

LEVERAGING SOCIAL MEDIA DURING EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT OPERATIONS

Social media is changing the way the public safety community prepares for, responds to, manages, and recovers from emergencies. Social media use and organizational adoption spans a broad spectrum across public safety organizations. As a result, some communities experience a divide between the public's expectations of government social media use and the government's delivery capabilities.

To address this gap, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Science and Technology Directorate (S&T) coordinated with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and public safety practitioners from the public safety community to develop the [Social Media Emergency Management \(SMEM\) Guidance Tool](#) for emergency managers (EMs) and public information officers (PIOs).

WHAT IS THE SMEM GUIDANCE TOOL?

The SMEM Guidance Tool is a free, online tool that provides users with a simple, step-by-step line of questioning to create plans to improve their organization's SMEM operations. The SMEM Guidance Tool is automated, web accessible, and mobile to enhance usability for practitioners who often have limited time to dedicate to SMEM planning and operations efforts.

DHS S&T launched the Beta SMEM Guidance Tool online in coordination with FEMA to supplement current social media course offerings and resources. This initiative promotes public safety's more effective use of social media, improves situational awareness, and enhances decision making. The Beta Tool is publicly available at www.smemguidancetool.org.

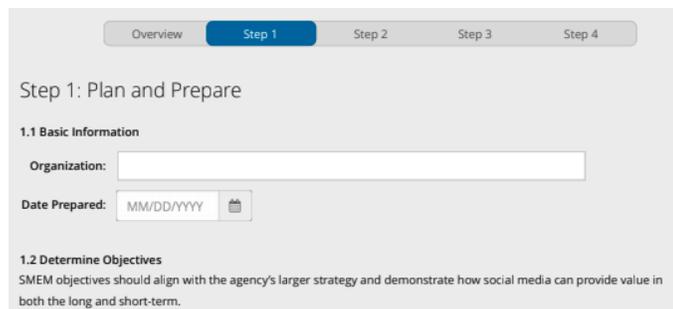


Figure 1: SMEM Guidance Tool Step One

HOW DOES IT WORK?

The existing SMEM Guidance Tool provides a robust and user-friendly experience for the DHS S&T [Social Media Business Case Guide](#) and [Digital Volunteer Program Guide](#). The SMEM Guidance Tool includes a resources page with links to other existing online guidance within the SMEM community.

Users can:

- Answer a series of fill in the blank and yes/no question prompts;
- Skip prompts they feel are irrelevant to their organization;
- Populate Microsoft Word document templates and charts; and
- Modify output documents to meet their agency or jurisdiction's specific needs.

After completing the prompts of the SMEM Guidance Tool, agencies will have a strong business case to share with their organization's decision makers to support increased SMEM adoption, in addition to improved digital volunteer processes and plans for immediate implementation. In 2020, the SMEM Guidance Tool will provide users the ability to create a comprehensive social media plan for their organization.

TESTING THE SMEM GUIDANCE TOOL WITH POTENTIAL USERS

The public safety community was the primary driver for the development of the SMEM Guidance Tool. Over the last year, DHS S&T strategically engaged a diverse group of SMEM practitioners and experts representing local, state, and federal government perspectives to ensure all SMEM Guidance Tool requirements were practitioner-driven. These partnership communities reviewed the tool throughout all stages of development and provided input on:

- User interface (UI);
- User experience (UX);
- Content;
- Usage; and
- Adoption.

Over the next year, DHS S&T will coordinate with FEMA to further refine the SMEM Guidance Tool and ensure it continues to meet the public safety community's expectations.