



حكومة أبوظبي
GOVERNMENT OF ABU DHABI

GENERAL SECRETARIATE OF EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

COMMUNICATION POLICY

FIRST EDITION

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Acronyms used within this policy

ADG	Government of Abu Dhabi
ADGE	Abu Dhabi Government Entity
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
CoP	Community of Practice
GSEC	General Secretariat of the Executive Council
OGC	Office of Government Communication
RFP	Request for Proposal
WofG	Whole of Government

Introduction

The OGC at GSEC followed international standards of best practice in developing the ADG communication policy to effectively meet the communication needs and requirements of ADG's stakeholders.

The OGC developed the policy to serve as a guide for ADGEs with the aim of communicating with Abu Dhabi's residents, and ensuring that their communication needs are met.

The ADG Communications Policy consists of main policy text and several associated guidelines that are integral to the policy. The OGC welcomes feedback from all stakeholders on the policy and guidelines, and will study all comments and recommendations, accepting those that are applicable.

1. Objectives and scope of policy

This ADG communication policy is designed to support and help ADGEs to meet their communication requirements on the one hand, and to effectively inform the public and the emirate's local, regional and global stakeholders on the other.

The ADG Communication Policy aims to achieve the following key objectives:

- 1.1** Strategic planning of government communications and facilitation of coordinated government communications.
- 1.2** Provision of accurate and clear information about ADG plans, policies, initiatives and actions that affect people's lives and have an impact on their future.
- 1.3** Provide the people of Abu Dhabi and other stakeholders specific channels through which they can access information about ADG plans, policies, initiatives and actions.
- 1.4** Engage with ADG stakeholders on policies and government services.
- 1.5** Ensure that specific ADGE communications reach the stakeholders they are intended for.
- 1.6** Efficient and proper use of new and emerging technology and media channels to communicate and engage with stakeholders.

The ADG Communications Policy applies to all public communications of ADGEs: corporate/organizational key messages, corporate/organization literature of various kinds, communications with the media such as press releases, press conferences, articles and interviews in the media, speeches at events and conferences, exhibitions, websites, social media engagements, branding, protocol, photography, and other relevant aspects.

2. OGC mandate, WofG communications and ADGE responsibilities

The OGC's mandate:

- 2.1 The OGC is responsible for all Whole-of-Government (WofG) communications (communications relating to decisions, initiatives, policies, themes and announcements that have an impact on multiple sectors and departments) while ADGEs are responsible for their own communications which have to be conceived and executed in line with the ADG Communications Policy.
- 2.2 Monitor ADGEs application of best practices in communicating with stakeholders.
- 2.3 Provide consulting services and advise all ADGE in effectively communicating the strategic vision of the government's key messages.
- 2.4 Ensure the synchronization of all government communication initiatives and activities relating to ADGEs.
- 2.5 Accomplish the advanced priorities of complex communication processes between the government and its stakeholders, and ensure the transparency of information and the ability to reach and communicate with the official management.
- 2.6 Provide information and facts related to Abu Dhabi in coordination with ADGE's so as to continuously meet the needs of the emirate's residents and stakeholders.
- 2.7 Manage the ADG brand identity, including the Abu Dhabi crest. Monitor and assess the usage of the ADG crest, and ensure its appropriate usage in the most effective manner. As well as the Abu Dhabi Brand and all the supporting elements relating to it.
- 2.8 Develop, update and disseminate ADG's key messages. The key messages developed by OGC will typically be Whole-of-Government (WofG) messages that should be used by ADGEs in their communications.
- 2.9 Ensure that ADGE communications collateral, both in terms of the look and feel and key messaging, do not contravene and/or contradict ADG policies and key messages.
- 2.10 Work continuously in close coordination with all ADGEs to ensure that ADG communications are phased out in a healthy manner throughout the year. This particularly applies to advertising, public relations and events (exhibitions and conferences).

2.11 Initiate quality control and capacity building measures to support ADGE communication requirements.

2.12 Build mechanisms to share best practice, promote close working relationships between ADGE communication professionals, tackle common challenges and provide networking opportunities.

The OGC's key responsibilities are:

- Spread awareness regarding ADG's key messages, as well as establish confidence in Abu Dhabi's decisions and achievements.
- Protect and preserve ADG's brand identity and media image.
- Disseminate positive promotions, and support government plans and programs.
- Developing platforms and skills of staff members in the government communications departments in order to continue following best practices in the field of communications

It is the responsibility of each ADGE to formulate and implement its own vision, communications strategy, program and policies. The Communications Directors at all ADGEs must ensure that their staff are familiarized with the communications policy and associated guidelines, and apply them within their respective entities.

3. Key Policy Principles ALL

- 3.1** Abu Dhabi is an emirate with its own distinct identity, values, culture and heritage and the ADG seeks to uphold and respect the local and national identity and values at all times. All ADG communications must ensure that these sensibilities are not violated any time.
- 3.2** Abu Dhabi also hosts diverse nationalities and cultures, and promotes a multi-cultural way of living and tolerance in line with ADG's commitment to the principle of enabling its people to live in harmony. All ADG communications must therefore respect the cultural diversity within the emirate.

- 3.3** Communication Processes should not affect Abu Dhabi's reputation or global standing in any possible way, and should ensure that Abu Dhabi's reputation is established through multiple media activities as one of the leading global destinations in various fields.
- 3.4** The ADG considers communications and engagement with its people and other stakeholders as integral to governance. ADGEs must integrate communications as a key strategic management function along with their strategic planning and while formulating new initiatives and making or reviewing major decisions and policies.
- 3.5** ADG communications must be conceived and delivered objectively with the purpose of informing and engaging with the stakeholders, or building awareness about new decisions and initiatives and their impact, with due respect to the emirate's laws.
- 3.6** It is essential for ADGEs to reach out to their stakeholders using diverse communication channels such as print, electronic and digital media, radio, direct mailing and through diverse groups and platforms based on each ADGEs mandate and priorities.
- 3.7** All government communications must be identified as such through clear and consistent ADG branding (explained further later in this document), supported by proper context and clear explanations for people to understand the rationale of the ADGE concerned.
- 3.8** Sustainability and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) are extremely important in Abu Dhabi's development and growth vision. ADGEs are encouraged to develop their own CSR programs or participate in CSR initiatives. Credible Sustainability and CSR programs will play a major role in strengthening and sustaining the reputation of ADGEs, and will help build awareness on important developmental and community issues.
- 3.9** While all ADGEs enjoy full autonomy in driving its own communications, the ADG is keen to foster a spirit of cooperation and partnership among its entities so that there is proper understanding of ADG priorities, messages and new initiatives across the government.
- 3.10** The OGC is keen to build and sustain ADG reputation for transparency and professional standards in communications. ADGEs' stakeholder interactions must be conducted in a manner that does not jeopardize this reputation. Applicable to all communications dealings of ADGEs, this is particularly relevant to the time taken to respond to stakeholder/media queries for information and clarifications.
- 3.11** ADGEs are advised to follow best practice in terms of circulating Request For Proposals (RFPs), assessing received proposals on time and providing assessment feedback and further actions in a timely manner.

4. Language

The official working language of the is Arabic. All official documents and all types of government communication must be in Arabic. If deemed necessary, official government documents and publications directed at non-Arabic speakers may be translated into the target audience's mother tongue. In case of any misinterpretation, the Arabic version will be treated as the source document.

Arabic is the language adopted for all speeches, statements and comments provided by the spokespersons of the Abu Dhabi Government during events held in the United Arab Emirates. Speeches may be given in another language when addressed to an audience who speaks that language.

When a speech in a foreign language is required, every attempt should be made by the responsible ADGE to ensure simultaneous translation into Arabic, and/or to provide a written Arabic translation for the Arabic-speaking members of the audience.

All ADGE external communications materials (i.e. ADGE official websites and all materials published within, including brochures, fact sheets, media releases, etc.) must be developed and produced in Arabic in a simplified and coherent style. All translations need to maintain the same tone and style and consistency; including accuracy in translating to other foreign languages.

5. Communication methods, tools and guidelines

The ADG and its entities may use the commonly accepted methods and tools of communication such as the ADG and ADGE brand identities, Web and Social Media, Advertising, Public relations, Events, Exhibitions and Conferences, Sponsorships, Multimedia and Publications. The ADG Brand Guidelines includes clear guidelines for ADGEs on the effective use of these communication methods and tools.



6. Abu Dhabi Government Brand

The ADG brand identity is made up of many visual devices, and this includes the Abu Dhabi Crest and the logos of other ADGEs that use the Abu Dhabi Crest. The Abu Dhabi Crest will remain the logo of these ADGEs, along with the entity's name and its own brand. The ADG Brand Guidelines has laid out clear directives on the usage of the ADG brand in tandem with the ADGE brand. It is the responsibility of all ADGEs to familiarize themselves and the external agencies they commission for communications work with the Abu Dhabi Brand Guidelines and ensure that they are appropriately incorporated in all elements of their marketing communications mix. The guidelines is deemed an integral part of this document and is available for downloading at www.ecouncil.ae

7. Web 2.0 and social media

The OGC recognizes and emphasizes the important role of ADGE websites in communicating the government's – and the individual organization's – positioning, key messages, issues and programs to the public. Government websites thus are considered a key and integral part of the ADG information and communication network. ADGEs must use the full potential of websites to communicate and engage with their stakeholders. The design and layout of ADGE websites should follow current best practice, the ADG Brand Guidelines and provide accurate, timely, relevant and authoritative information about the entity and its services in a manner that is easy to access and comprehend. There should be a clearly visible and accessible means of contact and all enquiries should be logged and responded to in a timely manner. All third party content and sources should be in compliance with UAE intellectual property law and must be appropriately cited on the ADGE web presence.

The ADG encourages ADGEs to maximize the potential of Web 2.0 and Social Media in government communications provided they have the relevant expertise and managerial capability. ADGEs are advised to follow the Web 2.0 and Social Media Guidelines developed by the OGC, which are deemed an integral part of this policy.

8. Advertising

ADGEs must consult the OGC's WofG communications calendar while scheduling their marketing and advertising campaigns to avoid conflicts with similar government initiatives. ADG advertisements and greetings on occasions of Eid Al Adha, Eid Al Fitr and the UAE National Day will be published by the OGC on behalf of all ADGEs, eliminating the need for individual ADGE advertisements. All ADG advertisements must comply with the Abu Dhabi Brand Guidelines, which include the technical and design specifics of the usage of the ADG brand.

9. Public relations

Public Relations is a key element of ADG communications, and the scope of PR intended within this policy document covers the development of positioning and key messages, training of spokespeople, media relations and media monitoring.

10. Positioning and key messages

The OGC recommends that each ADGE develop a clear positioning and key messages that support and strengthen the organization's purpose and objectives, ensuring that they do not contradict or contravene the WofG key messages developed by the OGC.

11. Spokespeople

All designated ADGE spokespersons should have the necessary skills to complete their tasks in the best way possible. Each ADGE should ensure that designated spokespeople are properly briefed, and adequately prepared in delivering speeches, statements and in responding to media questions. An ADGE Chairperson or CEO is the official spokesperson for that entity/company, but may appoint his own spokespersons for entity-specific topics, provided that they receive the appropriate training and preparation. Official ADGE spokespeople should only address issues within their specific sector and department. The OGC may appoint or assign staff at ADGEs to address specific WofG issues or sector topics that require detailed subject-matter expertise.

12. Media relations

ADGEs should endeavour to establish positive relationships that are characterized with openness, transparency, cooperation, and are built on mutual respect with all media professionals. ADGEs should also provide the necessary information and data to various media outlets, and inform them of their goals and achievements in order for them to create strategic cooperation that ensure adequate media coverage of news. However, ADGEs should avoid disclosing sensitive and private information, or information that relates to general peace and public safety.

ADGEs must have a well-defined approach of managing media relations and interacting with either local, regional, international media, or all of them, as media relations are essential for gaining and dispersing information to ADGEs stakeholders through trained and professional employees, or entities that have been assigned with such tasks.

ADGEs are advised to follow the below guidelines in managing their media relations:

- 12.1** ADGE communication departments adopt a clearly defined set of internal policy or guidelines for its media managers.
- 12.2** Work in coordination with the OGC whenever a media query or an issue in the media shows the potential to influence the reputation of other ADGEs, the ADG, the Emirate of Abu Dhabi, the UAE, and its leaders. The OGC will manage media requests and queries related to WofG topics and sectors.
- 12.3** Ensure that all ADGE communications with media are informative, accurate and up-to-date.
- 12.4** Ensure that ADGEs issue press releases only if they have new or updated information..
- 12.5** Conduct proper background research before agreeing to any media interaction, and prepare effectively prior to addressing press conferences and media interviews
- 12.6** Institute a policy and practice of acknowledging media queries instantly or immediately, and delivering a full and proper response by a deadline agreed with the media person, and not ignore any media inquiry or request.
- 12.7** ADGEs should submit their annual media plans to the OGC before the December of every year to be incorporated into the WofG Events Calendar. ADGEs should consult the WofG Events Calendar when scheduling media events to avoid conflict with other government communication activities.
- 12.8** Ensure the use of the ADG Brand Guidelines when submitting media materials, or when participating in conferences, forums, or workshops.

The OGC will oversee and proactively coordinate media events for all significant cross-government announcements. “Significance” is defined in terms of those announcements that constitute a major opportunity to establish or improve the government’s reputation or to respond to a multi-faceted crisis where the entire government’s reputation may be at stake.

13. Participation in credible and reputable awards and competitions

It is essential that all ADGEs monitor all international, regional and local reputable and credible awards, as well as study and follow opportunities of participating and winning these awards. It is imperative that these awards are prestigious, and add a positive value to the ADGE's reputation standing.

ADGEs that win such awards should capitalize on this opportunity and promote their vision and messages, as well as publicize and inform the public of their roles through publishing media materials that highlight their achievement, and the criteria met by the ADGE in winning the award.

14. Media monitoring and archiving

All ADGEs should continuously monitor their own specific news, activities and sector-related issues that appear in the print, radio, television and online media. Media monitoring is an effective metric that helps to measure the effectiveness of communication campaigns and key initiatives.

ADGEs should maintain an archive of all communication content in all types of media (physical and electronic). The archive's purpose is to support efficient retrieval and distribution of specific materials, as well as to preserve and maintain government communication material for historical record and analysis. The archive should be structured in such a way that its content is easily accessible.

15. Internal communications

All ADGEs must develop their own internal communication policy to ensure the cooperation and communication between managers and their employees. This will contribute in efficiently achieving the government's goals. It is also essential to provide employees with information including the ADGE's goals, services, projects, initiatives, and nature of work, which in turn will help the employee prepare for answering all questions, and have the ability of improving the entity's image to the public.

The authorities in the ADGEs should also inform the employees on important decisions

and changes, as well as strategic objectives. They must also find methods of gathering the opinions and suggestions of the employees that could assist in achieving the strategic goals and objectives of the entity.

The concerned parties in the ADGE should also implement and commit to a mechanism of sending the entity's decisions and new developments to their employees before or during the time this information is announced to the general public.

All messages and internal communication should be aligned with this policy both in quality and in content.

16. Events, exhibitions and conferences

Industry and corporate events, exhibitions and conferences offer important opportunities for government communications. As part of their strategic communications planning, ADGEs need to strategize and leverage these opportunities within the UAE and across the world by selecting the most fitting sector events, exhibitions and conferences to promote their agenda, and communicate and engage with stakeholders.

17. Patronage

Leadership's patronage is considered a characteristic of business and the communication culture in Abu Dhabi. ADG continuously receives leadership patronage requests for various events, exhibitions, and conventions, and ADGEs must consider the ADG Patronage Guidelines before the approval of leadership's patronage for any event. It is also important that ADGEs that wish to request patronage follow the mechanisms and procedures stated in the ADG Patronage Guidelines. It is important to note that the OGC is responsible for receiving patronage requests relating to His Highness the Crown Prince and Chairman of the Executive Council and His Highness the Vice Chairman of the Executive Council.

18. Protocol and delegations

ADG has well-established procedures and practices that govern national protocols, including dealing officially with government leaders, the use of leaders' photos, official rankings, and the use of official government symbols. Therefore, the OGC advises ADGEs to consult the Protocol Guidelines to ensure correct behavior during meetings and correct usage of government symbols.

19. Sponsorship

The primary objective of any sponsorship should be to produce direct and measurable benefit for the entity concerned and the ADG as a whole. Any publicity derived from the event should reflect the key messages associated with that ADGEs approved communications strategy. ADGEs must follow the OGC-prescribed ADG Sponsorship Guidelines while selecting and evaluating the events that they want to sponsor. These guidelines are deemed an integral part of this policy.

20. Photography and videography

Photography and videography are key components of ADG communications across all channels including ADGE corporate communications collateral, print media, online media, websites and digital media. ADGEs must ensure high standards of photography and videography while adhering to the Key Principles listed in this policy. Images and photographs of ADGE officials and relevant institutions and events should befit the status of the individual and the circumstances of the organization and the event, and should at all times reflect positively on the ADG. ADGEs should maintain updated electronic archives of all their entity's images. The OGC has developed exhaustive guidelines to enable ADGEs to use the most appropriate photography in government communications. ADGEs are advised to follow the Photography and Videography Guidelines and also refer to the ADG Brand Guidelines for technical specifications on the use of photography in branded communications.

21. Multimedia and content management

ADGEs may use multi-media tools such as DVDs, audio CDs, podcasts and other relevant software applications to inform and communicate. The content of such multi-media productions should be in line with the Key Principles explained earlier in this policy as well as the ADG Brand Guidelines and the Photography and Videography Guidelines.

22. Publications

ADGEs may produce print and online publications that are directly relevant to their entity's mandate and strategy. The publications' design and content must comply with the requirements of this policy, the ADG Brand Guidelines, the Photography and Videography Guidelines and the Promotion and Advertising Guideline. ADGEs are required to consult the OGC on any publication or content that has an impact on other ADGEs or sectors and the WofG. In such consultations, the OGC will be responsible only to ensure the alignment of key messages; the ADGE concerned will have the responsibility to adhere to the policy and guidelines as well as to ensure that the content is adept at projecting its key messages. ADGE's must put in place clear plans of how they will distribute these publications to ensure that the messages get to the target audience.

23. Crisis and emergency communications

For the purposes of this policy document, a crisis is defined as any emergency or controversy that results or could result in extensive media coverage and public scrutiny, resulting in negative public perception or reputation of the ADGE and/or the ADG in general. All ADGEs should follow established best practice in terms of preparing a crisis communications plan that identifies and addresses potential areas of reputational risk under a variety of scenarios. The ADGEs are advised to share the crisis communications plan with the OGC. The OGC will support ADGE crisis communications activities in the event of such a situation. The OGC will assume and manage crisis communications if a crisis develops within an ADGE that could negatively impact the reputation of other ADGEs, the ADG, the Emirate of Abu Dhabi, the UAE, and its leaders.

24. Stakeholder Engagement and Public Opinion Research

Public opinion research offers a valid mechanism to communicate and engage with stakeholders. ADGEs may conduct public opinion research specific to their entities at their own discretion, and they may use the results of such research to absorb stakeholder feedback and achieve further improvements in their functioning and performance.

25. Capacity building

The OGC is committed to adopting and promoting best practices in ADG communication, and to ensure proper coordination and standardization of government communication, it is necessary to have effective and efficient internal communication between the OGC and ADGEs. Therefore, in accordance with the objectives of this policy, the OGC will use its authority to develop mechanisms and appropriate initiatives that will enhance internal communication competencies.

26. ADG events calendar

The OGC has initiated an interactive WofG Events Calendar. The purpose of this calendar is:

- To ensure a synergistic and cost-effective integrated communications approach.
- To enable key decisions to be made about the strategic timing of key events (where there is a conflict or opportunity) and attendance.
- To provide the OGC with an effective overview of events, campaigns, and activities to feed into WofG communications.
- To oversee and coordinate the ongoing management of the WofG event calendar to ensure that the timing and distribution of events across the annual calendar is optimised, and that multiple stakeholders and audience groups are provided with a consistently high standard of content.
- To ensure distributing government events throughout the year as much as possible, as that will enhance awareness of government events and activities.

It is imperative that WofG events calendar is checked before scheduling media events to avoid conflict with other OGC initiatives or activities.

27. Management of Visits

The OGC seeks to support all ADGEs based in developing their relationships with external parties in a way that supports Abu Dhabi's strategic objectives. It does so by setting a general framework and guiding principles to regulate diplomatic activities. OGC's support involves coordinating the activities of government entities such as meetings, bilateral committee meetings, business councils, and other related activities to be unified and connected and ensure compliance with principles and the political, social, economic, and security policy adopted by the ADG.

28. Gifts

The OGC seeks to support all ADGEs based in developing their relationships with external parties in a way that supports Abu Dhabi's strategic objectives. It does so by setting a general framework and guiding principles to regulate diplomatic activities. OGC's support involves coordinating the activities of government entities such as meetings, bilateral committee meetings, business councils, and other related activities to be unified and connected and ensure compliance with principles and the political, social, economic, and security policy adopted by the ADG.

29. Agency Support

ADGEs may individually contract with external agencies to provide PR, marketing, and advertising services. The ADGEs must ensure that the external agencies understand and comprehend the ADG brand, as well as local values and norms. They must also ensure the quality of agency work matches with the standards that the ADG aspire to, and that their products and services are in full compliance with this policy and its associated guidelines.

ADGEs can send their annual media materials, including their media plans and significant press releases to the OGC through the following email media@ecouncil.ae

