

# SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES AND BEST PRACTICES

University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture

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## INTRODUCTION

UTIA Marketing and Communications believes that social media, when managed carefully and tied to strategy and brand promise, is one of the most powerful and cost-effective ways to promote and elevate the Institute. UTIA is a diverse organization composed of four units, multiple centers, departments, and initiatives that provide a touchpoint in every county in Tennessee, nationally and globally. Harnessing the power of our presence is important in telling the UTIA story.

UTIA Marketing and Communications is solely responsible for the main UTIA social media channels that include Facebook, Instagram, X (Twitter), LinkedIn and YouTube.

## WHY SOCIAL MEDIA?

UTIA units, centers, departments, and programs are permitted to create and maintain social media accounts to most effectively reach and engage target audiences. This decision is a strategic one, and you should be able to identify specific goals for your social media accounts that support your team's mission and tie into the Institute's brand promise. Overall, UTIA social media accounts should:

1. Increase visibility of the Institute, its people and its accomplishments.
2. Extend resources, news and information to target audiences.
3. Build an engaged community of supporters across the state and beyond.

While all units may have different goals and marketing priorities, the overall social media strategy for every account should point back to UTIA's mission to provide Real. Life. Solutions. to Tennesseans and beyond.

## SOCIAL MEDIA CONSIDERATIONS

Before your team creates a new social media account, you should address the following questions:

- What is your team’s mission, and how will a social media account contribute to it?
- Who is your current audience? What audience are you trying to reach?
- What platforms will help you effectively reach your desired audience?
- What can people gain from following your account(s)?
- Does your team have someone who can consistently maintain a social presence through producing written and visual content on a regular schedule?

## CREATING A NEW SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNT

If after answering these questions you wish to move forward with creating an account, please send a Social Media Account Proposal to UTIA social media specialist Haley Harbin ([hharbin1@tennessee.edu](mailto:hharbin1@tennessee.edu)) that includes the following information:

- Unit/Department
- Proposed social media account details:
  - Username
  - Display name
  - Profile image
  - Cover image
- Reason for creating a new social media account
- Names and contact information of **at least** two UTIA faculty or staff members who will have admin access/login information for the account(s)

Upon approval of your proposal, you may move forward with the creation of the new account. If you have questions, please contact Haley Harbin.

### Registering a New Account

All new and existing UTIA-affiliated social media accounts should be registered to a shared or general email address accessible by more than one person in the department or office. Personal emails should not be used. Login information should be known and securely maintained by page administrators as well as their direct leadership.

On platforms such as Facebook and LinkedIn, **at least** two UTIA personnel should have admin access to your department/program’s page. If you have difficulty updating these roles, please contact the UTIA social media specialist for assistance. When a team member with social media access leaves their role, remove them as an admin and change the passwords on the appropriate accounts **prior** to their departure. When a new administrator is added to a social media account, please notify Haley Harbin.

## Account Setup

- Username: A social media username, also known as a handle, is a unique identifier for a social media account, usually preceded by an “@” symbol. The username for a UTIA-affiliated account should be as close to you unit, department, center, or program’s name or acronym as possible. (Ex: @utiag, @utextension, @ut\_herbert, @utcvm)
- Display name: A UTIA-affiliated account’s display name should be short and concise with the name of your unit, department, center, or program fully spelled out and, if applicable, preceded by “UT.” If your profile picture includes the UT logo, it is not necessary to spell out “University of Tennessee.” (Ex: UT AgResearch, UT Department of Animal Science, UT Extension – Anderson County, UT Beef and Forage Center)
- Profile image: Profile images for units, departments, centers or initiatives should either be or prominently include their official UTIA Marketing and Communications approved logo. We recommend that profile images *not* be changed frequently to maintain familiarity between your account and your audience.
- Cover image: Cover images should include visuals relating to your department, be of high-quality, and be sized correctly according to each platform’s sizing guidelines, which can be found online.
- Bio: Your account bio should be brief and descriptive of the work your department accomplishes. Please refer to the [UTIA Editorial Guide](#) when writing this description.
- Contact information: Certain platforms allow users to include contact information in the “About” section of a page. Please ensure that your page lists an official UTIA phone number, email address, website, and location (if applicable).

## ADMINISTERING A UTIA SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNT

Official UTIA social media accounts must be administered by a UTIA faculty or staff member. Students may serve as active contributors to the account, but credentials must be maintained by an employee. Social media account administrators and contributors have the following responsibilities:

- Regularly create and post content that is relevant to their department/program’s goals while upholding the UTIA brand standards and identity.

- Respond in a timely manner to questions or comments using official accounts, *not* personal accounts. All responses should use professional, conversational language. Provide links to UTIA resources when appropriate.
- Moderate user-generated content (comments, replies, etc.) that violates hosting terms of service or is of a threatening or harassing in nature.

UTIA-affiliated social media accounts are prohibited from the following:

- Posting content that violates city, state or federal laws and regulations.
- Commenting on or posting anything related to legal matters without appropriate approval.
- Using the UTIA or UT brand name to endorse any product, private business, cause or political candidate.
- Representing personal opinions as university-endorsed views or policies.
- Establishing a presence or engaging with the platform TikTok using the university's wireless account. You are permitted to use your own personal wireless account for access.

## **MAINTAINING THE UTIA BRAND STANDARDS**

UTIA-affiliated social media accounts should be recognizable as such and follow the UTIA Marketing and Communications [brand standards](#) whenever possible. Important guidelines to follow include:

- Written content should adhere to the UTIA Marketing and Communications [writing standards](#).
- Graphics should include the official UTIA colors and *Marketing and Communications approved* logos when appropriate. Please refer to the UTIA Marketing and Communications [visual standards](#) for official colors and logo guidelines. UTIA logo and template downloads can be found [online](#).
- When possible, create content with messaging that points to UTIA's brand promise of providing Real. Life. Solutions. to Tennesseans and beyond.

## **ADDITIONAL UTIA SOCIAL MEDIA BEST PRACTICES**

All posts and activities on UTIA-affiliated accounts represent UTIA, UT Knoxville and the UT System as a whole. Please refer to these best practices in making page management and posting decisions.

## Management

- Be consistent: Determine a manageable weekly post volume for your page(s) and stick to it. Remember: Quality is greater than quantity.
- Use native social media tools (such as Meta Business Suite) to schedule content in advance.
- Regularly assess and document your page's performance and use analytics (engagements, impressions, reach, etc.) to inform content strategy and determine optimal posting times.
- Set goals for ways to engage and grow your audience through content strategy.

## Content

- Tell your story! Aim to create a variety of content that is *timely, interesting, and useful*.
- Include photos or other media whenever possible. These posts will have more engagement.
- Posts should represent your unit/department as a whole and not express the thoughts or opinions of an individual.
- Write captions in a conversational style. Aim for an authentic, yet professional tone and avoid using slang, jargon, and unfamiliar or confusing acronyms.
- Tag other UTIA accounts if you think the content may be relevant to them or their followers.
- Use hashtags when appropriate, such as the official UTIA hashtag, #RealLifeSolutions.
  - Please note: Individual hashtags should have no spaces or punctuation.
- Proofread all content prior to posting.
- Never post copyrighted graphics, photos, music, text, or video content without obtaining written consent from the copyright owner (this includes the "Power T" logo used by UT Knoxville Athletics).
- Use calls to action and link back to department/program websites whenever possible.
- Ensure content is accurate and relevant to the pertinent unit.
- If posting the same content to multiple platforms, find a way to adjust the post for each platform.
- Optimize all content for each platform's requirements. For example, you may need to adjust the size or crop of an image or video depending on to which platform you post it.
- Whenever possible, upload videos directly to the site instead of sharing a YouTube link.
- Be cautious of posting any personally identifiable information that can be used to locate or contact another person offline.

## Accessibility

- Provide alt text or descriptions for images.
- Ensure all videos are captioned accurately.
- Ensure that the color contrast for text on any graphics meet minimum standards for WCAG 2.0 AA compliance. To check contrast, refer to [WebAim's color contrast checker](#).
- Do not use orange text or backgrounds. Instead, use orange as an accent color in graphics.
- Avoid using too many emojis in a row or using emojis to replace words.
- Hashtags should be camel case, meaning that the first letter of each word is capitalized. EX: #RealLifeSolutions #EveryDayIsAgDay
- For additional accessibility guidelines and information, please visit the [UTIA Accessibility Guide](#).

If you have any questions or need guidance with creating and/or managing a UTIA-affiliated social media account, please reach out to UTIA social media specialist Haley Harbin at [hharbin1@tennessee.edu](mailto:hharbin1@tennessee.edu).