



Blackall-Tambo

Regional Council

Acceptable Use of Information Technology Policy

Policy Number: Admin 68	Effective Date: 14 December 2022
Version Number: 1	Review Date: July 2026
Policy Compiled by: Information Technology Officer	
Policy Approved by: Chief Executive Officer	

PURPOSE

We believe information assets that process data electronically in conjunction with the Internet, if used properly in conducting business related purposes, can be an asset. The purpose of this policy is to define the requirements and responsibilities that all users connecting or using the Internet through the Blackall-Tambo Regional Council (hereinafter referred to as “Council,” “we,” “our,” or “us”) network must follow.

This policy provides awareness and notification of what we deem to be acceptable and unacceptable use of the Internet. It is necessary to make sure that the Internet is properly used to avoid distractions in the work environment, and to avoid certain risks including virus attacks, compromise of Council network systems and services, and legal issues.

SCOPE

This policy is designed to provide guidance and assistance to Council employees involved in the safe usage of information technology products within Council.

APPLICATION

This policy applies to all users, including administrative consultants, employees, contractors, administrators, and third parties that have access to the Internet through the Council network. Internet/intranet/extranet access is granted expressly for employees and other approved users for the purpose of conducting approved business purposes.

1.1.6 Authorized and Unauthorized Usage

Personal or incidental use is authorized for limited purposes and will be subject to the following guidelines:

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- a. The use must not constitute a conflict of interest. Personal business or use for personal gain constitutes a conflict of interest.
- b. Personal use is on personal time (hours not charged to us) and must not interfere with our business or normal work activities, and not adversely affect performance of the employee, surrounding employees, the organization, or business functions.
- c. Illegal, obscene, pornographic, or offensive material must not be accessed, viewed, downloaded, or sent.
- d. Any access that could result in significant incremental cost, such as noticeable additional electronic mail traffic, large non-business-related file transfers, and the like are not permitted.
- e. Use must not involve any illegal or unethical activity (e.g., gambling, Warez sites containing pirated software, movies, games, or illegal hacking/cracking tools).
- f. Transmitting or sending sensitive or proprietary information, including software applications or personal information, to unauthorized persons or organizations is prohibited. Authorization for any transmission of personally identifiable information (“PII”) must be approved by a supervisor prior to transmission and done using authorized protocols (e.g., encryption, VPN, SSL).
- g. Downloading or sending unapproved software, computer viruses, malicious code, or any unauthorized attempts to access another person’s data or Council’s intranet are prohibited.
- h. The addition of any hardware that would allow additional access to the Internet is prohibited.
- i. Users should not bring personal computers or data storage devices (such as CDs/DVDs, external hard drives, USB or flash drives, or other data storage media) to connect them to our systems without permission from Information Technology. Personal electronic devices are subject to inspection; if a user does not wish his or her personal computer or other devices inspected, then the user should not bring those items to work.
- j. Users may not download software from any outside systems without permission from the Information Technology. Users should not use any externally provided software without first getting approval from Information Technology. Users should not download unapproved or unauthorized software from the Internet. Users are responsible for determining the sensitivity and need for further encryption to secure Council confidential or sensitive information prior to posting, transmitting, or sending it via the Internet. If unsure, the user is responsible for contacting Information Security or Management for assistance.
- k. Blackall-Tambo Regional Council’s privacy policy should be posted on all official Council websites to ensure that customers and clients are aware of our desire to maintain and protect the privacy of this data.
- l. Council websites or web servers are not to be used for posting non-business-related data or for illegal distribution of data, such as software, games, movies, code, or other inappropriate data.



1.1.7 Privacy and Monitoring

By using the Internet access provided by Council, users agree to this policy and acknowledge that records of Internet access, such as sites visited, images reviewed, and email sent, may be recorded, and monitored by us at any time with no expectation of privacy and that:

- a. Encrypted technology that meets our requirements will be employed.
- b. We own the rights to all data and files in our computers, network, or other information systems, subject to applicable laws. Users may not access networks, servers, drives, folders, or files to which the user has not been granted authorization. Users may not destroy, delete, erase, or conceal files or other data, or otherwise make files or data unavailable or inaccessible. In addition, users may not access another employee's computer, computer files, or electronic mail without authorization from their supervisor.
- c. We license the use of certain commercial software application programs from third parties for business purposes. Third parties retain the ownership and distribution rights to this software. Users may not use or distribute licensed software.
- d. Electronic mail ("email") messages sent and received using our equipment or Internet access provided by us are not private and are subject to viewing, downloading, inspection, release, and archiving by us. We have the right to inspect files stored in private areas of the Council network or on individual computers or storage media to assure compliance with our policies and applicable state and federal laws. We may monitor electronic mail messages (including personal/private/instant messaging systems).
- e. We may use software that allows us to monitor messages, files, or other information that is entered, received by, sent, or viewed on Council's network. By using our equipment or the Internet access provided by us, users consent to the monitoring of all network and information systems.

1.1.8 Reporting of Internet Abuse

- a. An email account link is established to receive complaints and concerns from external nonemployees pertaining to Internet activity possibly originating from Council network.
- b. Contractual documentation will specify the scope of the electronic transmissions and the services and devices required.
- c. Complaints to this account will be forwarded to Information Technology, where appropriate.

1.1.9 Electronic Mail and Instant Messaging

Policies and procedures governing the sharing of confidential information also apply to the sharing of information via commercial software. Users are prohibited from creating or sending electronic mail:

- a. that may be considered offensive or harassing, or that may contribute to a hostile environment.

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- b. that contains profanity, obscenities, or derogatory remarks.
- c. that constitutes chain letters or spam.
- d. to solicit or sell products or services that are unrelated to our business; or
- e. to distract, intimidate or harass anyone, or to disrupt the workplace.

Users are instructed to use caution when operating electronic mail and attachments from unknown senders because these pieces of electronic mail and attachments may contain viruses, root kits, spyware or malware that can put our system and sensitive information at risk.

Users will be provided appropriate instructions about the proper use of instant messaging services (“IM”) and measures to prevent unauthorised disclosure of Blackall-Tambo Regional Council sensitive information and PII if IM is used.

1.1.10 Social Media/Open Forums Policy

Blackall-Tambo Regional Council supports self-expression, including the right to express oneself to others via Internet blogs, social web pages, posting on open forums, or speaking during public events. Online social networking sites and other online communication platforms and technologies, such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, YouTube, and blogs, are primarily aimed at personal relationships and communications among individuals. While users may use these media to communicate with friends and family outside of work, users should be mindful that whatever users publish will be public for a long time and is available to Council and vendors and the community to view. Users may not use social networking sites while at work unless authorized by their supervisor. Some points that the Council wants users to consider when writing or expressing themselves publicly:

- a. Conduct themselves in a professional and businesslike manner, even if the communication is personal in nature.
- b. Do not reference or discuss the Council’s suppliers, vendors, customers, associates, contractors, potential business relationships or opportunities, competitors, or any entity that the Council does business with, or anything that might adversely impact the Council’s business relationships.
- c. Do not make statements about the Council's financial performance.
- d. Do not use these media for Council marketing or public relations.
- e. When users are participating in social networking sites, users must be transparent that their thoughts are their own. Unless the Council officially designates the user, in writing, to speak or write for the Council, users should never state that they write or speak on behalf of the Council or that their viewpoints are the same as the Council, and users should make this clear to those reading or listening to their points of view. Users may consider a disclaimer to this effect but note that it may not excuse improper or illegal conduct.
- f. Do not disclose private, internal-use only, copyrighted, or confidential information belonging to the Council or third parties, including employees, associates, suppliers, vendors, competitors, customers, or any other person or entity that associates or does business with the Council. Such information includes personally identifying information (such as telephone numbers, Social Security numbers, credit or debit card numbers, or financial account numbers). Users should also not mention customers, vendors, potential business relationships or opportunities,

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or competitors in their social media activity. Users should use common sense and courtesy and should follow strictly the Council’s policy on preserving confidential information.

- g. For social networking sites such as LinkedIn where personal and professional references are the focus: If users are representing themselves as a Council employee, users may not provide professional references about any current or former employee, contractor, vendor, or contingent worker. Users may provide a personal reference or recommendation for current or former Council employees, contractors, vendors, and contingent works provided (1) the statements made, and information provided in the reference are factually accurate, and (2) users include the disclaimer "This reference is being made by me in a personal capacity. It is not intended and should not be construed as a reference from Council or any of its affiliated entities."
- h. In addition to our rules on confidentiality, the Council requests that users follow all other applicable guidelines when commenting in an open forum.
- i. What users write or say, and how users write or say something, is up to each user. However, the Council provides notice that it reserves the right to read what users write or say publicly and decide if it meets the professional standards of the Council or damages the Council. Written or stated comments harmful or damaging to the Council or to its employees, associates, suppliers, vendors, customers, or any other person or entity that associates or does business with the Council may lead to immediate termination.
- j. Do not use vulgar, obscene, offensive, threatening, harassing, or defamatory language. Offensive language or content would include, but is not limited to, discrimination, harassment, or hostility on account of age, race, religion, sex, ethnicity, nationality, disability, or other protected class, status, or characteristic. Offensive language or content also includes soliciting sex or otherwise violating the laws regarding minors and their protection. Users that violate child protection laws, including solicitation of sex from minors, or posting of illegal pornographic material, will be subject to discipline including, but not limited to, termination.

COMPLIANCE

1. **Non-Compliance:** Violations of this policy may lead to the suspension or revocation of system privileges and/or disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment. We reserve the right to advise appropriate authorities of any violation of law.
2. **Exceptions:** Any exception to this policy must be approved by the CEO
3. **User Acknowledgement:** Information Technology is responsible for ensuring that a user acknowledgement or a non-disclosure agreement has been signed by all users acknowledging this Acceptable Use Policy before providing access to Council’s sensitive computer resources.
4. **Compliance Measurement:** Information Technology will verify compliance to this policy through various methods, for example, business tool reports and audits.

RELEVANT INFORMATION

Information Privacy Act 2009
Local Government Act 2009
Integrity Act 2009
Blackall-Tambo Regional Council – Code of Conduct for Employees and Councillors

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DATE NEXT REVIEW DUE

July 2026

CHANGES SINCE LAST REVISION

New policy to reflect current procedures.

RECORDS

Electronic copies are saved in the appropriately labelled folder in Magiq.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF RECEIPT AND UNDERSTANDING OF ABOVE POLICY

I understand and agree to the above Conditions of Use.

SIGNATURE:

PRINT NAME:

DATE:

Managers Approval

SIGNATURE:

PRINT NAME:

DATE: