



## **MEDIA RELATIONS POLICY**

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**Effective: 1 May 2020**

**To be reviewed: May 2023**

***To help the public service  
spend wisely***

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## INTRODUCTION

1. The Office of the Auditor General (OAG) is committed to the dissemination of audit findings and keeping the public informed about what we do. Communications with the media is guided by the principles of integrity, transparency and honesty.
2. This policy outlines how the OAG will provide information and interact with the media in the Cayman Islands and in the rest of the world. The news media plays a critical role as a channel of communication with the public in sharing audit updates.
3. The primary objective of this policy is to build and protect the integrity and reputation of the Office of the Auditor General of the Cayman Islands (the “OAG” or “Office”) by establishing the necessary principles to be followed by all OAG employees and by those individuals engaged by the Office. Such principles will help ensure that only correct information and evidenced views are expressed.
4. The OAG is committed to and recognises the right of the general public and the news media to be accurately informed about matters of public interest regarding the work it does while understanding that there are times when it must deal with political sensitivities of the subject matter it is communicating.
5. This policy supports the UN General Assembly resolution of 22 December 2011 based on the work of INTOSAI to strengthen the independence of supreme audit institutions. The principles include the freedom of the OAG to publish and disseminate its reports once they have been formally delivered to the Legislative Assembly as required by Law.

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES AND APPROACH

6. The strategic objectives of this media policy are:
  - To ensure that all messages coming from the Auditor General are based on the information provided in its reports; are consistent, well managed and in support of the OAG’s constitutional mandate, strategic goals and vision, taking into account the operational requirements of the Auditor General;
  - To provide guidance to staff around their responsibilities in the workplace and in their private lives around interaction with media
  - To outline responsibilities of designated OAG personnel during their interactions with the media; and
  - To help guide and manage the Office’s public interventions (through the media) that might affect the organisation’s reputation, image and brand.
7. The Office’s approach when interacting with the media is:
  - The Auditor General and authorized spokespersons shall only speak to facts where there is audit evidence to support the statements being made. Other comments made to the media shall be consistent with and based upon the reports produced by the OAG;
  - To maintain a mutual understanding between the organisation and the media by providing a proactive, professional and interactive information service;
  - To deal with the media in an ethical way by building and managing relationships with key individual journalists to ensure optimal value for the OAG brand image whilst recognising and adhering to professional standards;
  - To be sensitive to our stakeholders and the external environment in which we operate when we make public comments;

- To assist and guide the media on OAG issues to ensure that they (the media) reflect informatively and accurately when writing and publishing their stories on the organisation; and
- To respond quickly and appropriately to all media enquiries to limit potential damage caused by adverse or incorrect media coverage about the OAG.

## RESPONSIBILITY FOR MEDIA POLICY

8. The Auditor General and Deputy Auditor General (Performance Audit) will be responsible for ensuring that this policy is kept up to date and that it is managed effectively at all times.

## COMPLIANCE

9. All media activities within the OAG have to comply with the provisions of this policy
10. All staff are expected to comply with this policy at all times to ensure that the Office of the Auditor General effectively interacts with the media.

## SCOPE

11. This policy applies to all employees and their interactions with the media in the Cayman Islands and beyond.
12. “Media” includes all aspects of print, television, radio and internet media including social media. This policy complements the OAG Social Media Policy.
13. This policy will be incorporated into the contracts entered into with individuals and firms conducting audit work on behalf of the Office. The policy therefore applies to:
  - All OAG employees without exception;
  - All audit firms and/or individuals who work for the OAG on a contract basis; and/or
  - All OAG suppliers/vendors.

## IMPLEMENTATION

14. The Auditor General has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy. The Deputy Auditor General (Performance Audit) has responsibility to ensure it day to day operation and compliance.
15. The Auditor General and Deputy Auditor General (Performance Audit) serve as the designated contact points for the media. All media enquiries should be referred to either of these.
16. The Auditor General or Deputy Auditor General (Performance Audit) drafts, edits and disseminates news releases on behalf of the organisation.
17. When public comment on behalf of the OAG is requested by the media, the Auditor General or the Deputy Auditors General are authorized to respond. When designated, another employee can respond for that request only.

18. The Corporate Management Team will authorize any formal sites on social media where the OAG will communicate with the media and the public. The Auditor General will authorize all input and updates to those social media sites.
19. Other employees are not authorized to make public statements on behalf of OAG unless designated by the Auditor General as a spokesperson.
20. All media releases shall be approved by the Auditor General before their issuance.

## DEALING WITH THE MEDIA

### 21. Different forms of the media

- Broadcast – television and radio
- Print/press – newspapers and magazines
- Electronic –internet including social media such as Facebook and LinkedIn

### 22. Who are the media?

Broadly, the categories of media are as follows:

- News media such as television, radio stations and newspapers;
- Trade and professional publications;
- Popular print magazines; and
- Foreign media

### 23. Different ways in which the OAG interacts with the media

The OAG interacts with the media in the following ways:

- Disseminating press releases;
- Media enquiries;
- Participating in broadcast interviews on radio or television;
- Small or individual briefing meetings;
- Media conferences; and
- Informal relationship-building activities.

24. All media interactions – interviews and/or direct responses to media enquiries – with regard to OAG business are undertaken only by the Auditor General or the Deputy Auditors General. All media enquiries should be referred to one of these people. The aim of this approach is to help convey factual, accurate and consistent messages about the organisation in support of and to benefit the strategic objectives and values of the organisation.

25. The Auditor General will approve and sign-off all media responses/releases relating to the OAG’s operational matters.

26. As journalists are always chasing tight deadlines, the policy of the OAG is to adhere to agreed delivery or media response timelines. If the organisation does not respond to media enquiries and fails to meet their (media) deadlines, the media will go ahead and print/publish/broadcast a story without the OAG’s side of the story. It is in our best interest to cooperate with the media by meeting their deadlines wherever possible. But

meeting deadlines should be guided and driven by our commitment to provide the media with relevant facts. When we cannot meet tight media deadlines, the policy of the OAG is never to use “no comment”, but to respond along these lines: “Much as we would like to comment on this matter, we would rather give the public complete facts on this issue when we have all the relevant details at our disposal.”

### **AUDIT REPORTS NOT YET TABLED**

27. The OAG will not comment on the detail in any audit reports until they have been made public.

### **USE OF THE OAG’S NAME BY SUPPLIERS AND CONTRACTORS**

28. No service provider or vendor, audit firm or contractor who provides services on behalf of the OAG may use the organisation’s name in their media campaigns without alerting, consulting and obtaining the consent of the Auditor General or Deputy Auditor General (Performance Audit). For example, if a vendor/service provider wins a contract with the OAG, they cannot make a media announcement mentioning the organisation without consent.

29. The OAG should explain this provision when signing agreements with their vendors/service providers.

### **EMPLOYEE RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT THE REPUTATION AND INTEGRITY OF THE OFFICE**

30. All OAG employees have an obligation, expressed in the OAG Staff Code of Conduct and Ethics, to act in the best interest of the organisation at all times.

31. Employees are expected and encouraged to participate fully in the organisation’s consultation and decision-making processes on all official OAG matters, and to refrain from debating opinions on such internal matters through the media.

32. Employees are prohibited from:

- Leaking or releasing any OAG information/documents to the media or any external party. This includes airing of internal grievances in public through the media. Aggrieved employees who feel they have been wronged or treated unfairly by the organisation are encouraged and advised to follow existing internal channels and procedures to register their concerns for proper investigation and resolution;
- Expressing views and opinions in the public domain that the AG believes could discredit the organisation; or
- Expressing views on behalf of the organisation unless authorised to do so by the Auditor General.

33. Failure to observe and adhere to the principles stated in this policy is a serious disciplinary transgression and the necessary disciplinary steps will be taken against those employees who are in breach of this policy.

#### **CONTACT WITH THE MEDIA BY OAG EMPLOYEES AS PRIVATE INDIVIDUALS**

34. The OAG acknowledges that employees may at times interact with the media in their private capacity or on behalf of their social organisations (e.g. sports clubs or societies) outside their scope of work.
35. In such instances when employees discuss with the media or write about matters outside their areas of work, they should observe the following:
- They should make it clear that they are speaking as private individuals and not as employees of the organisation;
  - The use of OAG position titles, letterheads, email or postal addresses is prohibited in this context; and
  - OAG property/buildings should not be used as a backdrop for filming or photographic purposes.
38. It is acknowledged that there are times when employees may make reference to their positions in the Office when, for example, participating in a professional organization or service organization. Where employees wish to use their position at the Office of the Auditor General in their private capacity, they should request permission from the Auditor General.