

GSA Directive

CIO 2161.2 GSA Blog Policy
Date: 11/18/2008
Status: Validated
Outdated on: 11/18/2018

GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION
Washington, DC 20405

CIO 2161
November 18, 2008

GSA ORDER

SUBJECT: GSA Blog Policy

1. Purpose. This Order establishes GSA policy on creating and maintaining blogs on GSA websites.
2. Applicability. This Order applies to all GSA employees and contractors.
3. Background. A Blog is derived from the term Web Log and is generally an informal means of transmitting information, graphics and video about different subjects of interest. GSA has used Blogs internally to transmit information in an effort to improve lines of communication. Currently, GSA is in the process of making this new communications technology available to the general public. The Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO) maintains enterprise capability for developing and maintaining Blogs.
4. Definitions.
 - a. "Blog" means a web-based forum with regular entries of commentary, descriptions of events, or other materials where the blog host posts material on the website, and others may provide comments.

b. "Blogger" means the individual who posts material and monitors others' submissions to the blog.

5. Forms. Blog Request Form

6. Guidelines for creating and maintaining a GSA blog.

a. GSA is committed to providing blogging forums to improve communications with employees, government customers, commercial suppliers and the general public. Blogs are an element of GSA business communications. The OCIO supports enterprise operations and the Office of Citizen Services and Communication (OCSC) oversees editorial use.

b. A blog must adhere to GSA Order, *GSA logo and visual system*(CSC 1808.1), which states, "the GSA Star Mark... will be used on all stationery, business cards, print and electronic communications products throughout the agency."

c. Successful blogs require significant effort. The more successful a blog becomes, the more time it requires. If you are not prepared to devote time on a regular basis, consider other forms of communication.

(1) A "Blog Request Form" (found on InSite – Collaboration tab) is used to initiate a blog. Requests for blogs should be submitted to the OCIO's Enterprise Applications Division.

(2) Requests must be approved by a Regional Administrator (RA) or the Head of a Service or Staff Office (HSSO).

(3) Requests for blogs should include a title for your blog, a short statement about the purpose and/or value of the blog, and a desired URL shortcut (typically some variation of the unique blog name, but in all lower case, no spaces, no special characters, e.g., /gsacioblog). If hosting a blog outside of GSA, then indicate where it will be hosted and why that is preferable. The Regional Administrator (RA) or Head of a Service or Staff Office (HSSO) does not need to name the blogger(s) in the request, but no more than 5 employees should serve as regular bloggers for a particular blog. No employee should spend more than 30 percent of his/her official time per pay period working on GSA blogs.

(4) Approval from OCSC will be automated in the Blog Request Form on Insite.

(5) Monitoring the blog is the responsibility of the blog owner (RA or HSSO). The RA/HSSO (or a designee, appointed in writing and designated on the Blog Request Form) must ensure proper supervision of the blog to ensure the

information is accurate, timely, relevant, complete, and does not reflect adversely on GSA or the United States Government.

(6) **If any of the following points are violated on the blog will be taken down:**

(a) Will not contain vulgar or abusive language, personal attacks of any kind, or offensive terms that target individuals or groups.

(b) Will not endorse commercial products, services, or entities.

(c) Will not endorse political parties, candidates, or groups.

(d) Will avoid topics unrelated to GSA's mission.

(e) Will post all comments that adhere to the posting policy contained at Attachment 1.

(f) Will review public comments and those that are in accordance with the posting policy. Responses to public comments (if necessary) will be posted as quickly as possible, preferably within one business day.

(g) Will be Section 508 compliant.

(h) Will follow the latest guidance posted on InSite for GSA blogs.

d. Guidance for bloggers.

(1) Blogs succeed when visitors feel they have reached a trusted source of information. Let readers know who the blogger is from a professional standpoint. Do not release any personal information that the general public should not know, for example releasing home addresses or phone numbers.

(2) Be prepared to post content on a regular basis. This may mean daily, weekly, or even every two weeks. Let readers know what that schedule is. Be realistic in preparing a schedule. It is always better to increase frequency over the life of a blog. If a blog remains idle for 60 days or more, GSA reserves the right to take it offline.

(3) Be prepared to make time and devote resources to moderating all comments that readers post. Be committed to reading every comment received, even if nothing is posted in response to all of them. Time may be needed to research responses.

(4) Consider inviting guest contributors. This is a great way to enhance value without increasing workload. Announce in advance who contributors will

be.

(5) Be prepared to respond on the blog to the posted comments, especially negative ones. Blogs build credibility and readership when they appear to be as open a forum as possible.

(6) If the same questions are posed over and over again, consider creating boilerplate responses to some questions.

(7) Be aware that there are a variety of ways people will find the blog (e.g., via search engines, Google alert, RSS feeds, various social networking sites, book marking sites, or e-mail from another person). This means the individuals will often be reading only a headline (or title), or a headline and a couple of sentences. The more intriguing the headline of the blog and the content that follows, the more likely the content is to build readership.

e. Public notices on blogs. All GSA blogs must contain the entire notice at Attachment 1 on the blog. If the notice itself is not on the main page, then a prominent link must be placed on the blog homepage that clearly identifies the attachment as "Privacy, Security, and Legal Notice."

f. Records management, retention and archiving. All records, including information posted, received and/or connected in any way with GSA Blogs that meet the definition of a record, will adhere and conform to all documentation contained in but not limited to CIO P 1820.1 GSA Records Maintenance and Disposition System.

According to 44 USC 3301 the definition of a Federal record is "all books, papers, maps, photographs, *machine readable materials*, or other documentary materials, regardless of physical form or characteristics, made or received by an agency of the United States Government under Federal law or in connection with the transaction of public business and *preserved or appropriate for preservation* by that agency, as evidence of the organization, functions, policies, decisions, procedures, operations or other activities of the Government or because of the informational value of data in them."

Casey Coleman
Chief Information Officer

Attachment

The following information addresses information for readers and visitors of GSA blogs. This information should be posted or linked on the homepage of the GSA blog.

BLOG USE POLICY

1. General Policy

This blog is hosted by the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) to provide a forum for improving communications with our employees, government customers, our commercial suppliers, and the general public. This blog will discuss (Subject Matter of Blog e.g. Information Technology, Schedules, Communications, Building issues, etc.). This blog use policy is subject to amendment or modification at any time to ensure the blog's continued use is consistent with its intended purpose as a limited forum.

2. Posting Policy

You are encouraged to share your comments, ideas, and concerns. This is a moderated blog, and GSA will only post comments from bloggers over 13 years of age that relate to topics on (Blog Subject Matter). GSA will review all comments before posting them. GSA will not post comments that contain abusive, vulgar, offensive, threatening or harassing language, personal attacks of any kind, or offensive terms that target specific individuals or groups. GSA will not post comments that are clearly off-topic, that promote services or products, or that promote or oppose any political party, person campaigning for elected office, or any ballot proposition. Gratuitous links to sites are viewed as spam and may result in the comment being removed. Communications made through the blog's e-mail and messaging system will in no way constitute a legal or official notice or comment to the GSA or any official or employee of GSA for any purpose. The content of all comments are released into the public domain unless the commenter clearly states otherwise, so do not submit anything you do not wish to be broadcast to the general public. GSA does not discriminate against any views, but reserves the right not to post comments that do not adhere to these standards. GSA will make best efforts to review comments and post them as quickly as possible.

3. Product References by Blog Host

Any references to commercial entities, products, services, or other nongovernmental organizations or individuals that are included in this blog are provided solely for the information of individuals using this blog. These references are not intended to reflect the opinion of GSA, the United States Government (Government), or its officers or employees concerning the significance, priority, or importance to be given the referenced entity, product,

service, or organization. Such references are not an official or personal endorsement of any product, person, or service, and may not be quoted or reproduced for the purpose of stating or implying GSA or Government endorsement or approval of any product, person, or service.

4. Records Management

All blogs must conform and comply with the agency's records maintenance and disposition system.

5. Linking Policy

The (Blog Name) blog may include useful hypertext links or pointers to information created and maintained by other public and private organizations and individuals' blogs. All hypertext links must conform to all points in Section 6.

(Blog Name) provides these links and pointers solely for the blog users' information and convenience.

When a user selects a link to an outside website, he/she is leaving the (Blog Name) blog and is subject to the privacy and security policies of the owner/sponsor of the outside website. Hyperlinks to information created and maintained by other public and private organizations should not be construed as an endorsement of the views or privacy policies contained on those linked pages.

GSA and (Blog Name) **do not** control or guarantee the accuracy, relevance, timeliness or completeness of information contained on a linked website.

GSA and (Blog Name) **do not** endorse the organizations sponsoring linked websites, and do not endorse the views they express or the products/services they offer.

GSA and (Blog Name) **cannot** authorize the use of copyrighted materials contained in linked websites. Users must request such authorization from the sponsor of the linked website. Those who provide comments are responsible for the copyright of the text they provide.

GSA and (Blog Name) **are not** responsible for transmissions users receive from linked websites.

GSA and (Blog Name) do not guarantee that outside websites comply with Section 508 (Accessibility Requirements) of the Rehabilitation Act.

6. Copyright Information

Links to GSA blogs are welcomed. Unless a copyright is indicated, information on GSA's blogs is in the public domain and may be copied and distributed without

permission. Citation to the U.S. General Services Administration as the source of the information is appreciated.

If a copyright is indicated on a video, photo, graphic, or other material, permission to copy the material must be obtained from the original source.

7. Disclaimer of Endorsement of Author

The views expressed on (Blog Name) are those of the individual bloggers.

These views and posted comments do not necessarily reflect the views of GSA or the Government.

8. Public Affairs

If you would like verification or a transcript of information released on GSA blogs or if you have any questions or comments about the information presented, please contact GSA's Office of Citizen Services and Communications' Public Affairs Office. Reporters must submit questions to the Public Affairs Office through normal query channels and refrain from submitting questions on blogs as comments. GSA will not post questions from reporters. Public Affairs may be contacted at 202-501-1231.

9. Privacy

(Blog Name) follows the [gsa.gov](#) privacy policy. GSA will not share or sell any personal information obtained from users with any other organization or government agency except as required by law. Please view our complete [Privacy and Security Policy](#). To protect your own privacy, and the privacy of others, please do not include phone numbers or e-mail addresses in the body of your comment.

(Blog Name) is unable to post comments from children under the age of 13 due to the [Children's Online Privacy Protection Act](#) (COPPA). If you are 12 years old or younger, you may [email us](#) rather than posting a comment on (Blog Name).

The (Blog Host Office Name) manages this blog as a portal for information from the U.S. General Services Administration. However, information posted on this blog is not official policy of GSA and will in no way grant anyone any rights, privileges, or standing on any matter. All information should be verified through official channels at GSA. For contact information at GSA, please check <http://www.gsa.gov>.

(The statement in bold above should also appear on each Blog.)