conduct</i>	
Responding to residents via social media is not required and should not be expected by residents. Residents should contact the County with questions and concerns using traditional methods such as in person, over the phone, and/or through the mail.	It is important that residents understand that social media is not a substitute for traditional communication methods, but instead an addition to them. It is more for information sharing than formal communication.
The Department must regularly monitor social media accounts by setting notification of account activity to be sent to the administrators immediately. The Public Information Officer will generally monitor comments to ensure that these guidelines are being followed.	This section of the policy ensures that there is active oversight for social media accounts.

The Board of Supervisors reviewed the final policy on January 29, 2013. While they questioned how the policy would apply to elected officials, they passed it unanimously. They were concerned that elected officials would not follow the policy being that social media use by the County is supposed to remain non-political. Moreover, one representative believed that elected officials would use social media to promote their successes during campaigns. Thus, the policy must be amended to reflect the Board's concerns by establishing protocol for social media use by elected officials and making it clear that the tool will not be used for political advantage.

Strategies

Strategies challenge agencies to think about how to advance their objectives and goals using social media (Bryson, 2004). Yolo County recognized such a large potential benefit for strategies to increase the effectiveness of social technologies that the new policy requires agencies develop them before implementing social media. Therefore, I developed a social networking strategy for Yolo County, written specifically to help the PIO, found in Appendix C.

It should be noted that since there is no set guide for creating policies and strategies, during my review of other government documents I found that there is often overlap. It was difficult to separate strategy statements from other documents including policies, guides, memos, and presentations. Thus, I developed a framework largely containing themes found in the literature review, which established that social media strategies include defining a target audience and their communication needs, determining key objectives, integrating goals, developing messages, reviewing resource abilities, identifying potential partners, and defining success. Most governments, including those that require social media strategies, do not have the documents readily available. However, Orange County did share their Parks Department strategy with me after I filed a public records request.

I also recognized that social media implementation would have to include training assistance. Due to the expansion of technology and its frequency of change, individuals will have varying understandings of how to use social media tools. To address this I provide slides I created, for a self-led presentation, on how to use the different functions of Facebook organizational pages found in Appendix E. Moving forward the County will need to consider how they will remain up to date on social media technologies as they continue to transform.

Assessment

Assessment measurements are very difficult to create because social media effectiveness is hard to measure. Most governments only use the free online quantitative analytical tools to measure success, which does not provide a clear understanding of the quality of public participation or if a social media use is helping the agency fulfill its mission and goals (Mergel, 2012). Overall, Mergel (2012) recommended measuring engagement, interaction, and reach as it applies to the agencies mission, improving effectiveness, efficiency, transparency, participation and collaboration. Thus, for Yolo County in their strategies I considered different ways, as

content creators, the PIO can remain mission focused and advance social media goals found in Appendix C. Measuring the effectiveness of these efforts will take time, so the strategy can be implemented, citizens can react and the network can grow. Therefore, I recommend using a framework for assessment similar to Mergel's (2012) that can be applied to Yolo County as appropriate; it is outlined in the implementation guide in Appendix D. Overall, more information about social media assessment will likely need to be gathered and applied in the future before Yolo County assesses their social media campaign.

Summary

My work with Yolo County, developing policies, strategies, and a framework for assessment has influenced my recommendations for creating these documents in the local government social media implementation guide found in Appendix D. I applied concepts from the literature with what I had learned from analyzing other social media policies and strategies to develop a unique policy for the County as a whole and a strategy for the PIO. The completed Yolo County policy and strategy are included in the appendix. While I was unable to develop specific assessment tools for Yolo County due to time constraints, I am not sure how relevant they would be this early because it will take time before their social media strategies are fully implemented and ready to be assessed. I recommend they use the framework I developed from the literature review, as appropriate, outlined in the implementation guide.

Chapter 4

LOCAL GOVERNMENT SOCIAL MEDIA IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE

The stand-alone implementation guide, found in Appendix D, provides a framework of questions and ideas that local governments should consider when developing policies, strategies, and assessment measurements. This guide is brief and flexible, providing a tool to stimulate ideas that can be easily adapted to the context of different agencies. It should be noted that this framework has not been tested. These recommendations are based on the literature review provided in Chapter 2 and what I learned from developing these documents for Yolo County detailed in Chapter 3.

Chapter 5

CONCLUSION

Due to the popularity of social media among the general populous, there is potential for it to be a useful tool for local government agencies. This thesis has discussed the existing research on social networking use by public agencies and my experience interning with the Yolo County Public Information Office (PIO). Analyses of what I learned lead me to develop a social media implementation guide, designed for local agency use. This chapter will discuss my overall findings, the implications for public organizations, and the potential for future research on this topic. As the technology continues to grow and transform it will be crucial that others continue to research and understand the role of social technologies in public agencies.

Overall Findings

Upon an analysis of the literature and my experiences, I found that there are three challenges facing local government; implementation of social media is more complicated than commonly perceived, execution defies existing hierarchical organizational structures, and the medium requires frequent activity and monitoring. The implementation guide addresses questions and ideas to consider as agencies develop a social media presence, but in reality, other unexplored factors such as agency culture will contribute to the success or failure of a social networking campaign. This is why it is crucial that every public agency perform an in-depth analysis before implementation so they can consider the benefits, costs, and unknowns related to social technologies.

Social Media: Easy for Individuals, Complex for Public Organizations

For many public administration professionals and researchers (myself included), social media seemed like a panacea to increase effectiveness, transparency, accountability, and public engagement within government agencies. With multiple social media platforms offering various

tools and a growing number of followers participating on websites, many federal, state, and local agencies are realizing the benefits of social media and moving to develop a more active online presence. However, there are also concerns, risks and costs, to starting a social media campaign like the potential for legal and security issues. As discussed throughout this thesis, public organizations will be more effective at realizing benefits and mitigating concerns if they perform a proper analysis prior to implementation, develop comprehensive policies, create innovative strategies, and perform assessments as needed. Guidance to do this is found in the stand-alone local government implementation guide that I developed.

Generally, when individuals create social media profiles, it is easy for them to find ways to characterize themselves, but when organizations develop pages it is a much larger challenge to find an image that is representative of the organization as a whole. For local governments, like counties or cities, the challenge can be trying to represent many unique departments through sharing their multiple programs, services, and events. Similarly, for individual departments or agencies, they too usually represent a diversity of interests while working in concert with other public partners. No matter the size or scope of work within the organization, to justify continued social media use they need to ensure that the time and resources they spend using social technologies help them advance their mission and goals.

Overall, this thesis has found that proactive development of social technologies will help organizations reap the benefits and mitigate concerns of social media through effective policies and strategies. Once implemented it is important the agency measure and analyze social networking campaigns to determine if they truly are worth the time and resources invested and to see how they can improve their engagement, interaction and reach online. Spending the time to analyze organizational priorities will determine how they are translated to the digital community. This creates a larger burden for government agencies than many public administrators

anticipated. However, if social media can be effectively used and governments can realize the benefits of the technology, there is potential for local agencies to become closer to their communities, more effective at governing and more efficient during emergencies.

Breaking the Hierarchical Structure

Since utilizing social media requires understanding the larger organization and collaborating with internal and external public partners, implementation of social media defies traditional hierarchical organizational structures. Unlike most communication methods where there is a defined chain of command, the nature of social media requires instant updates on larger issues and day-to-day operations from multiple agencies, which would mean developing a process for approval within the administration that can be strenuous on the organization and employee workload. Moreover, maintenance of social media may also require coordination with IT, security and potentially the legal departments.

Therefore, for social media to reach its highest potential an organization should consider hiring or appointing a social media “ringmaster” who would be responsible for communicating with multiple agencies, coordinating with IT, security, and legal when necessary, while finding the most effective way to represent the whole of the organization and address uncertainties. For smaller localities, this person could manage multiple accounts, like a County or City page as well as many department pages. Ultimately, the social media ringmaster would be responsible for finding the most effective way to communicate the mission, goals, programs, services, and events of the organization to the public.

If an organization cannot afford a ringmaster or does not believe that social media will bring enough benefits to justify the cost of an employee, then they should consider finding a training program for current employees. Social media is constantly changing and effective use requires understand how to use the technology. For Facebook this means understanding how to

effectively market government agencies and use tools such as links, surveys, the toolbar, and photos. In relation to Twitter, it means developing an effective hashtag and promoting it to the public through interesting and engaging Tweets. Finally, for Youtube this requires having an understanding of video editing and sharing. When used together and correctly these platforms can be effective public engagement tools for localities.

More Posts, More Followers, More Monitoring

My last finding stems from observation and common sense; the more an organization posts the larger number of people the page reaches, which means more interactions and greater monitoring by the public agency. First, by looking at the data in Yolo County there was a correlation between the number of posts a department had and the number of followers, with the exception of comedian Kat William's arrest, which led to the most popular week for the Yolo County page. The reason that the number of posts corresponds to greater involvement is that Facebook only shares ten to fifteen percent of posts unless you pay for advertising. Therefore, to reach your audience you actually need to post more so that your stories will show up on their wall. In addition, the more an agency posts and the greater the variety of those posts will increase the likelihood the agency will share information that is beneficial to an individual. That individual then may visit the agency's main page, website, or share the information with their friends. These activities will ultimately increase the number of people who participate in the digital community. However, greater participation will likely require increased interaction and monitoring to ensure residents follow county policies.

Implications for Public Organizations

The main purpose of this thesis is to explore and offer recommendations, backed up by research and experience, to public agencies on how to effectively analyze, implement, and monitor social media. As stated above this was facilitated through reviewing the relevant

literature, analyzing my experiences working with Yolo County, and stepping back to consider what I learned to develop an implementation framework designed for local governments. My hope is that this guide will stimulate questions and ideas that will lead local agencies into a successful and efficient embrace of the digital world.

In my literature review, I discuss the limited research on social media use in the public sector as it relates to organizational priorities, potential benefits, relevant concerns, and the development of social media policies, strategies, and tools for assessment. I found that it is crucial that organizations consider how social media will advance their mission and function within their hierarchical structure. Moreover, they must determine if there is a local audience online to utilize the service. In addition, public agencies should be aware that there are many benefits to social media use, primarily expanding reach, increasing public participation, promoting transparency and accountability, and improving emergency prevention, preparedness, and response. There are also concerns like security threats, direct and opportunity costs, legal uncertainty, and the potential for the public to perceive social media use negatively. Social media policies, strategies, and tools for assessment are crucial to increasing effective use of social technologies.

Using what I learned in the literature review, I applied this framework to Yolo County as I developed their social media policy and a strategy for the PIO. Ultimately, I found that Yolo County could gain many social media benefits, with the most important one being emergency response. To mitigate concerns I addressed them in the policy I drafted that was passed by the Board of Supervisors. While constant monitoring and diligence will be required to ensure these concerns are not an issue, the policy outlines ground rules that provide guidance to County employees. Moreover, as I developed the Yolo County social media strategy I worked to find ways that they could implement social media within their organizational constraints while increasing the benefits received from the technology and minimizing issues. The final documents

are provided in the appendix. Lastly, I did not have sufficient time to develop specific tools for assessment, but I recommend they use the framework I outlined in the implementation guide.

I designed the stand-alone implementation guide to facilitate social media execution in local government agencies by stimulating questions and ideas that relate to organizational priorities and the most effective way to use the technology. While creating this guide I tried to make it as brief and flexible as possible so that it would be a useful tool for many localities. My hope is that this guide increases the effectiveness of social media use by public agencies, which would fulfill the purpose of this thesis.

Need for Future Research

Social media platforms are frequently changing making it difficult for researchers and professionals to draw conclusions about their role in public agencies. While there are many opportunities for future research, I focus on the three I find most relevant to this thesis, the effectiveness of social media, ways to approach social networking assessment, and the effectiveness of this guide.

Social Media Effectiveness

In the current research, there is limited data on social media effectiveness across multiple agencies. Since most of the research only considers single departments or agencies within one state, it is difficult to draw conclusions about social media in the public sector. In the future, research that collects aggregate data on characteristics that lead to social media success or failure would be extremely helpful in the development of social media policies and strategies for public agencies. Moreover, the data may also show that social media truly is an individual endeavor for every agency, which may prove that analysis and assessment prior to implementation is important.

Social Media Assessment

Out of all of the areas that I studied, social media assessment was supported by the least amount of information. There is still no clear research on defining or measuring social media success in the public sector. Much of the research recommended using qualitative data provided by Facebook Insights or Google Analytics, but I believe that in government it is also important to find ways to measure the quality of engagement and interaction online. In the social media implementation guide, I used a framework provided by Mergel (2012) and developed questions that I thought were relevant in measuring public agency success. However, these assessment tools have not been tested, thus to determine their effectiveness future research is needed.

Effectiveness of the Social Media Implementation Guide

The social media implementation guide is meant to improve successful social media use by government, but I have not had the opportunity to test the effectiveness of the guide itself. The guide has never been applied to a locality. Future researchers could take the guide and use it to implement social media while documenting their experiences. This would be extremely helpful in making it more encompassing of potential barriers or issues and more effective for other users moving forward.

This thesis had discussed many topics related to social media administration in local government agencies. It is obvious that agencies need to reflect on organizational limitations, potential benefits and possible concerns through developing policies, strategies, and tools for assessment. The stand-alone social media implementation guide should help public officials assess their organizations and stimulate questions and ideas that will lead to effective policies and strategies. With regular assessment and reevaluation of the successes and failures local government agencies will be better prepared to realize the benefits of social media, mitigate concerns, and define their role in the digital community.

APPENDIX A

Yolo County's First Social Media Policy (April 10, 2010)



County of Yolo
Administrative Policies and Procedures Manual

TITLE: SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY	DEPARTMENT: COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE
TYPE: POLICY	DATE: April 13, 2010

A. PURPOSE

To address the fast-changing landscape of the Internet and the way residents communicate and obtain information online, county departments may consider participating in social media formats, i.e. Facebook, Twitter, etc. to reach a broader audience. Yolo County encourages the use of social media to further the goals of the county and the missions of its departments where appropriate.

The Board of Supervisors and the County Administrator have an overriding interest and expectation in deciding who may "speak" and what is "spoken" on behalf of Yolo County on social media sites. This policy establishes guidelines for the use of social media. Yolo County's Public Information Officer, in coordination with County Counsel, shall approve what social media outlets may be suitable for use by the county and its departments and shall serve to educate departments on how to best use various social media outlets to achieve their goals.

B. POLICY

1. All official Yolo County presences on social media sites or services are considered an extension of the county's information networks and are governed by the Web Link Policy contained in the Yolo County Administrative Policies and Procedures Manual.
2. The County Counsel and the Public Information Officer will oversee Department Head-approved requests to use social media sites.

3. The Public Information Officer will advocate using social media to help departments reach their stated goals by assisting departments in developing appropriate uses for social media, assisting in the selection of appropriate social media outlets and helping departments define a strategy for engagement using social media.
4. Departments that use social media are responsible for complying with applicable federal, state and county laws, regulations and policies. This includes adherence to established laws and policies regarding copyright, records retention, Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), First Amendment, privacy laws and information security policies established by Yolo County.
5. Wherever possible, links to more information should direct users back to the county's official website for more information, forms, documents or online services necessary to conduct business with Yolo County.
6. With few exceptions (see County Counsel for exceptions), all communication on social media outlets shall be one-way only. There shall be no opportunity for posting information from anyone other than the site host.
7. Employees representing the county government via social media outlets must be designated by department heads and shall conduct themselves at all times as representatives of Yolo County. Employees that fail to conduct themselves in an appropriate manner shall be subject to disciplinary action.
8. Content posted on departmental social media sites must be approved by the Department Head.
9. The County Counsel and Public Information Officer will monitor content on each department social media site to ensure adherence to the Social Media Policy for appropriate use, message and branding consistent with the goals of Yolo County.
10. Violation of these standards may result in the removal of department pages from social media outlets. The County of Yolo retains the authority to remove information.

APPENDIX B

Yolo County's New Social Media Policy (January 29, 2013)



County of Yolo
Administrative Policies and Procedures Manual

TITLE: SOCIAL MEDIA USE FOR COUNTY PURPOSES	DEPARTMENT: COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE
TYPE: POLICY	DATE: January, 28, 2013

A. Purpose

Yolo County has both a business and public service need to augment traditional communication methods with the use of social media channels. This need primarily stems from public demand. The rapid growth of social media use by other local, state, and federal government entities is an indication that social media can be used effectively to enhance constituent communication.

The use of social media presents opportunity and also risk to individual County departments, as well as the County as a whole. In general, the County supports the use of social media technology to enhance communication, collaboration, and information exchange to further the goals of the County and the mission of its departments where appropriate.

The Board of Supervisors and the County Administrator have an overriding interest in deciding who has the authority to manage social media accounts and what content is appropriate. This document establishes countywide social media use policies, protocols and procedures intended to mitigate associated risks from use of this technology where possible. Shall the County change its direction on social media use, this policy will be revised and social media activity for all departments shall be adjusted accordingly.

B. Policy**1. Department Access**

- Yolo County's Public Information Officer, in coordination with County Counsel, shall approve what social media outlets may be suitable for use by the County and its

departments and shall serve to educate departments on how to best use various social media outlets to meet their mission and achieve their goals.

- Department Heads must designate employees who will properly represent the County government via social media outlets.

2. Account Management

- The Public Information Officer, in coordination with County Counsel, will oversee Department Head approved requests to use social media sites and review social media strategies.
- Social media strategies should broadly include a discussion of target audiences, objectives, goal integration, message development, resources, appropriate social media tools, related activities, potential partners, legal risks, technical capabilities, potential benefits, and a definition of success.
- Prior to authorizing use of social media for County-related purposes, department management shall conduct a formal risk assessment to be included in the social media strategy. The assessment shall, at a minimum, include the analysis of the risks (including risk mitigation strategies) involved in providing social media websites including:
 - a. Employee productivity;
 - b. Reputational risk to the department and the County;
 - c. Potential avenue for exposure or leakage of sensitive or protected information;
 - d. And potential harm to the County's IT environment.
- The Public Information Officer will be responsible for maintaining a list of all social networking application domain names in use, the names of all employee administrators of these accounts, and the associated passwords.

- The Public Information Officer and/or the Department Head will adapt social media strategies as needed to ensure they remain relevant.
- During emergencies, all social media content and postings must be coordinated with the Public Information Officer as part of emergency support functions. Depending on the incident, publishers, or employees designated to post on the County's social media site, may be directed to point to specific social media sites that will serve as the main source(s) of information. The Public Information Officer reserves the right to publish content directly to any official County social media site during an emergency. The Public Information Officer will notify publishers in advance when possible, but if time is of the essence, they must have access to all accounts and information may be published.
- Violation of the standards documented throughout this policy may result in removal of department pages from social media outlets. The County of Yolo retains the authority to remove information.

3. Acceptable Use

- Social media use is for official agency communication with the purpose of promoting a department's broad interests or specific programmatic and policy interests, in accordance with County goals and objectives. Personal use is not acceptable.

4. Employee Conduct

- Employees representing the County via social media outlets shall conduct themselves at all times as representatives of Yolo County. Employees that fail to conduct themselves in an appropriate manner shall be subject to disciplinary action.
- Key principles of ethical social media conduct are as follows, but not limited to:
 - a. Customer protection and respect are paramount.

- b. We will use every effort to keep our interactions factual and accurate.
- c. We will strive for transparency in our interactions.
- d. We will provide links to credible sources of information to support our interactions, when possible.
- e. We will publicly correct any information we have communicated that is later found to be in error.
- f. We are honest about our relationships, opinions, and identity.
- g. We respect the rules of the venue.
- h. We protect privacy and permissions.

5. Content

- Departments are responsible for establishing, publishing, and updating their pages on social media sites. The Department Head, or designee, must approve content posted on departmental social media sites.
- The County Counsel and Public Information Officer will monitor content on each department social media site to ensure adherence to the Social Media Policy and for appropriate use, message and branding consistent with the goals of Yolo County.
- All official Yolo County presences on social media sites are considered an extension of the county's information networks and are governed by the Web Link Policy contained in the Yolo County Administrative Policies and Procedures Manual.
- Wherever possible, links to more information should direct users back to the county's official website for more information, forms, documents or online services necessary to conduct business with Yolo County.

- County-created social media forums must be structured narrowly to focus discussions on a particular interest of Yolo County.
- Comments from the public are welcome on social media sites but must be monitored regularly to ensure they meet the criteria below. County publishers may only remove postings based on the guidelines below. Additionally, if a publisher plans to delete a comment, a screenshot of the topic and the offending comment must be saved for documentation purposes.
- All social media sites that allow comments must publish the following text on the site:

The purpose of this site is to communicate matters of public interest in Yolo County related to (County Department). This is a moderated online discussion site and not a public forum. This site will not be used for political purposes. Once posted, the County reserves the right to delete submissions that contain:

 1. Vulgar language or sexually explicit comments
 2. Personal attacks of any kind
 3. Content that promotes, fosters, or perpetuates discrimination on the basis of race, creed, color, age, religion, gender, marital status, genetics, status with regard to public assistance, national origin, physical or intellectual disability or sexual orientation
 4. Spam or links to other sites
 5. Content that is off topic or not directly related to the business of the County of Yolo
 6. Promotion of illegal activities
 7. Content that promotes or opposes political organizations
 8. Infringements on copyrights or trademarks

- 9. Personal and/or identifiable medical information; or
- 10. Information that may compromise the safety, security, or proceedings of public systems or any criminal or civil investigations

The comments expressed on this site do not reflect the opinions and position of the Yolo County government or its officers and employees. If you have any questions concerning this social media platform, please contact ...

6. Security

- The Public Information Officer or Department Heads may prevent unnecessary functionality within social media websites, such as instant messaging, file exchange, and “friends”, to reduce the risk of exposing a government user to a link that leads to inappropriate or unauthorized material.
- Authorized employees can manage official County social media sites from personal mobile devices (iPhone or Droid) with social media applications. Employees should be aware that the app does not provide the full set of page management features found on Facebook’s desktop browser version. If a publisher loses a personal phone and someone accesses the Facebook app, then an official County resource is at risk. If you are the publisher and use a personal mobile device, then you must protect County information by using a passcode on your personal device. If you lose your phone, the Public Information Officer must be notified immediately so that administrative rights can be temporarily removed.

7. Legal Issues

- Departments that use social media are responsible for complying with all applicable federal, state and county laws, regulations, and policies. This includes adherence to established laws and policies regarding copyright, records retention, Freedom of

Information Act (FOIA), First Amendment, privacy laws, employment laws, and information security policies established by Yolo County.

- An employee of Yolo County should only engage residents on social media sites if their responses can be short and completely factual and/or the response corrects misinformation posted by residents. For example, an employee can address resident questions or concerns by posting Yolo County written policy, sharing meeting dates and times, and/or providing links to further information. For an employee of Yolo County to engage residents on a social media site on behalf of their Department or the County they must seek approval from the Department Head.
- Employees are not required to respond to residents' comments or questions. Residents can be encouraged to use established communication methods to contact the County. However, a response that provides useful information to other social media followers is encouraged.

8. Resident Conduct

- Responding to residents via social media is not required by Yolo County employees and should not be expected by residents. Residents should contact the County with questions and concerns using traditional methods such as in person, over the phone, and/or through the mail.
- If the County or the Department allows for comments on their social media feed then it is expected that residents will follow the comment guidelines provided in Section 5. The County reserves the right to delete comments that do not follow these guidelines.
- The Department must regularly monitor social media accounts by setting notification of account activity to be sent to the administrators immediately to ensure that these guidelines are being followed.

- The Public Information Officer will generally monitor comments to ensure that these guidelines are being followed.

APPENDIX C

Yolo County Public Information Office Social Media Strategy

Mission Focused: The Yolo County Board of Supervisors have adopted nine strategic goals. They are to advance innovation, champion job creation and economic opportunities, collaborate to maximize success, enhance and sustain the safety net, preserve and ensure safe and crime free communities, preserve and support agriculture, protect open space and the environment, and to provide fiscally sound dynamic and responsive services (Yolo, 2012).

Hierarchy & Organizational Complexity: The Public Information Officer (PIO) ultimately has many formal duties described below. The PIO must also gather information from different departments and agencies. To be successful the PIO must foster cooperation across the county and look for opportunities to incentivize participation or educate departments on success so they can realize the potential benefits of social media. It is also important for this office to provide support and training.

Defining Audiences: The PIO's primary responsibility is to provide the public information about county services, programs, and events using many tools including writing and distributing press releases, maintaining the website, updating social media, and utilizing newspaper, radio, and television partners as appropriate. In addition, in emergencies the PIO must provide critical information to the public. The people using the PIO's product are typically local journalists, the general public, and members of the public interested in a particular issue. The population that could benefit is the general public, in that it may be in their interest to be more informed about county issues.


Table 1- Strategy to Implement Key Objectives with Examples

Social Media Should ...	Through These Tactics	Using Messages Like These
Implement Key Objectives		
Expand the online base now for the event of an emergency	Inform, Educate, Involve	Did you know that you can find emergency preparedness information on our Facebook page? Moreover, during an emergency we will be posting critical updates here and on Twitter.
<i>Promote Preparedness</i>	Inform, Educate	Emergency preparedness includes having a disaster supplies kit, a plan, and remaining informed. For more info visit the CDC: http://www.bt.cdc.gov/preparedness/
<i>Provide Communication During Emergency Response</i>	Inform, Educate, Involve, Participate	-Due to flooding, the following roads are closed: -The electricity outage may last for hours. Please inform your elderly neighbors. -An evacuation due to wildfires is in place. More info to come.
<i>Facilitate Recovery</i>	Inform, Educate, Involve, Participate	-Many people were hurt in yesterday's event. You can donate blood at the following locations: -The following organizations are helping to clean up after the flood. Contact them for more info.
Engage users and share public information	Inform, Educate, Consult, Involve	-Did you enjoy the Library's Book Fair? We hope you will attend the Book Drive. -Cache Creek Campground is now open! Visit our website for rates, activities, and more.
Pull people back to the main webpage	Inform, Educate	-For more info on paying taxes, visit... -Check out the County calendar for important meetings and events.
Serve as a public participation tool	Involve, Consult, Participate	-What do you think about services for low-income residents? More forums have been scheduled so we can get your input. -We are having a photo contest! Post your favorite pictures of Yolo and the Board of Supervisors will choose a winner who will receive a day pass to the County parks!
Increase Transparency	Inform	-The Board of Supervisors is working on the annual County budget. Attend the meeting today to learn more or visit...
Increase Accountability	Inform, Educate, Consult	-The annual county budget passed today. If you have questions or concerns, we encourage you to contact...

Table 2- Strategy to Integrate Goals with Examples

Social Media Should Work Towards...	Through These Tactics	Using Messages Like These
<i>Integrate County Goals</i>		
Advancing innovation	Consult, Participate, Collaborate	-What is your preferred method of receiving info about County services? What else would you like to know and how can we improve?
Championing job creation and economic opportunities	Inform, Educate, Involve, Participate	-Did you know that the County is working on a health and safety grading system for restaurants? Will this influence where you eat? -All businesses must be licensed. To find the necessary forms visit:
Increasing Collaboration to Maximize Success	Participate, Collaborate	-We are establishing a citizen committee on realignment. We hope you can attend, but if you unable to send us your concerns at...
Enhancing and sustaining the safety net	Inform, Educate, Consult, Involve	-Learn about and apply for CalFresh and other assistance programs at... -Child Welfare Services has a 24-7 child abuse hotline that will lead to immediate intervention.
Preserving and ensuring safe and crime free communities	Inform, Educate, Consult, Involve, Participate	-For crime prevention tips please visit... -Amber Alert! Please alert authorities if you see this child... -Did you know there is a difference between emergency and non-emergency phone numbers for the County? Call 911 in case of an emergency and for non-emergency issues call ###-###-####.
Preserving and supporting agriculture	Inform, Educate, Involve	-Think Global, Act Local! Check out one of Yolos many Farmers Markets this week! -Yolo County's Cooperative Extension Program with UC Davis is having an event this week...
Protecting open space and the environment	Inform, Educate, Consult, Involve, Participate	-It is important to be a responsible user when you visit County parks. Make sure you pay your fees, pick up your trash, and put out all fires. -Air quality is essential to people and the environment. Check out this website for daily updates on Yolo County's air quality...
Providing fiscally sound services	Inform, Educate	-Visiting and paying for parks is essential for the County to keep them open. Thank you to all parks supporters! -Efficiency is essential to us. What can we do better?
Providing dynamic and responsive services	Inform, Educate, Consult, Involve	-Elections are next Tuesday. Find out where your polling place is here... -Next week there will be free flu vaccinations. Protect yourself this flu season.

Table 3- Strategy to Incorporate County Activities with Examples

Social Media Should Inform Residents About...	Using Messages Like These
Board Meetings	 -The agenda for next week's Board of Supervisors Meeting is now online... -To watch today's Board of Supervisors Meeting visit...
Public Noticing	-There is a project in progress. To find out more information call or visit this website.
Awareness/Education Weeks	-This week is emergency preparedness week. Visit the CDC website to find out more about what you can do to get prepared. -May is older Americans month. Find out about programs and services for residents over 65. -This week is National Infant Immunization week. Learn more about when, where, and why you need to vaccinate your child.
Job openings	-We just posted some new opportunities for employment. Visit our website to learn more...
Holidays	-County offices will be closed Monday in observance of Memorial Day. Enjoy the holiday! -This Pearl Harbor day let us remember those in the armed forces who fought bravely for our freedom.

Collaborating with Public Partners: To improve efficiency the county should share information from other federal, state, and local agencies. For example, sharing information from the Federal Emergency Management Agency and California Emergency Management Agency will allow the county to provide accurate information without recreating posts. They should like relevant departments and agencies and share their information frequently as appropriate.

Resources & Abilities:

- How many hours of employee time will be dedicated to social media use on average related to implementation, content creation, and maintenance?
- Does the agency have the capacity to implement social media successfully?
- Will social media use help to improve the effectiveness of other government programs or services?
- How many posts will be shared per week?

Emergency Management: The PIO's number one priority for social media is to create a following that could help share information during an emergency. The task of sharing public information during an emergency can be daunting and the County should consider developing and incorporating emergency management practices into social media. Broadly, social media can be used to share information before, during, and after an emergency. The audience for preparedness posts should be the public, but particularly those at elevated risk (individuals who live on the river have a greater need for flood control information). The audience during an emergency is the people experiencing or being hurt by the crisis (the houses that are flooding), those in danger (the houses that could be flooded), and the public. The audience during a recovery, depending on the impact of the emergency, can become quite broad including people who want to contribute financially to organizations like the Red Cross and non-profits who want to offer time and resources. However, the County should remain focused on providing the information that is most crucial to residents.

Yolo County can experience multiple types of emergencies from natural disasters like floods, earthquakes, and fires to environmental safety issues like hazardous waste spills or poor air quality days, to public safety emergencies including high-risk criminal activities (bombings/shootings) and missing children. Different tools may be more effective in spreading information about these issues. For example, Twitter has a function that allows people to follow hashtags and have them sent directly to their cell phone. This function can be useful in high-risk situations where people need to have information in a timely manner. I would recommend however that the Twitter emergency hashtag should only be used during those high-risk situations so people do not stop following you.

Other emergencies may be better facilitated through social media, especially on the preparedness side. Informing people about possible emergencies will improve the public's

emergency response. Moreover, in events leading up to the emergency, the day before the storm, it can be useful for directing people on how to prepare and what to expect. Moreover, after an emergency social media can facilitate community recovery.

Definition of Success: The Yolo County PIO discussed success in terms of emergency management. Her vision is to have a person in each neighborhood in the County that could share information, make phone calls, and knock on doors if necessary, so that every community could receive emergency notifications quickly, efficiently, and effectively. However, through the process of developing this thesis, she has also realized that social media success should also include increasing transparency, accountability, and visibility of county programs and services through constructive interactions with residents.

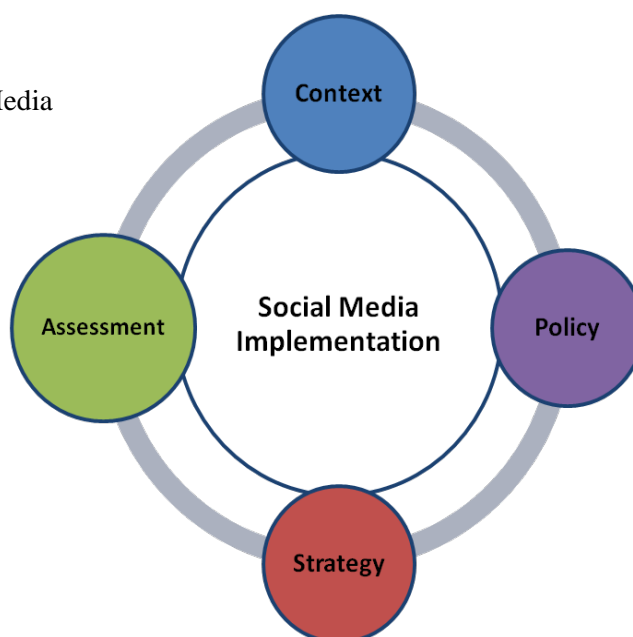
APPENDIX D

Social Media Implementation Guide for Local Governments

This short guide provides a framework for social media development in local government. It mostly consists of questions that need to be considered and examples that should be tailored to specific agencies because social media campaigns need to reflect the mission and goals of each agency as well as their distinct audience. I have identified four stages of social media implementation including considering context, developing policies, strategies, and the assessment measurements. Context will affect the development of policies and strategies. After implementation, analysis of assessment measurements should inspire reevaluation of the first three stages as illustrated in Figure 1. Government officials should recognize that this guide is flexible and should be used to stimulate ideas as they relate to the organizational needs. Not all of the questions or considerations will apply to every agency. The sections of this guide are as follows:

Figure 1- Social Media Implementation

- Why Social Media?
- Context: Evaluating Social Media
- Policies
- Strategies
- Assessment
- Social Media Tools



Why Social Media?

As social media use continues to grow among most demographic groups across the United States, federal, state and local governments have started using social technologies to advance their mission and expand the reach of their information in response to public demand. Overall, social media promotes good government goals such as transparency, efficiency, and effectiveness. Further, it can increase involvement in programs and services and may lead to citizen participation and collaboration with government officials.

The vision for social media in public agencies is far reaching, but current reality is that government use lags adoption of social technologies in the private and non-profit sectors. This is because governments have uncertainties related to social media risks like legal and security concerns, direct and opportunity costs, and reputational vulnerabilities. Moreover, public agencies tend to dive into social media implementation without understanding how to use the technology to its greatest capabilities decreasing its effectiveness. Governments should spend more time developing social media policies and strategies before implementation so they can increase benefits, decrease costs, and mitigate risks. Additionally, they must consider assessment goals to ensure social technologies are worth their investment and to make changes to policies and strategies as needed.

Context: Evaluating Social Media

Before implementing social media, local governments should consider if using social technologies is appropriate for their agency and if the benefits outweigh the costs. Agencies can use the questions in Figure 2 and Table 1 to guide their analysis.

Figure 2- Framework for Analyzing Organizational Context



Compare Benefits & Concerns

Benefits and concerns related to social media are extremely hard to measure because there is so much uncertainty within the network. Therefore, I do not recommend that local governments use resources to determine the financial worth of the benefits and costs. Instead, based on what I have learned, I recommend agencies compare and contrast the scope and likelihood of potential benefits and concerns within their organizational context.

Table 1- Summary of Benefits and Concerns

Benefits	Concerns
<p><u>Expanding Reach:</u> Can the agency expand reach? Are there other local organizations that have an online following?</p>	<p><u>Security:</u> How will the agency address IT department concerns in effort to reduce the likelihood of security issues? Block social media tools that may lead to security threats.</p>
<p><u>Participation 2.0:</u> Will people interact with your organization on social media? Consider community culture. What programs or services could social media advance?</p>	<p><u>Direct & Opportunity Costs:</u> Estimate the cost of employee time related to implementing and maintaining social media. What are the opportunity costs?</p>
<p><u>Transparency and Accountability:</u> What information could the agency share to increase transparency and accountability?</p>	<p><u>Legal:</u> Ensure the agencies policy addresses legal concerns. Coordinate with the legal department as necessary to reduce the likelihood of legal issues.</p>
<p><u>Emergency Preparedness:</u> Are there enough people in the area online that social media could be a useful tool in emergency preparedness, response, and recovery?</p>	<p><u>Perception:</u> Ensure the agency develops a policy that clearly establishes employee and resident online etiquette standards to reduce the likelihood of reputational issues.</p>

Policies

Policies are important because they establish rules and responsibilities and mitigate risks. I recommend local governments consider incorporating policies that answer the questions and address the concerns listed in Table 2, as appropriate. Additionally, Table 3 relates public participation goals to social media tools and policies. This table will help public agencies consider how their policy language will affect their social media strategy.

Table 2- Social Media Policies

Essential Elements	Questions/ Ideas to Consider	Example Language
<i>Purpose</i>	-Why is the public agency pursuing social media?	-The rapid growth of social media use by other government entities is an indication that social media can be effective in enhancing constituent communication in response to public demand.
<i>Employee Access</i>	-What social media sites are appropriate?	-The Public Information Officer (PIO) shall approve social media outlets that are suitable for County use.
	-What employees will have access to creating and managing pages?	-Department Heads must designate employees who will properly represent the government via social media outlets.
<i>Account Management</i>	-Will there be an approval process for social media implementation?	-The PIO will oversee Department Head approved requests to use social media sites and review social media strategies.
	-Will strategies be required?	- Strategies should broadly include a discussion of target audiences, goal integration, message development, social media tools, activities, potential partners, resources, and a definition of success.
	-What should they include?	
	-Who will manage social media during emergencies?	- During emergencies, all social media content and postings must be coordinated with the PIO as part of emergency support functions.
	-What are the consequences for violating the policy?	- Violation of the standards in this policy may result in removal of pages from social media outlets.

Essential Elements	Questions/ Ideas to Consider	Example Language
<i>Acceptable Use</i>	-Define personal versus agency use of social media.	- Social media use is for official agency communication with the purpose of promoting a department's broad interests or specific programmatic and policy interests. Personal use is not acceptable.
<i>Employee Conduct</i>	-Will there be disciplinary action for improper employee use?	- Employees that fail to conduct themselves in an appropriate manner shall be subject to appropriate disciplinary action.
	-Establish principles to guide ethical use of social media.	- Key principles of ethical social media conduct include, customer protection and respect, interactions that are factual and accurate, transparency in interactions, etc.
<i>Content</i>	-How will you structure public forums?	-County created social media forums need to be structured narrowly to focus discussions on a particular interest.
	-Who will create, approve, and monitor content?	-Departments are responsible for creating, publishing, and updating their pages. The Department Head, or designee, must approve content posted on social media sites. The PIO will monitor content on each department social media site to ensure adherence to this policy.
	-Process for deleting a comment	- If a publisher deletes a comment, they must save a screenshot of the topic and the offending comment for documentation.
	-Include a comment policy to be posted on social media.	The purpose of this site is to communicate matters of public interest. This is a moderated online discussion and not a public forum. This site will not be used for political purposes. Once posted, the County reserves the right to delete submissions that contain, vulgar language or sexually explicit comments, personal attacks of any kind, content that promotes, fosters, or perpetuates discrimination, etc.

Essential Elements	Questions/ Ideas to Consider	Example Language
<i>Security</i>	-Prevent functionality of specific social media tools	-The PIO may prevent unnecessary functionality within social media websites, such as instant messaging, to reduce the risk of exposing a government user to a link that leads to inappropriate material.
<i>Security Continued</i>	-Updating social media using mobile phones	-Authorized employees can manage official social media sites from personal mobile devices. Publishes who use a mobile device must protect information by using a pass code.
	-Awareness of current laws	-Departments are responsible for complying with all applicable federal, state and county laws, regulations, and policies. This includes adherence to established laws and policies regarding copyright, records retention, Freedom of Information Act, First Amendment, privacy laws, employment laws, etc.
<i>Legal Issues</i>	-Engaging with citizens online	- An employee should only engage residents on social media sites if their responses can be short and completely factual and/or the response corrects misinformation posted by residents.
	-Responding to resident comments	- Employees are not required to respond to residents' comments or questions. However, a response that provides useful information to other social media followers is encouraged.
<i>Citizen Conduct</i>	-What is expected of residents?	- If the County allows for comments on their social media feed then it is expected that residents will follow the comment guidelines.

Table 3- Public Participation Goals, Social Media Tools, and Policies

Public Participation Goals or Social Media Tactics	<u>Inform/Educate</u> To provide the public with balanced and objective info	<u>Consult</u> To obtain public feedback	<u>Involve</u> To work with the public through the process	<u>Participate / Collaborate</u> Partner with the public in each aspect of the decision	<u>Empower</u> Allow the public to make the final decision
Social Media Tools/ Techniques	Share articles, websites, general information, fact sheets, and public meeting information.	Interact with the public by allowing comments, surveys, and digital participation in public meetings.	Facilitate online workshops for programs and online town halls for issues and elections.	Potentially organize these processes online, but they ultimately require face-to-face interaction.	Allow citizens to vote or allocate funds using social media apps. Examples are participatory budgeting or Citizenville
Policies	All communication on social media outlets shall be one-way only...	Two-way communication required. It includes netiquette, resident conduct, and social media values.	Start with online tutorials on how-to use programs. Important for emergency management.	<u>Vision-</u> Use social media as an intelligent public forum that inspires public involvement and action	<u>The Future-</u> Citizens make decisions through online participation.
<i>Adapted from IAP2 and Mergel, 2012</i>					

Strategies

While policies outline the official rules and responsibilities of government agencies, strategies challenge agencies to think about how to advance their objectives and goals using social media. Strategies are beneficial because they can improve decision-making and enhance organizational effectiveness. Addressing the questions and concerns in Table 4 below will help agencies decide how to develop and find messages that advance their mission and goals. Strategies also include considerations towards collaborating with public partners, resources and abilities, emergency management, and defining success.

Table 4- Advance Key Objectives, Integrate Goals, and Promote Activities through Social Media Message Development

Social media should advance...	Through These Tactics	Using These Messages
<p><u>Mission</u> <i>Identify the Mission</i></p> <p><u>Social Technology Objectives</u> <i>Include emergency management, transparency, accountability, etc.</i></p> <p><u>Agency Goals</u> <i>Identify Goals</i></p> <p><u>Activities</u> <i>Identify Tasks and Activities</i></p>	<p>Choose one or many social media tactics, which include <i>informing, educating, consulting, involving, participating, and collaborating</i> with the public. These tactics will fulfill different agency goals and require varying levels of employee time and public participation.</p>	<p>What are examples of potential messages that can be used for different objectives, goals, and activities? Will different social media tools be more effective in promoting different types of information?</p>

Collaborating with Public Partners

To improve efficiency local governments should share information from relevant Federal and State agencies, regional local governments, and community organizations that affect the agency's mission as appropriate. For example, sharing information from the Federal Emergency Management Agency and California Emergency Management Agency will allow local governments to provide accurate information without recreating posts. Departments and agencies can also keep residents up to date on relevant legislation.

Resources & Abilities

- How many hours of employee time will be dedicated to social media use on average related to implementation, content creation, and maintenance?
- Does the agency have the capacity to implement social media successfully?
- Will social media use help to improve the effectiveness of other programs or services?
- How many posts will be shared per week?

Emergency Management Strategies

I recommend that agencies develop a social media strategy that is specific to various emergencies that may happen in their area. This should include considering what social media tools would be most useful in relation to communicating preparedness, response, and recovery.

Definition of Success

Public agencies need to determine what defines success. This should not necessarily be a quantitative goal, but instead a vision of what social media could accomplish for their organization. For example, in Yolo County, the Public Information Officer discussed success in terms of emergency management. Her vision is to have a person in each neighborhood in the County that could share information, make phone calls, and knock on doors if necessary, so that every community could receive emergency notifications quickly, efficiently, and effectively.

Assessment

Measurements are important because they help an agency determine if social media is worth the investment and if it is advancing their mission and goals. I used the framework provided by Mergel (2012) to develop and organize the questions in the tables below. These measurement techniques will require analyzing Facebook Insights or Google Analytics. For more help establishing, using, and understanding these free online tools I recommend visiting these websites:

- Help with Google Analytics: <http://www.google.com/analytics/learn/index.html>
- Help with Facebook Insights: <https://www.facebook.com/help/336893449723054/>

Table 5 & 6- Social Media Assessment & Measurement

MEASURE	<i>By answering these questions with qualitative and quantitative data as appropriate</i>	
	<i>Internal</i>	<i>External</i>
<u>Engagement-</u> Commitment that leads to greater understanding or change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Was public agency action ever taken because of citizen suggestions or feedback? -Has the agency provided in-depth responses to reasonable questions from residents? -Does the agency respond to most questions? -In case of an emergency: Did social media help to improve internal and external communication? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Is there greater public participation offline in programs, services, or events? -In case of an emergency: Did social media improve preparedness, response, and recovery actions throughout the community?
<u>Interaction-</u> Basic communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Is the agency posting (<i>goal</i>) times every week? -Does the agency respond to basic information questions in a timely manner? -Is the agency sharing information that is relevant to the public such as meeting information, data, new policies, etc.? -Has the agency used any interaction tools such as surveys, public forums, photo contests, etc.? -Is the agency using Facebook Insights to determine what posts people like, share, and comment on? -Is the agency regularly monitoring comments for quality and to provide responses when appropriate? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -How many people are interacting with the page through likes, shares, comments or by participating in surveys, public forums, photo contests, etc.? -Is the number of people interacting with the page correlated to the number of posts per week? -Is the number of people interacting with the page correlated to when the agency responds to citizen questions or concerns? -Is interaction correlated to the use of certain tools like videos, photos, fact sheets, etc.? -In general, is participation high in quality? Are comments, questions, and concerns relevant and respectful?
<u>Reach-</u> Number of participants currently active & inactive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Does the agency use Facebook Insights and Google Analytics when appropriate? -Is the agency using other forms of communication to promote social media, like putting a Facebook link in e-mails or promoting it at events? -Has the agency considered investing in advertising, which can increase reach significantly on websites like Facebook, for important social media messages (Example: emergency notifications)? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -How many people have liked the page? -What is the total reach or number of people who view a post (Example: friends of fans)? -Is the number of likes and reach increasing? -What are the demographics of people who like the page? -What are the demographics of people reached by information on the page?

ADVANCE	<i>By answering these questions with qualitative and quantitative data as appropriate</i>	
	<i>Internal</i>	<i>External</i>
<u>Mission-</u> What is the mission?	-Are posts related to programs and services that advance the mission?	-Does evidence exist that the public is more aware of and/or participating in programs and services? -Is the public more engaged in the process?
<u>Effectiveness-</u> Better Outcomes	-Is the agency posting about diverse topics using a variety of social media tools? -Does social media and public participation help the agency provide better programs and services?	-Are more people using social media to find out about government programs and services? -Are people having productive conversations online that discuss relevant government concerns?
<u>Efficiency-</u> Best use of resources	-How much time are employees spending on social media in relation to the content they are maintaining on websites? -If it is determined that use of social media is not leading to many benefits then what alternative communication methods would employees devote their time to and what are their potential benefits?	-Are people participating in social media? -Do citizens find value in social media? -Do you believe social technologies could provide significant benefits during an emergency?
<u>Transparency-</u> Improve access to information	-Does the agency use social media to post relevant information, data, new policies, meeting notices, press releases, public notices, etc.?	-Are more people viewing public agency documents, videos, meetings (in person or online), press releases, etc?
<u>Participation-</u> Increases awareness of opportunities for input and involvement	-Does the agency inform the public when they have opportunities to get involved including attending public meetings, contacting representatives, utilizing programs, etc.?	-Are people becoming more involved? -Are they sharing their input and using different avenues provided for public participation? - Are people utilizing programs or participating in events that were promoted on social media?
<u>Collaboration-</u> Organizes opportunities for community partnerships where appropriate	-Does the agency share community information when appropriate? -Does the agency facilitate collaborative discussions, like online moderated public forums? -Does the agency respond to citizen feedback and/or consider their online concerns during decision-making?	-Are people using more offline programs? -Are they participating offline because of information they received online? -Are they having productive and respectful online discussions during public forums? -Do citizens feel satisfied with government responses to their questions and concerns thus far?

Social Media Tools

Table 7- Social Media Tools

	Facebook	Twitter	YouTube
Capabilities	Allows users to share a variety of information quickly including posts, links, pictures, articles and videos with a large audience through organizational pages	Twitter, allows users to share 140 character phrases that are searchable by hashtags (#). It has been a useful resource during emergencies in the past.	Through short videos this tool allows agencies to describe commonly used processes, promote programs, communicate emergency preparedness and response, etc.
Tools	Post scheduling, data analysis, liking and sharing information from other pages, and providing organizational information in the toolbar	Users can have Twitter forward hashtags to their phone. Governments have set up emergency hashtags that allowed for real-time information sharing during response and recovery.	YouTube allows users to follow agencies through channels. Video and channel links can be shared on agency websites, Facebook pages, and shared via link through Twitter.
Limitations	Due to the privatization and the increase of Facebook ads, organization pages only forward ten to fifteen percent of posts to those who like your page unless you pay for advertising, which expands social media reach. Could be used to share information strategically.	Twitter's 140 character limit restricts the amount of information that can be shared. Moreover, if the tool is used for emergencies it is necessary to build a following before hand to improve communication during emergency response.	Developing, creating, and editing videos requires more resources than simply sharing information online. However, once the resources are expended it can be an extremely useful resource for the public.
Links for Further Assistance	https://www.facebook.com/help/pages	https://business.twitter.com/twitter-organizations-nonprofits	http://www.youtube.com/user/YouTubeHelp

Conclusion:

Local governments should use this framework, adjusted to fit their organizational needs, to stimulate ideas around developing social media policies, strategies, and assessments with the goal of increasing the effectiveness of their use of social technologies. Thoughtful implementation and utilization of social media will help improve efficiency. More information is available in the entirety of my thesis.

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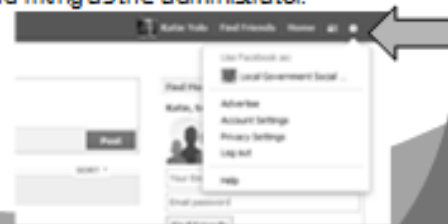
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Facebook How-To

- ③ How to Use Facebook as the Administrator
- ③ Edit Page Functions
- ③ Add Photos
- ③ About Bar
- ③ Posts
- ③ Administration Panel

I Am The Administrator

- ③ Choose the page you want to administer for by clicking on this icon in the top, right corner of the page.
- ③ Once you select this you are posting and liking as the administrator.



Edit Page Functions

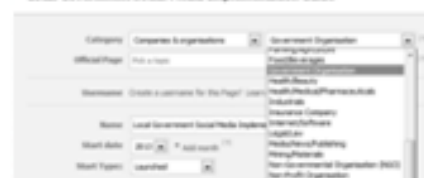
- ③ Update Info
- ③ Admin Roles
- ③ Manage Permissions
- ③ Manage Notifications



Edit Page → Update Info

- ③ Category, Name, Details, Description, Awards, Parking, Hours, Phone, Website, etc.

Local Government Social Media Implementation Guide



Edit Page → Manage Permissions

③ My recommended settings for most governments

The screenshot shows the 'Manage Permissions' settings for a Facebook page. The settings are as follows:

- Page visibility:** ☒ Only people who are on the page (What is that?)
- Country restrictions:** ☐ Limit to country (What is that?)
- Age restrictions:** ☐ Only show things to users in these countries (What is that?)
- Posting ability:** ☐ Only users can post to local government local media implementation guide (What is that?)
- Post visibility:** ☐ Only users can add photos and videos to local government local media implementation guide (What is that?)
- Default visibility of posts by others on local government local media implementation guide's timeline:** ☐ Only people who are on the page (What is that?)
- Tagging ability:** ☐ People can tag photos posted to local government local media implementation guide (What is that?)
- Messages:** ☒ Show "Message" button on local government local media implementation guide (What is that?)
- Notifications:** ☐ Show notification bell on local government local media implementation guide (What is that?)
- Post privacy setting:** ☐ Allow me to control the privacy of my posts made on my Page (What is that?)

Edit Page → Admin Roles

③ To add an administrator, the person being added must like the page using the Facebook account connected to the e-mail they will monitor the account with.

③ There are five different admin roles: Manager, Content Creator, Moderator, Advertiser, and Insights Analyst.



Edit Page → Manage Notifications

③ My recommended settings for most governments

The screenshot shows the 'Manage Notifications' settings for a Facebook page. The settings are as follows:

- Local Page Notifications:** ☒ Show local government local media implementation guide when recommending other Pages people might like on a Page (What is that?)
- Posting notifications:** ☐ Allow comments and posts on your page on local government local media implementation guide when using Facebook on mobile (What is that?)
- Local notifications:** ☐ Send notifications to public officials and staff on local government local media implementation guide when people post to, comment on, or message your Page (What is that?)
- Mobile notifications:** ☐ Send you a notification on Facebook when people post, like, comment on, or send local government local media implementation guide a message (What is that?)

Add Photos

③ Profile Photo- For public agencies this is often a seal or a brand



Add Photos

- ③ Cover Photo- The photo on your homepage. For many local agencies this is often scenery, but could also be pictures of people, events, crops, etc.



The About Bar



About Section

- ③ Whose page is this and what information will be shared?
- ③ Example text in the box.



Tabs

- ③ Where it gets complicated...
- ③ Tabs require an app. So in the next few slides I will discuss how to install and utilize it.
- ③ Temporarily switch over to your personal page. In my example this is Katie Yolo.



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