e-Participation Policy

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Article 17 of Amiri Decree No. 57 of 2021 sets the mandate and function for the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (hereinafter referred to as "MCIT") to supervise, regulate, and develop the sector of Information and Communications Technology (hereinafter referred to as "ICT") in the State of Qatar in a manner consistent and aligned with, but not limited to the following:

- Supervising and developing the ICT sector in line with national development needs.

- Supervising the creation of an appropriate regulatory environment for fair competition.

- Supporting, developing, and stimulating the ICT sector and encouraging investment.

- Securing, developing, and raising the efficiency of information and technological infrastructure.

- Raising awareness on the importance of using ICT to advance society, build a knowledge-based digital economy, and improve the life of the individual.

- Implementing and supervising e-Government and Smart Society programs.

- Strengthening government infrastructure and capabilities in the field of ICT.

Furthermore, this policy has additional legal support from the following:

- Amiri Decision No. 47 of 2022 established the Digital Government Policies and Standards Department and its responsibilities which include but are not limited to developing policies, guidelines, and technical frameworks for digital government affairs; proposing draft related legislative tools; setting standards and technical specifications related to digital government; measuring government agencies' compliance with policies, guidelines, and technical frameworks related to digital government affairs.

Strategic Alignment

The national Digital Government 2020 strategy identifies promotion of open government as one of the key strategic objectives and recognizes Open Data, e-Participation and related policies as key initiatives. Further, Article 11 (4) of Emiri Decision No. 27 of 2014 identifies promoting the principles of electronic participation (hereinafter "e-Participation") between government agencies and the people as ictQATAR's responsibility.

Document Summary

Name	e-Participation Policy
Version	1.0.2
Document Reference	P003
Document Type	Policy
Summary	This policy aims to drive public and civic engagement using a common approach across government agencies to inform, consult, involve and solicit inputs from citizens, residents, and businesses for areas which include but are not limited to; service development and improvement, user requirement discovery, agenda setting and planning, government openness and transparency, policy and service creation. Benefits include but are not limited to; increased transparency and trust in government, engagement and participation in governance processes, broader perspectives and opportunities for innovation, wide range of information sources, improved dialolgue, deliberation and decisions, policy alignment, service delivery and increased buy-in.
Publishing Date	April 2015
Applicable To	Applies to all government entities.
Adoption Period	12 months from policy publication date
Owner	Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (MCIT)

* For any feedback or inquiries please contact policy@mcit.gov.qa.

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1   Introduction

Globally, there has been significant efforts by Governments to promote peoples' participation and engage them in their decision and policy making processes. These efforts aim not only to inform people but also to empower their participation and involvement.

Broadly, engagement with their people allows governments to tap into wider perspectives, sources of information, and potential solutions to improve decisions and services. It also provides the basis for productive relationships, improved dialogue and deliberation, and ultimately, better governance.

The Government of the State of Qatar, like many others internationally, has recognized the value of engaging the people in governance processes. Qatar's National Development Strategy 2011-2016 acknowledges that people are a country's most valuable asset and their participation in political, social and economic spheres will contribute to sustaining a prosperous society. The strategy also notes that social development requires broad participation of all people and the government, working together to fulfil the basic rights of individuals and the needs of the state.

The human development pillar of Qatar National Vision 2030 calls for investing in and developing all of Qatar's people, and creating an enabling environment for them to participate fully in the above spheres thus contributing to the achievement of national development goals.

In an annual survey on Qatari Youth 2013, conducted by the local Arabic daily "Al Watan", many citizens voiced their frustrations with a number of government entities but expressed that the use of electronic systems and mobile applications have helped them to connect better with some entities. Use of electronic means and online communication channels for people-government communication offers ease of use, convenience of time and location, transparency and people's trust, and reduction in governance cost. Therefore, governments internationally and regionally are adopting such means and communication channels to encourage people's participation in governance, which has aptly grown to be known as e-Participation.

The objective of e-Participation is to engage people in development policy and decision-making processes through use of information and communication technologies. e-Participation is an important index in major global e-Government rankings such as UN-e-Government Survey and WEF-Global IT Report (GITR). Qatar currently ranks 45th in the UN e-Participation Index 2014. As per findings of a UN e-Government Assessment Mission conducted in 2011, the culture of e-Participation is still lacking in many institutions and people in Qatar.

This policy document, therefore, aims at instituting the culture and practices of e-Participation in the Government Entities and improving transparency and people's participation, thereby assisting the State of Qatar in achieving its national development goals.

2   Policy Objectives

The key objectives of this policy are to:

2.1 Increase engagement of citizens, residents, communities, and businesses in policy making, service development, agenda setting, planning, and governance.

2.2 Strengthen government transparency, openness, trust, engagement, and public partnerships by using feedback and consultations to support policy creation, service delivery, planning, and decisions.

2.3 Provide participation and feedback opportunities to help identify, create, and improve services and policies thus improving user experiences and buy-in.

2.4 Provide government agencies with a wider perspective, broader sources of information, and alternative ideas for service delivery and policy making.

2.5 Provide a consistent approach for e-Participation across government entities and the use of associated technologies and platforms.

3   Policy Scope and Application

3.1   Applies to all Government Agencies in the State of Qatar and their online communication and people-engagement activities.

3.2   Applies to all processes, systems, policies, and services where e-Participation mechanisms can be promoted and integrated to improve engagement with citizens, residents, communities, and businesses, within the provisions of all applicable laws, policies, regulations or contracts.

3.3   Includes all opportunities where consultation, solicitation of opinions, feedback and input can be used to better deliver services, policies, and decisions.

3.4   Does not apply in the matters of national security, bilateral or multilateral relations with other countries, internal procedural matters and any other issue as deemed sensitive or unrelated, may not be subjected to public consultation.

4   Policy Provisions

People's participation in governance processes and decision making is a vital component in the new knowledge-based society. The Digital Government 2020 Strategy has defined a strategic KPI of 20% increase in users participating on online forums moderated by government. Government Entities should comply with the provisions in this section to support the use of online community engagement as an integral part of the development, implementation and evaluation of its policies, programs and services and achieve the KPI set by the strategy.

This policy on e-Participation requires all Government Agencies in the State of Qatar to take the following steps:

4.1   e-Participation Leadership

i.   Each Agency shall assign responsibility to a senior officer (hereinafter referred to as "e-Participation Leader") with sufficient authority to communicate with people and external bodies on behalf of the Agency, to oversee the administration and implementation of e-Participation activities, including but not limited to those outlined in Appendix 1.

ii.   Additionally, the e-Participation Leader shall lead all online communication activities in the Agency, and spread awareness among its employees and senior management about importance and benefits of the same as well as provide general guidance to them on usage of social media in personal and professional capacities as outlined in Appendix 2.

iii.   In the absence of an assigned officer, the official spokesperson or public relations in-charge, or equivalent, in the Government Entity shall assume above tasks and responsibilities in the interim.

4.2   e-Participation Webpage

i.   Each Agency shall establish an exclusive webpage for all e-Participation activities within the Entitty's official website, with link in the main page.

ii.   This webpage shall provide the following information, including but not limited to:

   a.   Agnecy's commitment on e-Participation – a brief description of Entity's aims in engaging the people and its e-Participation activities and plans, including how the people can engage with the Agency online and on what matters;

   b.   Online Public Consultation – a listing of public consultation documents issued by the Agency for public consultation, which will include those currently open and those closed for consultation. Please also refer section 4.3 for detailed provisions related to the conduct of public consultation;

   c.   Online People Engagement – this will guide people on how to participate and communicate online with the Entity, including a listing of its social media accounts and online communication channel as well as general response time expected. Please also refer section 4.4 for detailed provisions related to the conduct of people engagement;

   d.   Disclaimer - a general disclaimer shall be published, similar to that provided in Appendix 3, for administration of people's comments and shielding themselves from online activities of their employees in their personal capacities.

4.3   Online Public Consultation

Public consultation is the process of seeking views and ideas from the people and key stakeholders when formulating and implementing policies. Agencies should in drafting or reviewing its policies issue a public consultation document to solicit people's feedback.

Entities shall take the following steps to ensure effective online public consultation:

- *Identify appropriate policy issues or topics for public consultation*: In general, any policy issue or a related matter that has a direct impact on the people in Qatar as service and information recipients, should be identified for public consultation.

  Any other policies that may be related to State of Qatar's internal security, bilateral or multilateral relations with other countries, internal procedural matters and any other issue as deemed sensitive or unrelated to people in Qatar, may not be subjected to public consultation.

- *Draft public consultation document:* Entities shall state the objective, scope and process of the public consultation exercise, including the following information in the public consultation document:

    o   Explain in the consultation document at which people or target groups the consultation is directed;

    o   Provide the rationale of policy subject, how the policy shall affect the people or other target groups and benefits that they or the nation shall derive as a result of policy implementation. Make this document as simple and concise as possible. Use of practical examples may help better explain technical concepts;

    o   Include a list of questions the agency is seeking views on, in the consultation document;

    o   State clearly in the document the aspects of the issues where decisions have already been taken, or which are not currently open to change, so as to make clear the scope of the consultation exercise.

    In drafting the public consultation document, Entities shall also ensure it will provide simple and easy to use information on the policies and issues under consultation. Agencies should also provide any other relevant information to the people to help them make informed inputs, e.g. briefs on the current policy framework, surveys, etc. Such information should be made widely available using both electronic and other means, and free of any fees/charges.

- Publish consultation papers online:

    o   Agencies shall publish all their consultation papers on their e-Participation webpage;

    o   Agencies shall include a short summary/extract of the paper open for consultation, include the document open for consultation, details on how people should submit their feedback as well as date for close of consultation;

    o   Agencies shall update those papers closed for consultation with the final documents (please see item 4.3 (v) below);

    o   Agencies should also provide facilities for online submission of people's feedback as well as providing Entities' responses to their feedback;

- *Provide sufficient time for responses*: Agencies shall provide sufficient time for people to respond with their feedback and such period of time should be stated. Where issues are complex, more time may be needed.

  The following may be used as a guideline in determining how much time may be required for the consultation exercise:

  - 8 Weeks - Consultations that cover national policy initiatives and/or of interest to a wide range of stakeholders;

  - 6 Weeks - Consultations that covers important sector-specific policy proposals and are of interest to a wide range of stakeholders;

  - 4 Weeks - Consultations, for which there is an urgent need to reach a decision by specified time period because of market developments, have already been the subject of a previous consultation and for proposals that will have a limited effect on the market.

  Agencies should identify and include in its consultation, those most likely to be affected or who have most to contribute. These may include professional groups, non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders.

- *Follow-up and inform people on outcome:* People's inputs should be seriously considered with an open mind. Entities shall always follow-up to update on its Public Consultation sub-section in the e-Participation webpage to:

  - acknowledge responses;

  - provide a summary of the feedback and views expressed by the people without revealing individuals' identity unless consented by them (subject to privacy and confidentiality requirements as stipulated by relevant laws applicable);

  - publish Agency's responses with reasons for rejecting suggestions, if any;

  - publish Agency's decisions of the consultation so that people are aware and kept updated; and

  - publish final outcome or revised document.

  This will ensure that people do not feel that they have wasted their time in providing their inputs.

Section 1.2 of Appendix 4 may be referred for online tools available and widely used for Consultation segment of e-Participation.

4.4   Online Public Engagement

It is expected that some of the targeted participants are not especially interested in the policy topics. However, they may care about many specific issues that affect their lives and be willing to contribute with opinions or be informed. In order to engage them by allowing to raise such issues with the government and share their opinions, Agencies shall take the following steps:

i.   Within the e-Participation webpage, Agencies shall provide a brief description about how people can reach government agencies with their ideas and views on various governance issues.

ii. Agencies shall create and maintain official social media accounts and list them in their e-Participation webpages. Wherever possible, such accounts should be certified by the service providers as official accounts or have appropriate authentication measures in place.

iii. Agencies shall allow people to create or subscribe to online polls or petitions related to services, policy or governance areas, in the e-Participation webpages.

iv. Agencies shall allow people to submit their new ideas or suggestions on services or governance issues. Agencies shall always review such suggestions and follow-up with the contributors on a timely basis;

v. Agencies may require validation of people's identification through Qatar ID or One-Time-Password on mobile number entered by users to avoid fake responses or responses from unsolicited groups or individuals.

vi. Agencies shall perform online satisfaction surveys of their services and other relevant topics on a periodic basis. They shall publish results of all surveys conducted.

vii. Agencies shall provide an option to people to choose whether they wish to reveal their identity or post as anonymous, in creating online polls and petitions or submitting suggestions and feedback. They shall also provide a statement of assurance on the e-Participation webpage that if users choose not to reveal their identities, Agencies shall keep such information confidential (subject to privacy and confidentiality requirements as stipulated by relevant laws applicable).

Sections 1.1 and 1.3 of Appendix 4 may also be referred for online tools available and widely used for online public engagement.

4.5   Use of Social Media Analytics and Tools

i. Agencies should consider the use of various social media analytics tools to assess the performance of its social campaigns, online reputation and social profile with the people. Such tool can help agencies to:

   a. identify what issues may be becoming topical in the local community;

   b. gauge people's sentiment about particular issues;

   c. respond to misinformation about the government's position on an issue;

   d. raise awareness about opportunities to influence government decision making on an issue; and

   e. encourage people's responses through official channels.

   Appendix 5 may be referred for tools available for social media analysis.

ii. Agencies may also utilize social network management applications or aggregation tools to assist them in updating, managing and maintaining several communication outlets such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube etc. via one unified interface. Please refer Appendix 6 for details on this topic.

iii. Agencies should evaluate whether online public discussions or comments should be responded to, and where they decide to provide a response, it should be specific, factual and concise targeted at addressing the issue. Appendix 7 may be referred while performing such assessments.

4.6 Additional Requirements

i. All Agencies are encouraged to implement any additional measures for enhancing e-Participation experience of users or applying security procedures that they deem fit and important.

ii. Agencies shall implement requirements of this Policy and undertake its utmost efforts to engage the people.

iii. Ministry of Information and Communications Technology (ictQATAR) may issue any additional or supplementary procedures, guidelines and best practices from time to time to support the e-Participation Policy.

iv. Agencies shall make every effort to achieve the policy targets as set out in Appendix 8 of this document as well as any new/revised targets as may be provided in future by ictQATAR to ensure effective adoption of e-Participation in the State of Qatar.

4.7 Implementation Progress and Review

Agency responsibilities:

4.7.1 Agencies shall perform a self-assessment based on the compliance checklist or other parameters as may be circulated by ictQATAR at the time of assessment request, and submit report with ictQATAR. Agencies shall submit any additional information or report as may be requested by ictQATAR to assess progress of e-Participation implementation.

4.7.2 Agencies may put in place success measures to assess periodically the progress of their online activities. Some of such measures are outlined in Appendix 10 for reference. Additionally, some tips to achieve success in online activities are provided in Appendix 11.

MCIT responsibilities:

4.7.3 Ministry of Information and Communications Technology (ictQATAR) as custodian of the overall e-Participation Policy shall monitor Agencies' implementation of e-Participation initiatives. A compliance checklist as broadly outlined in Appendix 9 shall be used in monitoring implementation.

4.7.4 MCIT shall monitor implementation of this policy by government agencies and may at any time request information and/or a detailed report on the adoption of this policy.

5 Glossary of Terms and Definitions

Term	Definition
Digital Government 2020	Qatar Digital Government 2020 Strategy for the year 2020 available at the Ministry's website.
e-Participation	Defined by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs is the process of engaging people through ICTs in policy and decision-making in order to make it participatory, inclusive, and deliberative.
Government Agency	All ministries, public bodies and institutions in the State of Qatar.
ictQATAR	Refers to Ministry of Information and Communications Technology of the State of Qatar, previously known as The Supreme Council of Information & Communication Technology.
Social media	Web-based and mobile technologies used to turn communication into an interactive dialogue. It may be defined as a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content.
Web 2.0	Web applications that facilitate participatory information sharing, interoperability, user-centered design, and collaboration on the World Wide Web. A Web 2.0 site allows users to interact and collaborate with each other in a social media dialogue as creators (prosumers) of user-generated content in a virtual community.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Roles and Responsibilities

The roles and responsibilities section assigns responsibility for the policy requirements set out in Section 4 (Policy Provisions).

    i.   At least one senior staff (e-Participation Leader) with sufficient skills, experience or training in using online communication tools for corporate communications, public relations or equivalent field, should be assigned the overall responsibilities of e-Participation activities in the agency. The e-Participation Leader should have sufficient authority to officially communicate on behalf of the agency.

Duties of e-Participation Leader should include:

- ensuring that policy requirements and targets as set out in this document are implemented and achieved in their Agencies;

- planning and managing execution of Agency's online communication plans;

- managing all social media accounts of the Agency;

- soliciting response from the business or policy departments for people's queries, complaints, requests etc. and assist them in preparing responses;

- creating an Agency e-Participation webpage with the help of IT department or as appropriate,

- responding to people's queries or responses within reasonable time or as required by the policy;

- involving other Agencies where useful for response/issue resolution;

- monitoring and reporting on public social media activity and opinion related to their Agencies;

- assisting business departments in performing public consultation of policies and strategies.

    ii.   Business departments in the respective Agencies, in the context of e-Participation, have the responsibility to:

- provide responses to e-Participation Leader in a timely manner or as required by the policy, and resolve issues where needed;

- perform public consultation of policies and strategies through e-Participation Leader; prepare discussion forum and add background information when needed;

- review people's comments and use as input for policies, services etc.

    iii.   Ministry of Information and Communications Technology has the responsibility to:

- update the e-Participation policy from time to time to ensure currency of the policy and to address new or emerging needs and best practices;

- issue procedures, guidelines and best practices to support the e-Participation Policy;

- provide instructions or advise any action that Government Agencies should undertake to support effective implementation of this Policy;

- monitor progress of implementation of this policy at Government Agencies.

Appendix 2: General Guidelines for Employees

Outlined below are general guidelines for employee engagement with social media. These guidelines will evolve as technology continues to make possible new ways for social networking.

If an employee of a Government Agency participates in social media as a means to discuss the work of the Agency, either on a personal or a professional basis, these guiding principles should be followed by the employee.

Personal Use of Social Media

If an employee uses social media in personal capacity, they should be mindful of the following:

1. The employee should never disclose any information that is confidential or proprietary to their employer or any third party (e.g. companies, individuals and other government agencies) that has disclosed information to the Agency in confidence. They should never comment on anything related to legal or commercial matters such as regulatory matters, the status of tenders and employment contracts. Employee's existing employment contract should also be prohibiting this.

2. The employee should keep in mind that what they publish will be widely accessible. For example, his or her supervisor and colleagues may come across what is being communicated online through their own use of social media. So the employee should think about what they are saying and be responsible.

3. If the employee identifies himself as an employee of the Agency, they should make it clear that the views expressed are theirs alone and should not use the Agency's logo or other means that may cause the audience to believe that they are representing the Agency's views. The employee may use the following declaration as an example:

   The views expressed on this (e.g. blog; website…) are my own and do not necessarily reflect the views of <Agency name>.

4. The employee should not infringe on the privacy rights of colleagues, such as by posting pictures of colleagues or giving out their contact details without their permission.

5. Personal use of social media should be done at employee's personal time.

Professional use of Social Media on behalf of the Agency

When it comes to using social media professionally (e.g. as part of the Agency's awareness campaign, interactive on-line discussions with external peers and contacts, or when representing the Agency in particular on-line forums), these basic guidelines should be followed:

1. The employee should disclose who they are and their role at the Agency. The employee should not pretend to be someone they are not.

2. The employee should try and understand the culture of the online communities they communicate with so as to interact effectively.

3. The employee should protect their own privacy and respect the privacy and contact preferences of others.

4. The employee should write about what they know and their areas of expertise. If the employee is not an expert on particular topic that comes up for discussion, they should make this clear to others. The employee can also suggest how to get in touch with someone else in the Agency who has expertise in a given topic area if appropriate and after the proposed expert's permission. They should not comment on any matter which may have legal or commercial implications for any third party.

5. Where practicable, links to the Agency's website should be provided so that individuals and on-line communities have access to official statements, documents and initiatives.

6. The employee should engage in healthy debate and not use social media to criticize or denigrate colleagues or individuals, agencies and companies that the Agency employs and/or collaborates with. When disagreeing with others' opinions, the employee should keep it appropriate and polite. They should choose words wisely and be careful and considerate.

7. The employee should be accountable by quickly and clearly correcting any mistakes they may make in presenting information related to the Agency's work and initiatives. For example, if they choose to modify an earlier post to a blog, readers should clearly be informed that they have done so.

8. The employee should take a few minutes to think about what he or she is going to say before actually saying it. He or she may also want to consult his or her manager if he or she is unsure how to respond to a particular issue that is being discussed. The employee is the author, and responsible for anything that is published, so they should use good judgment.

9. The employees should not create additional social media accounts of the Agency. All official social media accounts should be created and administered by the e-Participation Leader or the personnel assigned with the responsibilities of online communications in the Agency (Appendix 1).

10. Departments in the Agency seeking to market their activities in social media or who want to start a blog/create pages/accounts should channel it through the e-Participation Leader.

11. If the employee comes across in social media comments regarding Department level programs or the Agency in general, he or she should keep the e-Participation Leader informed.

Appendix 3: General Disclaimer Guideline

The following text should be made available from a prominent location on any official social media channel or page:

1. Comments posted by you on this page will be removed by the administrator if it:

    a. impersonates any other person or falsely claim to represent any other person, whether living or dead, real or fictitious;

    b. is abusive, harassing, threatening or violates the legal rights of others;

    c. is misleading, deceptive, false, defamatory or libelous;

    d. is a statement that may interfere with or prejudice the course of or otherwise deals with civil or criminal proceedings that are presently before any court, tribunal, commission or similar body or any investigation by the police, or other agency;

    e. seeks to raise personal matters which have been dealt with or concluded judicially;

    f. uses insulting, threatening or provocative language or language that is hateful towards a certain group of people;

    g. incites hatred on the basis of race, religion, gender, nationality or sexuality or other personal characteristic;

    h. includes indecent, obscene, pornographic or otherwise inappropriate language, information or other content;

    i. infringes the intellectual property rights of others or discloses their confidential information;

    j. contains any commercial advertising material;

    k. is not relevant to the themes currently being discussed; or

    l. invades the personal privacy of any other person or groups without their consent.

You may also be banned from this page by the administrator for posting comments or other content of this nature.

2. Comments posted anywhere by an employee of our organization other than those posted through our official accounts, do not necessarily reflect the views of the organization and should be considered as personal opinion of the employee. <Agency name> does not endorse or take responsibility for any content posted by employees through the use of social media.

Appendix 4: Online Tools for e-Participation

Improving e-Participation unavoidably requires a certain level of knowledge about the available online tools. This section presents several online tools based on what activity they may facilitate in the participation process. It should be noted that no printed list of online tools will remain relevant for a long period of time. New tools enter the industry every day, some tools may cease to work.

>>Process	Inform	Consult & Collaborate	Involve and Empower
Goal	Provide balanced and objective information	Obtain people's feedback on issues	Work directly with the people throughout the process
Possible obstacles	Access, Technical/ management	Interaction, Cultural issues	Interaction, Political cultural issues, Technical/ management
Overcoming obstacles online with	E-mail lists, Websites, Blogs, Microblogs, Vlogs, Social networking sites, Translation tools, Aggregating tools, Web feed	Websites, Blogs, Vlogs, Social networking sites, Translation tools, Polling tools, Discussion forums, Planning tools, Collaborative working tools	Petition tools, Voting tools

Use of most of the tools listed here is free of charge. With every tool a link to the original site and the owner of the software or web service will be found.

Please note that by providing examples as below, this document does not endorse use of a particular tool or application over others that are not mentioned in the list. The intent is to provide appropriate examples to the Government Agencies in order that they are able to further research and choose the tools or applications most suited to their needs. Government Agencies should ensure that the tools chosen by them, from the list below or otherwise, comply with requisite security standards or protocols and all applicable legislations and policies in the State of Qatar.

1.1 informing and Publication Tools

Tools listed below can help in sharing or spreading information among the people or other target groups present online e.g. in social networks, and turn communication into an interactive dialogue with the people or other target groups.

1.1.1 E-mail lists

E-mail lists allow the user to send information to all the people who have signed up for the mailing list. Many organizations use email lists to disseminate, for instance, their newsletters online.

Mailing list hosting services:

FreeLists provides free e-mailing list hosting.

Mailchimp.com is an e-mail marketing and e-mail list manager.

1.1.2 Web publishing

There are a number of service providers that offer free hosting for websites, and some providers additionally offer content managing systems (or CMS) that allow the user to design and maintain a

website with only a minimum of technical skills. These sites are usually offered in free versions with somewhat limited functionalities or in paid full versions.

WordPress is a blogging tool that can be equally seen as a free publishing and content management platform. It offers a variety of layout templates. Additionally, the *WordPress* software can also be downloaded at WordPress.org and installed to a server of the user's own choosing.

Voog is a simple, customizable tool for creating a website. Minimum technical skills are needed and it has both a free and a paid "pro" version.

Google sites is a free tool for setting up websites. The choice of layouts and additional options however is smaller, compared to for example WordPress.

1.1.3 Blogs

Blogs are web-based services which allow publication in written, audio and video formats. They are often used to express opinions and facilitate discussion with the blog followers about a given topic.

Benefits of blogs include:

- structured organization of the user's messages and other content elements, usually in chronological order;

- ready for use after registering with an online blog service provider;

- an easy-to-use text editor which allows the user to see the article while writing it, almost in the same form as it will appear after publishing it;

- support embedding of various widgets provided by other service providers e.g. YouTube videos, SlideShare slides, etc.

Some free blogging services are:

WordPress is a blogging and publishing service with a focus on aesthetics, web standards, and usability. The WordPress blog can be made private, meaning that it is visible only to the people selected by the blog owner, or otherwise publicly visible to everyone. The user interface is available in 120 languages.

Blogger is a publishing tool from Google for sharing text, photo and video. In order to blog in Blogger a Google account is necessary. Private blog may be shared with up to 100 Google account holders. The user interface is available in 50 languages.

If the user has a blog, it will appear on Technorati, the largest blog search engine in the world. Once the user registers, Technorati tracks "blog reactions" or blogs that link to the user's blog. The user can search for his or her name on Technorati and subscribe to RSS alerts, so that the user knows about it when someone blogs about him or her.

1.1.4 Microblogs

Microblogs or miniblogs differ from traditional blogs for they provide a forum for more limited content at a time. Organizations or individuals can use microblogs to announce short and condensed messages.

Twitter is the best known microblog, which allows posting 140-character long text updates. Users can follow other users' tweets. Posting regular tweets and following the tweets of the target audience may

increase the users' visibility and the number of followers. Please note that tweets may be set as public so that anybody can see updates, or private so that only users' followers can view content.

Tumblr is an easy-to-use tool which allows sharing content in text, photo and video formats. The tool provides its users with a useful support center.

Facebook and Google+, the popular social networking sites, may also be used as microblogs with the status updates that are visible to all the other users in the user's network. Please note that the status updates on Facebook and on Google+ may also be set as public so that everybody may see the user's updates.

1.1.5 Vlogs and video sharing tools

Using video sharing tools, vlogs, may help the user increase outreach. Providing information in video format in an interactive and Web 2.0 sharing environment may be beneficial in reaching people with reading and/or language difficulties.

The use of video sharing sites is growing rapidly. On video publishing sites, the user can upload and share his or her information in a smart way. Utilizing video sharing tools can bring more viewers to the user's personal or organization's website.

For example, when sharing an introductory video on an issue through a video sharing site, some of the viewers may want to visit the organization's website to learn more about the topic.

Some video sharing tools include:

YouTube and Vimeo are video sharing websites where users can upload, share, view, and comment on videos made by themselves and by others.

VideoJug is focused on "how to..?" videos.

Animoto helps to turn photos, video clips and music into videos to share with everyone.

1.1.6 Social networking sites

Social networks consist of individuals and/or organizations which are related to each other in various ways, depending on the network type (e.g. friendship, interests, business relationships, etc.).

Benefits of social networking sites include:

- creating new networks
- sharing information in real time with mobile applications
- increasing outreach
- increasing interaction
- increasing participation

Facebook is a social networking tool which enables people to connect with friends and others who work, study and live around them. Facebook provides an opportunity to share text, photos and videos with friends on the user's contact list.

Organizations can use Facebook by creating a page or group. The main advantage to an organization of having a Facebook page or group is that everyone who likes or joins the organization in Facebook will receive updates to their own Facebook wall, and therefore can be updated about news.

For example, when authorities start an inclusion process, or an organization wants to advertise a public event, they can post information on their Facebook page so all those following their activities will receive an update.

Wikipedia alone lists over 200 social networking sites.

Many sites analyze the popularity of web sites and social media. For instance, ebizmba is specific to social media while alexa and comscore analyze the popularity of websites.

Finally, AddThis.com enables sharing information on to others wherever they feel like.

1.1.7 Aggregating tools

Using multiple social media tools may be challenging in terms of managing the updates and the interaction.

Aggregating tools allow combining different types of social media content, and creating blogs which gather all kinds of feeds so they appear on one page.

Some of the services are:

Paper.li allows the user to pull together different content, e.g. Facebook or Twitter feeds or any other web content and publish it as a newspaper.

Please also refer Appendix 6 for detailed information on Social Networks Aggregation.

1.1.8 Making a website multilingual

When publishing information on a web page it is important to think of the target group – can they understand the language of the text, or should it be translated into other languages?

A multilingual website may be provided by integrating a translation gadget on the website. The gadget allows the user to select a preferred language on the website, and translate the content immediately.

Google translate can be added to any web site to enable site visitors to easily translate content into one of the 50 available languages on Google translation tools.

Microsoft translator widget is a similar tool providing translation to and from over 30 languages.

1.1.9 Informing about an interesting web-content

When browsing information on the web, on some sites AddThis button can be found which enables the user to share information through many desired social media channels, e.g. Facebook, or to send a link by email. Authorities and organizations can add this widget to their website so that if users want to share news with their friends or colleagues they can do it easily, directly from the website. Such button can be also installed into the user's browser allowing the user to share any content he or she finds interesting (even if the sharing option is not provided by the website).

1.1.10 Making links look better

Sometimes when it is needed to publish a link of a certain article on a website, the link may be very long and difficult to read. Service provides offer URL forwarding service so the user can make a short version of the article's URL address and use the short link instead of the long one. The service provider takes care that the short URL takes the user to the original link.

There is a variety of short URL service providers, including:

- http://shorturl.com,

- http://goo.gl,

- http://tinyurl.com

- http://ow.ly/url/shorten-url

Social bookmarking services like Delicious and Diigo are online services that allow the user to organize, save and share his or her bookmarks with other people using tags.

1.1.11 Web feed

A web feed is a data format used for providing users with frequently updated content, e.g. news from another public blog or website, without visiting the site. When the blog or website is made private, then reading a web feed is not possible. The most common web feed is RSS.

There are different ways for reading web feeds:

Web browsers: users can add feeds of websites of interest to their web browser favorites menu, and be notified when there have been changes to the websites.

Learn about subscribing to a feed using the Internet Explorer, Firefox, or Safari browsers. See also a tutorial video in YouTube.

Google Chrome cannot automatically read feeds, but an official extension can be downloaded from here.

E-mail clients: RSS feeds can be viewed as e-mails on many of the e-mail client programs. For example, read how to set up MS Outlook to read RSS feed.

RSS readers: there are also online RSS readers. The main advantage is that feeds can be read from any computer or mobile device. Examples of such services are:

Bloglines enable searching, subscribing, creating and sharing news feeds, blogs and rich web content.

For Yahoo clients, there is MyYahoo that allows creating customizable news page for daily use.

RSSOWL is for Windows, Linux (32 Bit and 64 Bit) and Apple Mac OS X, which can save selected information in various formats for offline viewing and sharing. There are tutorials available for various features of RSSOWL.

1.2 Consultation and Collaboration Tools

All the above tools may also be used in the consult phase. The consult phase aims at collecting feedback from the people while collaboration aims at both government working with the people and people working together independently for a cause. The online tools below permit consulting, co-working and collaborating online both in synchronous or asynchronous modes. The section has been logically divided into planning, execution (consultation), evaluation and collaboration sub-sections.

1.2.1 Planning Tools

1.2.1.1 Process planning

The newly created web-based tool iCoworker gives an opportunity to visualize the process of co-creating a draft document or a petition, by presenting a timeline, along with the invited participants, links to documents versions and other useful source information, as well as the comments and opinion of the joint work group. The tool could be also used for a small-scale project management or inclusion activities.

A publication People and Participation by Involve – public participation experts based in the UK and working with the governments, provides guidance on how to plan for participation and choose appropriate participation methods.

1.2.1.2 Scheduling meetings and events

When it is needed to invite many parties to a meeting and find a common time which would suit to all, it could be tedious to make a phone call to everyone in order to find out the suitable times slots in their schedules, and match these between all of the expected participants.

Online scheduling tools save resources in planning an event with multiple stakeholders.

Doodle allows the user to select a range of dates for a meeting, and ask everyone to indicate their preferences. The user can decide the meeting time according to the options most suitable to the participants, sending all a notification with the final decision on date and times. Additionally, all participants can see which dates and times other people had preferred for the meeting. Doodle is simple, quick and requires no registration.

1.2.2 Consultation and Evaluation Tools

1.2.2.1 Consultation tools

While many tools listed in the 1.1 Informing and Publication section may be used during this stage, one tool of significant importance is discussion forums.

An Internet forum, or message board, is an online discussion site where people can hold conversations in the form of posted messages. They differ from chat rooms in that messages are often longer than one line of text, and are at least temporarily archived. Also, depending on the access level of a user or the forum set-up, a posted message might need to be approved by a moderator before it becomes visible.

Forums have a specific set of jargon associated with them; e.g. a single conversation is called a "thread", or topic.

A discussion forum is hierarchical or tree-like in structure: a forum can contain a number of subforums, each of which may have several topics. Within a forum's topic, each new discussion started is called a thread, and can be replied to by as many people as so wish.

Depending on the forum's settings, users can be anonymous or have to register with the forum and then subsequently log in in order to post messages. On most forums, users do not have to log in to read existing messages.

Many governments internationally have been online discussion forums successfully to engage with their peoples. Some of the examples are Reach (https://www.reach.gov.sg/) at Singapore where consultation forum has centralized structure, and United Kingdom where consultations forums are decentralized at council and department levels (UK Consultations, https://consultations.southglos.gov.uk/consult.ti). Other countries that are leading in this area are Canada, Denmark, Scotland and Australia.

Here is a link to understand how to start an online discussion forum: http://www.wikihow.com/Start-an-Online-Discussion-Community.

Polling tools as mentioned in the next section (1.3 Involve and Empower Tools) may also be used where consultation questions are very structured and decision will be based on objective opinions of the people.

1.2.2.2 A guide to evaluating people's participation

A UK based organization, Involve, has published a web-guide titled *Making a Difference: A guide to evaluating public participation in central government*. Although the guide is addressed to government institutions, it provides helpful insights also to organizations and communities organizing large scale projects that involve informing or including a wider circle of participants.

The evaluation guide may be read or downloaded at http://www.involve.org.uk/evaluation-guide/.

1.2.3 Collaboration Tools

Collaboration tools allow collaborative creation and management of documents online, and are useful when many people need to work on the same document at the same time. With online collaboration tools, there is no need to send static documents between the collaborators by email. Instead, a document can be created and commented on online.

1.2.3.1 Document creation and editing tools

Document creation tools allow instant online collaboration with commenting, editing and discussion functionalities. Here is a list of somewhat similar online tools, which do not require registration or any user account, are easy to use, and useful for recording meeting minutes, brainstorming, project planning, drafting sessions and more. The tools below allow multiple people to edit the same document at once, and all changes are instantly reflected on every participant's screen. Once the document is created it can be easily shared by simply sharing the document's URL (link) with others. All co-authors can pick a personal color that indicates their original text in the document.

Netcomment.net (netcomment.net) is a service that makes the process of commenting and approving digital material easy and efficient. In addition to commenting, it provides the ability to manage the workflow of document editing and approval.

Google Docs & Spreadsheets (docs.google.com) allow creating collaborative online documents and spreadsheets with all the main possibilities of document editing software, being somewhat similar and recognizable for those used to Microsoft Word and Excel or LibreOffice. The user can also upload existing files, pictures or videos and share them with other users. The files may be exported and saved, or shared online with selected users or made public to everyone. The tool thus has more sophisticated features but it requires registration and a user account.

1.2.3.2 Wikis

A wiki is a website where users can collaboratively add, modify, or delete its content.

Wikis keep track of the history of changes in the text; so that earlier versions of the document can be tracked when necessary. Wikis do not allow instant co-creation of a document, because an article will be locked while it is being edited by someone. But it allows making changes when other users are not working with the document.

Wikis are especially useful for building knowledge bases because they allow expansion and creation of new articles or sub-articles when new information becomes available. Creating sub-articles and building connections between articles makes it easy to use wikis as a source of information.

See the comparison of wiki software.

Although most wikis require downloading and installation on a web server, there are also web-based versions of wiki software available:

EditMe (editme.com) is a wiki hosting service that empowers non-technical users to quickly and easily build and host editable web sites.

Wikidot (wikidot.com) is a wiki hosting service which allows the creation of up to 5 wikis for free, with limited storage space.

1.2.3.3 Visualization tools

Visualization tools allow drawing or sketching ideas collaboratively. These tools can be especially useful during online meetings; for instance during a Skype call when participants need to visualize their ideas.

Some easy-to-use visualization tools include:

CoSketch (cosketch.com) is a multi-user online whiteboard designed to give the users the ability to quickly visualize and share ideas as images. No registration needed. The users can upload and share images to draw on or use Google maps as the background for their sketches to show directions or share trips.

Chartle (chartle.net) allows easy creation of charts and embedding them into a blog or a website. In addition to the variety of charts and diagrams, it is possible to make intensity maps and geo maps.

Mindmeister (mindmeister.com) is a collaborative online mind-mapping tool. The basic version is free and facilitates sharing folders and files as well as task lists. There are various templates for brain-storming, project plan, to do list among others. It is possible to chat and attach files to the mind-map.

1.2.3.4 Online slide presentation tools

Online presentation tools are useful in many ways. For example, when the meeting is carried out over Internet, using Skype, all participants could simultaneously follow the slide presentation presented by the speaker.

Sharing presentations online has the following advantages:

- The presentation file is too big to be sent by e-mail, or there is doubt about whether everyone can receive large files by e-mail.

- Uploading presentations to a web site can help spreading the information among a wider audience, attracting possibly interested people outside the existing contact list, and community members.

- Online presentations can be shared very easily, by sharing and forwarding only the link to the presentation instead of the file itself.

- The viewers of the presentation do not need additional software for viewing it.

Slideshare (slideshare.com) allows uploading slide presentations to the web for sharing with other people.

Prezi (prezi.com) is meant for preparing creative presentations collaboratively over the Web.

Issuu (issuu.com) is a publishing platform which enables its users to upload and share PDF documents such as magazines, catalogues and presentations.

1.2.3.5 Group working and sharing tools

There are various e-tools that facilitate working in groups. In general, the user can create a group and invite people to join and share ideas, files, events, etc. with each other.

Facebook group (http://www.facebook.com/groups) is a collaboration tool for Facebook members. It is possible to share files, advertise events, chat, video call, create polls, etc. in various languages.

Some of the tools which are specifically for content management and sharing:

Google Groups (https://groups.google.com/) if the user has a Google account he or she can use the Google Groups to share content and group work. The user can search the content of existing public groups and join them. The advantage of this tool is the availability in many languages as well as setting up an automatic translation tool for the user's group.

Teambox (http://teambox.com/) is collaboration software for workplace communication and free up to five team members. Allows to share messages, tasks along a calendar, and a Wiki page to work collaboratively.

Mindmeister (https://www.mindmeister.com/) is a collaborative online mind-mapping tool. The basic version is free and facilitates sharing folders and files as well as task lists. There are various templates for brainstorming, project plan, to do list, and etc. which is possible to chat and attach files to the mind-map.

1.2.4 Instant messaging, voice and video call

Instant messaging tools allow discussions and meetings free of place restrictions.

Instant messaging tools offer two basic functions:

- Chatting – participants can collaborate and discuss issues in a common chat environment and the whole discussion will be saved for further reference.

- Calling – participants can collaborate over a voice call (VoIP). For smaller meetings it is enough to use a laptop's built-in speakers and microphone. For bigger meetings more advanced technical equipment like loudspeakers, a stand-alone video camera and microphone may be needed. Also, testing should be done beforehand, to make sure that everything is working well before the meeting starts.

Skype (skype.com) and Yahoo messenger (messenger.yahoo.com) offer similar functionalities of chat and video call.

Additionally, above mentioned applications can be used to call to any phone number around the world, which however, this is not a free service, although cheaper than using a regular phone.

For concrete example on how to use various collaboration tools — for example wikis, collaborative writing tools, microblogs and instant messaging and VoIP tools together, you can refer to a report by Somus: Social media for citizen participation.

1.3 'Involve and Empower' Tools

It is expected that some of the targeted participants are not especially interested in the policy topics. However, they do care about many specific issues that affect their lives and are willing to contribute with opinions or be informed. The *Involve and Empower* tools listed below allow the participants to raise such issues with the government and share their opinions through e-polling or surveys.

1.3.1 Petition and polling tools

There are several websites available for launching an initiative and collecting signatures and opinions of people to connect who share views, and create an interest group to present the ideas to the authorities.

The authorities may also benefit from the online petition and voting tools in the consulting phase during the inclusion process, for collecting feedback from the people.

Online voting tools allow platforms to collect people's feedback. Examples of online voting include:

ipetitions (ipetitions.com) is a free online service for launching a campaign or petition. Registration is required.

Online questionnaire services do also provide multiple opportunities for collecting feedback from the people. These services include webropol (webropol.com) and surveymonkey (surveymonkey.com).

Hukoomi portal in Qatar also provides functionality to conduct survey based on online questionnaire. The online poll feature allows people to vote on a question and view the tallied results.

1.4 Other

Wordle (www.wordle.net) is a simple visual word-counting tool for illustrative purposes.

Appendix 5: Social Media Analytics Tools

While not strictly an e-Participation activity, monitoring subjects related to the work of an agency is an important part of engaging online. In many cases, social media analysis is an extension of traditional media monitoring, which many agencies already do. As discussed below, social media monitoring can also be undertaken by individual public servants using a range of online tools. Compared to traditional media monitoring, social media monitoring has the advantage that it can give more direct access to community sentiment and the opportunity to respond in real time.

Even before beginning to use e-Participation tools, monitoring the online world for discussion and content related to an agency, program or area of interest can be beneficial. It may even prove that social media monitoring can provide the impetus for building a more comprehensive organizational e-Participation strategy. For example, if an agency can see that a wide ranging conversation is happening on Twitter regarding its work or area of interest, it may assist in motivating the agency to become involved in that conversation.

There is a broad range of tools available for monitoring online traffic about an organization. In many cases these tools will be able to supplement traditional media monitoring, particularly when they pick up on online versions of articles in mainstream media. When beginning to monitor activities, it is not necessary to spend large amounts of money. A basic social media monitoring toolkit could consist entirely of free tools.

Social media analysis will quite possibly discover activity and comment with respect to an agency, its senior leadership, staff and executives in many places. Once such activity has been discovered, questions arise about how to respond, including:

- How to decide to respond to any activity, whether negative, neutral or positive.
- Who is responsible for responding officially, as opposed to more general responses by staff which may also be permitted in some cases.
- The nature of any response.
- The platform on which any response should occur, for example, if and how to respond directly to a negative Facebook comment or group, versus responding from the agency site and linking to the Facebook page.

Appendix 7 may be referred for assessing how to respond to social media postings.

1.1 Research and Analysis Tools

Some of the tools that may be used for social media research and analysis are listed below. Please note again that by providing examples as below, this document does not endorse use of a particular tool or application over others that are not mentioned in the list. The intent is to provide appropriate examples to the government entities in order that they are able to further research and choose the tools or applications most suited to their needs. Government Agencies should ensure that the tools chosen by them, from the list below or otherwise, comply with requisite security standards or protocols and all applicable legislations and policies in the State of Qatar.

1.1.1 Tools for social media

Many tools can assist in researching and analysis all social media types. Some examples include

- *Trendrr* (https://twitter.com/trendrr) – acquired by Twitter,

- *Brandtology* (http://www.isentia.com.sg/services/brandtology-social-media) – acquired by isentia,

- *Social360* (http://www.social360monitoring.com/),

- *The Search Monitor* (http://www.thesearchmonitor.com/),

Numerous tools have also been created to help research and monitor particular social media tools. These may be useful for analyzing particular activities on single social media presences. Examples include

- *Twitter Search* (http://search.twitter.com/),

- *Boardreader* for forums (http://boardreader.com/),

Some free tools include :

- *Hootsuite* (https://hootsuite.com/),

- *Twazzup* (http://www.twazzup.com/),

- *HowSociable* (http://www.howsociable.com/),

- *TweetDeck* (http://tweetdeck.com/),

1.1.2 Alerts

Google alerts - Google Alerts are email updates of the latest relevant Google results (web, news, etc.) based on the choice of query or topic. These can be emailed to the user's Gmail address or added to his or her Google Reader: www.google.com/alerts

Yahoo alerts offer a similar service: http://alerts.yahoo.com

1.1.3 Keyword searches

The following tools search across social media applications;

- http://www.social-searcher.com/

- Best Free Social Media Search Tool - Talkwalker

1.1.4 RSS feeds

Subscribe to RSS feeds in Twitter for keywords relating to the agency's department or campaign.

Instructions on using Google Reader can be found online:

- Mashable – how to use google reader: http://mashable.com/2008/12/07/how-to-use-google-reader/

- Google reader in plain English video:
  http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VSPZ2Uu_X3Y&feature=related

1.1.5 Analytics

Analytics software can provide details of websites linking to the agency website. This information can help discern where traffic is coming from, including official social media presences or other web and social media sources. By identifying these and reviewing the sources of traffic the user can analyze the nature of the links and potentially address issues and engage audiences in ways that meet the needs identified from social media chatter at the source of existing traffic.

1.1.6 Google search

View the Google search instructions to improve search results and especially the ability to search within websites to monitor relevant online content.

https://support.google.com/websearch/answer/2466433?rd=1

Search within a specific website:

Google allows the user to specify that his or her search results should come from a given website. For example, the query [qatar site:nytimes.com] will return pages about Qatar but only from nytimes.com. The simpler queries [qatar nytimes.com] or [qatar New York Times] will usually be just as good, though they might return results from other sites that mention the New York Times. The user can also specify a whole class of sites, for example [qatar site:.gov] will return results only from a .gov domain and [qatar site:.qa] will return results only from Qatari sites.

It should again be noted that no printed list of online tools will remain relevant for a long period of time and the above examples are provided only for reference purpose. New tools enter the industry every day, some tools may cease to work.

Appendix 6: Social Networks Aggregation

Social network aggregation is the process of collecting content from multiple social network services, such as MySpace or Facebook, into one unified presentation. The task is often performed by a social network aggregator, which pulls together information into a single location, or helps a user consolidate multiple social networking profiles into one profile.

All content appears in real time to other members who subscribe to a particular community, which eliminates the need to jump from one social media network to another, trying to keep an eye on one's interests.

Social network aggregation systems can rely on initiation by publishers or by readers. In the publisher-initiated aggregation systems, the publishers combine their own identities, which make their readers see all aggregated content once subscribed. In the reader-initiated systems the readers combine the identities of others, which has no impact to the publishers or other readers. The publishers can still keep separate identities for different readers.

PCWorld has identified top 5 such tools based on four criteria – affordability, scalability, support and update posting assistance (scheduling):

- HootSuite: The award-winning software's user interface takes the form of a dashboard, and supports social network integrations for Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Google+, Foursquare, MySpace, WordPress, TrendSpottr and Mixi. Additional integrations are available via HootSuite's App Directory, including Instagram, MailChimp, Reddit, Storify, Tumblr, Vimeo and YouTube. *HootSuite* uses the URL shortener ow.ly to shorten URLs submitted to its service.

- VerticalResponse: The *VerticalResponse Social* service marries email and social media campaigns in a way that other tools do not. Usually people regard email and social media as separate islands, but bringing them together under the umbrella of one online marketing campaign makes much more sense.

VerticalResponse Social schedules everything from single updates to entire campaigns up to 30 days in advance. It allows clients to set up their own custom content library of common websites for their industry, and it offers suggestions for content based on the nature of their business. The chief advantage of this tool is that it is designed for professionals who think that they don't have the time for social media and are not tech-savvy.

- Sendible: *Sendible* drills down on various tasks, giving its users the choice of posting to Facebook personal-page photo album, posting notes to Facebook page or profile, posting items to a LinkedIn Group or LinkedIn status, and so on. This attention to specific actions saves a user a lot of time, and it makes *Sendible's* cost over other tools well worth the investment for organizations that use social media more aggressively. Google Analytics monitoring and basic social media analytics come with the *Marketer* package.

- Postling: *Postling* blends social media analysis, posting, and reporting, but it also incorporates instant notifications for reviews of user's business on TripAdvisor and Yelp, the two sites by which hospitality and restaurant businesses live and die. For any company involved in those industries, *Postling* is the obvious tool of choice. The inbox is similar to Sprout Social's in that it allows the user to deal with all mentions and messages from one place.

Postling's pricing structure makes it ideal for businesses that want to maintain a pared-down social media presence. If you need the scalability to add many accounts in the future, it may not be the best choice given its per-account pricing.

Please note that by providing examples as above, this document does not endorse use of a particular tool or application over others that are not mentioned in the list. No printed list of online tools will remain relevant for a long period of time; new tools enter the industry every day, some tools may cease to work. The intent is to provide appropriate examples to the Government Agencies in order that they are able to further research and choose the tools or applications most suited to their needs. Government Agencies should ensure that the tools chosen by them, from the list above or otherwise, comply with requisite security standards or protocols and all applicable legislations and policies in the State of Qatar.

Appendix 7: Decision Tree - Social Media Response

Social Media Response Assessment

DISCOVER

A post discovered about the agency

Is it positive or balanced? — Yes → **"Concurrence"** A factual or well-cited response, which may agree or disagree with the post.

No

EVALUATE

"Unhappy customer" Is the posting due to negative experience? — No ←

"Misguided" Are there erroneous facts in the posting? — No ←

"Rager" Is the posting a rant, rage, joke or satirical in nature? — No ←

"Trolls" Is this site or user dedicated to degrading others?

Do you want to respond to post to concur with or provide positive review?

No

RESPOND

Yes (Unhappy customer) → **Restoration -** Rectify the situation and act upon a reasonable solution

Yes (Misguided) → **Fix the facts -** Respond with factual information directly on the comment board

Yes (Rager) → **Monitor only -** Avoid responding to specific posts, monitor site for relevant information and comments. Notify management.

Let stand - Let the post stand – no response

Yes (positive review) → **Share success -** Proactively share your story and your mission

No → **Current circumstances -** Write response for current circumstances only

Respond

Response Considerations

Transparency - Disclose your role at or connection with the agency

Sourcing - Cite your sources by including hyperlinks, images, video or other references

Timelines - Take time to create good responses. Don't rush.

Tone - Respond in a tone that reflects on the rich heritage of the agency

Influence - Focus on the core content that will influence the audience positively

Appendix 8: Key Policy Targets

Task	Target duration from the date of publishing this Policy	Responsibility
1. Designate senior officer with sufficient authority to assume the e-Participation Leader's responsibilities	2 months	Senior Management of Government Agencies
2. Create a webpage dedicated to e-Participation activities in the Agency's websites in both Arabic and English languages	3 months	e-Participation Leader
3. Publish agency news & plans, senior leadership's views and other interactive information on the e-Participation webpage in accordance with the terms of this Policy	3 months onwards - at least one activity per month	e-Participation Leader
4. First e-Participation implementation review	12 months	ictQATAR

Appendix 9: Policy Compliance Checklist

Progress of implementation of this Policy at the Government Agencies shall be measured against the following broad checklist on an annual basis by the Ministry of Information and Communications Technology (ictQATAR):

e-Participation Compliance Checklist	Yes	No
1. Has the Agency assigned e-Participation responsibilities to a senior officer in the Agency?		
2. Has the Agency created an e-Participation webpage on their website addressing the policy requirements?		
3. Is the Agency publishing information on the e-Participation webpage in both Arabic and English languages?		
4. Does the Agency take up at least one e-Participation activity per month?		
5. Does the Agency keep its online consultation documents updated, including summary of comments and updated final documents?		
6. Does the e-Participation Leader provide response to people's queries, comments on a timely basis?		

ictQATAR may update or modify the above compliance checklist as it deems fit for monitoring progress of implementation of the e-Participation policy. ictQATAR may request the Agencies to perform a self-assessment and provide responses within 15 working days of such request. ictQATAR may request for further information or details during evaluation of Agencies' self-assessment reports.

Appendix 10: Social Media Success Measures

Social media is an integral part of e-Participation. Tracking social media success may also help in assessing whether the Agencies are able to effectively engage the people in their e-Participation activities. Following metrics may be referred to help determine the success of the social media accounts.

Activity Metrics

- bounce rate
- brand mentions
- comments and trackbacks
- connections (between members)
- contributors
- interactivity (with other media)
- loyalty
- members, friends, followers
- number of groups (networks/forums)
- page views
- posts (ideas/threads)
- referrals
- tags/ratings/rankings
- time spent on site
- virility – spread of posts
- visitors/unique visitors

Activity Ratios

- frequency: visits, posts, comments by time period
- ratios: member to contributor; posts to comments; active to passive contributors, etc.

Customer service metrics

- quality and speed of issue resolution
- relevance of content, connections
- satisfaction

Results

- number of mentions (tracked via web or blog search engines)
- positive/negative listing ratios on major search engines
- positive/negative sentiment in mentions

The above is only a suggestive list of indicators. Government Agencies are free to choose from the above and others in determining the success criteria that best benefits the Agencies' needs.

Appendix 11: Tips for Social Media Success

Some tips for social media success:

1. **Get Buy-In.** Obtain support from senior leadership to commit time and resources. Make sure that management understands the implications of investment in a new and rapidly evolving medium.

2. **Develop a Strategy.** Avoid a reactionary, "scattershot" approach to social media engagement by developing a comprehensive social media strategy.

3. **Establish clear goals.** Set targeted outcomes. These might include increasing brand visibility and awareness, greater message penetration and promoting interest in events and unconventional media such as websites and e-newsletters.

4. **Identify key social media sites.** Don't rush into joining new social media sites; consider first whether that medium will add value and allow your organization to achieve its social media goals. Build a relationship with local social media sites to ensure more brand visibility over time, and make sure you understand the policies of each social media account.

5. **Create a social media overseer.** Appoint a single, dedicated employee to oversee social media. Ideally that employee should have experience not only in the technical aspects of social media but also will possess a developed understanding of content requirements. If a team works on social media, make sure its style is consistent. Maintain only one voice on each social medium.

6. **Develop a response system.** Create a system for handling non-routine comments and complaints in a timely manner. Don't respond to complaints with a single, generic reply; personalize responses to increase impact.

7. **Tailor content.** Monitor closely the length of social media content to match that content to the type of site and its users. Be selective in posting content. Don't post overly promotional material. Don't post or tweet the same content multiple times a day to avoid clutter.

8. **Promote interaction.** Take steps to ensure that social media content promotes interaction with your targeted audience. Adopt interactive tactics such as adding questions to the body of the post, utilizing the "discussions" feature on Facebook, and live-tweeting from events. Respond swiftly to user comments and inquiries.

9. **Prepare for criticism.** Prepare to be criticized by users. True engagement can be both positive and negative. Constructive feedback can be particularly useful to an organization or agency.

10. **Analyze traffic and user demographics.** Use social media analytics to analyze traffic and demographics. Sites such as Facebook and Twitter provide these statistics free of charge.

11. **Be patient.** Don't expect sudden increases in site traffic or user feedback. Social media success builds over time. Remember that the quality of user interactions is more important than the quantity. Don't depend too heavily on numbers to measure success.

12. **Anticipate change.** Prepare to re-evaluate strategy constantly to adapt to changes. The world of social media is very young, and the relative value of specific sites or strategies will evolve over time.

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Document Control

Version	Date	Amendments	Author
1.0.0	30/04/2015	Release of policy	MICT
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