



**LIMITED-SCOPE AUDIT OF  
THE PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICE**

**FOR THE PERIOD OF  
OCTOBER 1, 2022 - MARCH 31, 2023**

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**Limited-Scope Audit of the Public Information Office**  
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May 5, 2023

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Assistant County Manager – Administration  
Chief Public Information Officer  
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Fernando Macias, County Manager  
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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Doña Ana County Public Information Office (PIO) consists of the Chief Public Information Officer, Communications Coordinator, Social Media Technician, Multi-media Coordinator, and Multi-media Specialist. The PIO focuses on providing clear, relevant, and timely information to all audiences. The office does this through media, constituents, and public relations. The PIO is the keeper of the Doña Ana County (DAC) brand and works closely with the County's department leaders and elected officials to maintain a positive and consistent image for the county. More details about the department can be found by accessing the following link: [Public Information Office | Doña Ana County, NM \(donaanacounty.org\)](https://www.donaanacounty.org)

The Audit reviewed areas deemed to be at greater risk of internal control deficiencies, as well as areas of concern to PIO leadership. Herein, the Audit reviewed county-owned social media sites, live audio-visual recording sessions, local newspaper publications, inventory listings, monthly statistical data, and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) of the PIO.

The most serious deficiency noted was beyond the immediate scope of the PIO, as it would involve other county departments. Herein, the need for a social media log-on repository should not be underestimated as unmitigated access risks exist without one. A result of not having such a repository is noted in the current existence of multiple unauthorized social media sites within a county department/office. Other areas of concern involve the lack of monitoring of food vendors who offer their services to county staff, as well as the absence of a county-wide active shooter protocol. To its credit, the PIO has multiple SOPs already in place, which only require minor updates. An area that could use improvement throughout the county involves inventory. However, the Audit found only minor inventory recordkeeping discrepancies within the PIO. Finally the Audit noted a lack of monitoring for one social media site, which should be addressed as soon as possible. The internal auditor hereby takes an opportunity to acknowledge the assistance and cooperation received from PIO leadership and staff during the Audit.

## AUDIT SCOPE & OBJECTIVES

As this was a department that had not undergone an internal audit heretofore, the Audit's purpose was one of breadth, conducting a cursory or limited review of a number of primary functions within the department. The Audit reviewed PIO work processes for existence, completeness, and recordkeeping accuracy. PIO activities for the period of October 1, 2022 – March 31, 2023 were reviewed with the following objectives:

1. Determine the completeness of risk management plans and practices as pertaining to the release of information to the public;
2. Review of SOPs for existence, as well as inventory listing data for completeness;

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3. Verify the accuracy of monthly statistical data;
4. Review and analyze county-owned social media site activities, and;
5. Assess audio-visual operations.

## **OPERATING & INTERNAL CONTROL RISKS**

This report contains one (1) High-level risk, three (3) Moderate-level risks, and three (3) Low-level risks. This report also includes the auditor's Recommendations, Management Responses, and Auditor Comments (as applicable).

## **DETAIL OF AUDIT FINDINGS**

Risk ratings are based on professional judgment to assess the extent to which deficiencies could adversely affect the performance of systems and controls of a process. More details about the risk rating in this report can be found by accessing this link:

[Audit Risk Ratings | Doña Ana County, NM \(donaanacounty.org\)](https://donaanacounty.org/Audit-Risk-Ratings)

## **FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS, MANAGEMENT RESPONSES, & AUDITOR COMMENTS**

The evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for the findings and conclusions below, based on audit objectives. As a result of interviews, observations, reviews of Public Information Office SOPs, Regulatory Ordinances, and tests performed, the following results were recorded. While management responses are included within this report, the Audit takes no responsibility for the sufficiency of said responses, nor for the effective execution of corrective actions taken or to be taken by management. **NOTE:** Manager Responses below are written in *italics*.

### **1. Missing Social Media Log-On Repository. *High.***

**Condition:** The Chief Public Information Officer reported that the County lacks a log-on repository for each County-Owned social media site/platform.

**Effect:** Because many social media sites require personal information in order to have access, log-on data can easily be siloed amongst operators/administrators. As operators/administrators leave, whether expected or unexpected, this log-on data could leave with them. In addition, in some cases operators/administrators may forget these log-on credentials.

**Criteria:** Per HR Policy 2-8. External Communication. D. County-Owned Social Media. 2, "The Media and Public Communications Department is responsible for the County's centralized, coordinated social media outreach.

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**Cause:** *The current condition exists due to DASO and the Clerk's Facebook pages being created before the County embraced social media and created accounts. Those department pages were grandfathered in. Since then, other social media pages (Instagram, Twitter and others) have been created, but there has been no enforcement of the policy citing that all newly created accounts must be approved by the PIO.*

**Recommendation:** The Audit recommends the establishment of a legitimate repository that would include all log-on data for each county-owned social media site. This would allow the county site access regardless of personnel changes. While such a repository could be established via the Information Technology (IT) department, it should be coordinated by the PIO. A notification measure should also be added in the event that personnel who are responsible for media site maintenance are placed on any form of leave that would dictate suspension of their log-on credentials.

**Management's Response:** *Facebook is our largest audience. Facebook requires that each page be tied to a personal account. We sought advisement from the Director of Communication/PIO at Las Cruces Public Schools on how they issue usernames and passwords for unique schools, using a workaround. Unfortunately, their process will not work for us. Instead, we will allow an approved department to set up a Facebook page using the login of the designated administrator with the Chief PIO and Social Media Technician being named as admins of the department's page. This will ensure page continuity and access to the pages in the event the department's page administrator promotes to another position or leaves employment with the County. This process will eliminate the need for a repository because unique usernames and passwords will not be created.*

**Auditor Comments:** While this legitimate finding was revealed during the current audit, responsibility for the deficiency is not absolute to the Public Information Office. The Audit supports the Chief PIO's alternative recommendation for its applicability in this circumstance.

**AUDITOR'S NOTE:** The internal auditor contacted the Doña Ana County Sheriff's Office (DASO), and received the following input: *We have no "county owned social media site."* The Audit notes that as there are no county-owned social media sites beyond the PIO and the Clerk's Office, the establishment of all future county-owned social media accounts should occur via HR policy guidance.

2. **Unmonitored Food Vendor Operations, Moderate.**

**Condition:** The Public Information Office has not enforced the tenants of the SOP Title: Food Vendor Permits.

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**Effect:** The aforementioned SOP is intended to ensure that vendors who sell food products on county property are authorized to do so. The SOP also limits the areas wherein such products may be sold. Without SOP enforcement, unauthorized vending agents may be selling food products on county property, in unauthorized areas. A lack of monitoring could also lead to food safety concerns.

**Criteria:** Per the SOP Title: Food Vendor Permits, the PIO is responsible for overseeing food vending agents who conduct business within the county building or on county property (implied).

**Cause:** *From what I understand, this was previously a duty that fell under Special Projects during a former department head's tenure. The policy was not altered following the dissolution of the Special Projects Office.*

**Recommendation:** The Audit finds multiple shortcomings with the current SOP. Per an initial review, this appears to be a function that is better suited within another area (DAC department or office). Also, the SOP fails to define all applicable area(s) wherein its rules should be enforced, as well as timeframes when vendors would be allowed onto county premises to conduct business. Herein, food vendors tend to serve county properties at locations (Detention Center) other than the main county building. The SOP directions should be reviewed for applicability to determine if the recommended actions are still best practices.

The Audit therefore, recommends that the Chief PIO coordinate a meeting with the two Assistant County Managers and the Risk Manager. This meeting should determine if the current SOP properly captures the necessary steps to address probable risks, as well as the applicable department that should be enforcing the SOP. Until the above are determined, per SOP, policy implementation responsibility still lies within the PIO.

**Management's Response:** *The recommended meeting has already taken place with Risk Management, Community Development, and Facilities & Parks. I collected best practices from the City of Las Cruces and shared with ACM of Operations. He has taken the baton and removed this task from PIO, coordinating with appropriate departments. I am unsure of how the policy will change.*

**Auditor Comments:** Per correspondence with the ACM of Administration, the food vendor permit process will be moved to Facilities & Parks.

3. **Missing Safety Protocol. Moderate.**

**Condition:** An interview with the Multi-media Specialist revealed that in an active shooter emergency during a live meeting, he would immediately stop the live feed and then take cover.

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**Effect:** While sparing a live audience the trauma of witnessing an atrocity would be most honorable, the Audit views making such a valiant effort in lieu of taking immediate life-saving precautions as an unmitigated risk.

**Criteria:** There should be written active-shooter safety precautions for media personnel during live meetings, and these precautions should be part of a county-wide active-shooter protocol.

**Cause:** *I would have expected the responsibility of safety precaution policies throughout the building would fall under Risk Management/Security.*

**Recommendation:** An April 2023 internet search revealed that the United States has experienced on average 13 mass shooting incidents weekly, in 2023. The internal auditor's risk assessment has determined the necessity of having safety protocols in place that would guide county personnel reactions in the event of an active shooter incident.

While the onus of inputting such protocols would be upon upper management, the internal auditor recognizes that the Chief PIO may be well positioned to coordinate a meeting between 1) the Risk Manager, 2) both Assistant County Managers, and 3) the Emergency Manager to discuss applicable active shooter protocols for county staff. The results of this discussion could be presented to the County Manager for implementation consideration.

If management's guidance is for media personnel to take measures to stop the live stream of a meeting during an active shooter incident, the Audit highly recommends the use of remote technology (such as a key fob) to cease live streaming and/or the use of a security laminate (bullet resistant glass) over the glass portion of the multimedia recording booth to better protect media personnel.

While it is obvious that an active shooter incident should not be live streamed, the Audit further recommends that the Chief PIO consider the benefits of listing or writing examples of the 'types' of incidents that would be live stream prohibitive so that staff has better direction in this area. Again, a consultation with the personnel above (if necessary) could assist with listing such examples. Also, personnel reaction to such incidents should be guided by a written protocol.

**Management's Response:** *After conferring with Risk Management, our Multi-media Coordinator is drafting an SOP. We will look to coordinate a meeting with the above-mentioned group before June 30 [2023] to finalize it.*

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4. **Unauthorized County-Owned Social Media. Moderate.**

**Condition:** The Audit notes that the Clerk's Office currently operates the following social media platforms – 1) Facebook, 2) Twitter, and 3) Instagram. As the establishment of their Facebook platform predates the current Human Resources (HR) policy, it is considered as tacitly approved or grandfathered in for policy purposes. However, the establishment of its Twitter and Instagram accounts occurred post-HR policy.

**Effect:** The Clerk's county-owned Twitter and Instagram accounts were not established as directed by policy.

**Criteria:** HR Policy 2-8. EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION; D. County-Owned Social Media. 3 states, "No other Department is authorized to establish or maintain its own social-media sites(s) without written permission from the Media and Communications Department Manager."

**Cause:** N/A

**Recommendation:** As the Clerk's Office already employs a trained professional to direct its social media efforts, the Audit recommends the Communications Coordinator reach out to the Chief PIO to gain proper authorization for its current Twitter and Instagram platforms. The Chief PIO has indicated a willingness to provide social media policy and state statute familiarization training, which would include best practices currently employed by the county. Moving forward, any additional county-owned social media pages would also require acquiring permission from the Media and Communications Department Manager.

**Management's Response:** *County Clerk's office appreciates the recommendations and will maintain the current procedures in place.*

**Auditor Comments:** The internal auditor recommended that the Communications Coordinator become familiar with HR Policy 2-8, and welcomed any recommended policy updates that would strengthen the current HR policy.

While this legitimate finding was revealed during the current audit, responsibility for the deficiency is not absolute to the Public Information Office.

5. **Standard Operating Procedures Lacking. Low.**

**Condition:** A review of current SOPs, along with interviews of PIO Staff revealed the following deficiencies – 1) Missing 'last reviewed' dates and 'reviewer' names/initials on SOPs, 2) Outdated verbiage in applicable SOPs, and 3) Missing SOPs that could chronicle vital operating knowledge.

**Effect:** When SOPs are not updated annually, they could eventually be of little to no use to the reader due to outdated information. Missing SOPs that could chronicle vital operating

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knowledge can result in longer learning curves for future staff while missing data allows for loss of best practices when experienced staff leave county service.

**Criteria:** Departmental SOPs are used to set the direction and standards for consistency of operations within each section of a department. On at least an annual basis SOPs should be reviewed and updated as applicable to keep them current. When it comes to the use of social media platforms, SOPs could also be used to set up an approval process for the establishment of future county-owned social media sites.

**Cause:** *I am not familiar with an SOP to outline what should be included in an SOP. Each person was documenting their task and not following any particular template.*

**Recommendation:** The Audit recommends updating departmental SOPs with current applicable verbiage, the reviewer's name or initials, and the last reviewed date. In addition, the use of website monitoring tools, social media archiving, and procedures to follow when deleting or hiding social media data should be chronicled. The creation of a Mobile Streaming Device Operations SOP and Lobby TV Setup SOP should also be considered.

**Management's Response:** *We accept your recommendation. I have assigned our student intern to begin to scrub our SOPs, eliminating any outdated ones and update them with the correct information. We also commit to label with the last reviewed date and initials of the reviewer. Previous versions will be added to an Archive folder for reference.*

6. **Incomplete Inventory Records. Low.**

**Condition:** While reviewing the PIO inventory sheet of 100 items, the Audit noted minor discrepancies:

Missing DAC tags on at least 18 pieces of equipment

Missing description and serial number on two items (at least one should be present)

Missing the locations for 10 assigned items

Missing a record of the Kitty Condo (stationed in a corner of the lobby of the main county building).

**Effect:** Inventory listings assist departments and the county to account for its assets. These lists often contain the item name and description, location, tag number, and actual/estimated value/cost. When inventory listings lack this data, accountability can also be lacking. In addition, failure to tag inventory (fixed assets and sensitive items) is a violation of the County's Fixed Assets guide.

**Criteria:** The Doña Ana County Capital Outlay (Fixed Assets) guide defines sensitive items as, "...assets that are prone to theft or misuse..." The guide further purports, "Sensitive items below the capitalization threshold of \$5,000.00 shall be tagged, inventoried, and safeguarded at the using department level. The using department shall maintain an inventory

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list of sensitive items. The Internal Auditor reserves the right to request copies of the ‘sensitive’ items inventories when deemed pertinent and perform random audits.”

**Cause:** *I am unsure of why some items are missing tags. However, I will assign this task to our summer intern to go through our current inventory list and identify items in our possession. I will complete appropriate paperwork for items not in our possession to avoid the appearance of “missing” when they are not in our possession.*

**Recommendation:** An item description and/or serial number should be recorded for each item as applicable. DAC tags and item locations should also be included on inventory lists. In the case of the Kitty Condo, this would be considered a ‘donated asset,’ as no county funds were expended for its purchase. In which case, the Capital Outlay (Fixed Assets) guide recommends including the fair market value or estimated cost of the item, on the inventory list. The Audit recommends that management include this item in its inventory listing and account for it on at least an annual basis, per county policy. The Audit further recommends that management address the accountability discrepancies listed above. As the Kitty Condo no longer houses cats or kittens, management should consider an appropriate disposition for it.

**Management’s Response:** *I accept your recommendation to ensure we have an accurate item description and/or serial number should be recorded for each item as applicable and included in the inventory list. I am currently unable to print an inventory list. I requested assistance from IT on April 27, 2023 and followed up again today, June 2, 2023.*

*As a note, [the Social Media Technician] cites multiple conversations with the County Manager about who owns this item and what should happen to it since the program ceased. I too had this conversation with the County Manager. The last conversation was his suggestion that we give it to the County’s Court Hold Facility. I spoke with the Animal Control Manager who is willing to accept it for any cats they rescue in the future.*

**Auditor Comments:** Per guidance from the County Manager, the Kitty Condo will be added to the County Manager’s inventory.

7. **Unedited Job Postings - LinkedIn. Low.**

**Condition:** The internal auditor reviewed approximately 38 job postings on the County’s LinkedIn site, noting the following 10 discrepancies:

1 x Misspelling in the title; 9 x incidents wherein the “About the Job” section was illegible for the (Grounds Maintenance Worker, Director Facilities & Parks, Document Technician – Assessors [sic], Jetport Operations & Maintenance Worker, Recruiting Coordinator – Fire, IT Communications Systems Technician, Planner, DASO Deputy – Certified, and DASO Cadet Uncertified) positions.

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**Effect:** LinkedIn is known for its value as a networking and job posting site. Thus, if job descriptions are illegible, the opportunity cost could be the loss of eligible applicants. In addition, the County could be judged on the quality of digital product it presents to the public.

**Criteria:** Job descriptions of applicable PIO personnel include ensuring “consistency of messages across multiple networks...and continuous monitoring and coverage of all sites.”

**Cause:** *While your assessment of PIO personnel is accurate, this does not apply in the case of HR's job postings or any other County process in which we are not involved.*

**Recommendation:** While PIO personnel may not be the source of LinkedIn job postings, website oversight function appears to be a PIO responsibility. Thus, the Audit recommends that appointed PIO personnel monitor the job postings on the LinkedIn website, and remit service requests directly to LinkedIn when job postings require correction.

**Management's Response:** *We have documentation from HR that the HR applicant tracking system automatically posts positions to Indeed, **LinkedIn**, Direct Employers, Monster.com, Glassdoor, Recruit.net, Workforce Solutions, and NMSU Handshake. Because these LinkedIn job posts do not appear on the portion of LinkedIn in which we create and display content, I believe it unrealistic to expect PIO to monitor every piece of content posted, particularly when we are not responsible for its posting or the process for posting.*

**Auditor Comments:** As job posting data is pulled by the Internet Collaborative Information Management Systems (iCIMS) software and posted on behalf of HR, the internal auditor corresponded with HR resulting in the staff reaching out to the perspective vendor(s) for the technical support necessary to have the matter corrected.

In addition to the Findings and Recommendations above the internal auditor reached out the Director of Human Resources with policy update recommendations for HR Policy 2-8.

**EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION.** The recommendations can be reviewed by accessing the link/icon below.



Microsoft Word  
Document

*Ernest Harvin*      *5 May 2023*

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Internal Auditor – Doña Ana County

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