

The NSW Government has no official policy on the use of influencers. This document is only to be used as a guide for departments and agencies who may be considering an influencer-led strategy. Compliance with the Advertising Act and Regulation remains.

## Influencers vs ambassadors

<b>Influencer</b>	An influencer is someone who has a significant following on social and/or other media. Influencers are engaged for short-term campaigns. They may be paid with free products or access, via a lump sum or based on post-performance. They may work with multiple brands, and create their own content.
<b>Brand ambassador</b>	Ambassadors are hired by brands to be the face of the company or spokesperson. Typically they have deep knowledge of the brand and values that align with those of the brand. Ambassadors can become influencers.
<b>Brand advocate</b>	Advocates can be customers, shareholders and employees. They spread word of mouth messages and may answer questions on behalf of your campaign/brand, or come to defence when others leave negative comments and reviews.
<b>Paid talent</b>	Paid talent are hired to appear in a campaign or initiative. They may become influencers if they promote campaign content on their own social channels, and become better recognised specifically to a campaign.

## Strategic purpose

To ensure the use of influencers serves a strategic purpose to your campaign and is an effective way to reach your target audience, you should consider:

1. **campaign needs** – What are you trying to achieve?
2. **target audience** – Does media consumption data and research support using influencers to reach the target audience?
3. **SMART objectives** – Will the use of influencers help you to achieve your SMART outcome and impact objectives?
4. **measurement** – How will you measure success?

## Key considerations

The following criteria may help determine if an influencer is appropriate for your campaign:

<b>Audience demographics</b>	Will the influencer help you connect with the right people? Does the influencers' audience match with your own customer personas? Caution genuine vs fake followers.
<b>Engagement</b>	Does the influencer have engaged followers? Are you paying for reach or engagement?
<b>Activity</b>	Is the influencer's feed full of sponsored content? Do followers feel spammed and have they tuned out?
<b>Brand alignment</b>	Does the audience believe the influencer is strongly connected to the department and campaign objectives?

<b>Relevance</b>	Does your message flow seamlessly into what the influencer is already sharing?
<b>Authenticity</b>	Does the influencer's social media profile include a blue verification tick? Does the influencer interact with their audience often and share their opinions with sincerity? Is the influencer in tune with their audience? Do they publish ethical content (e.g. that will not misused or misinterpreted) in line with your department? Does the influencer have fake followers?
<b>Trust</b>	Has the influencer crossed the trust threshold (does the audience question their motives)? Does the influencer create ethical content and engage appropriately with their audience?
<b>Content skills</b>	Does the influencer have photography, videography and editing skills? Can they bring a fresh perspective and creative edge to your campaign?
<b>Sentiment</b>	Does the influencer have the integrity to represent your department?

**You may need to reconsider the influencer if you answer YES to any of the following questions:**

<b>History</b>	Has influencer engaged in risky, unhealthy or illegal behaviours that would negate your key message?
<b>Sponsorship</b>	Does the influencer receive other sponsorship that contradicts your key message, or have they in the past?
<b>Inappropriate content</b>	Has the influencer ever posted racist, homophobic or sexist slurs, jokes or insults?
<b>Activism</b>	Has the influencer been associated or involved with contentious current or former issues that might impact the NSW Government?

### **Do NOT solely rely on your media agency to vet influencers.**

Once your media agency provides a short list for consideration, you should conduct you own risk assessment on proposed influencers.

### **Your risk assessment at a minimum should include:**

- Check influencers by hand and remove any that do not meet your criteria. You can do this via a Google search. Also do a manual search to identify fake engagement (e.g. unrelated comments on posts, emoji responses).
- Use Meltwater to check the influencers past history. Be aware that this check only goes back 15 months, so manual checks are also advised.
- Ask your media agency to use AI or Algorithm based technology to apply psychographic, demographic and contextually relevant filters to help identify appropriate personalities. AI can also help detect fake followers, and provide a quality score.

## Influencer management

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- Engage influencers through a media or PR agency, where possible.
- Develop a contract for influencers and seek legal advice to ensure your contract is sound (or ask your PR/Media agency to do so).
- Consider requiring the influencer to declare past sponsorships and abide by a code of conduct, and undergo any required pre-checks (e.g. police check, Working With Children Check, etc.).
- Consider duration and ownership (i.e. how long the influencer is required to keep the content online and whether you can reuse the content elsewhere).
- Ensure your department is aware of the approach and seek approval from your senior executive.
- Review and approve the influencer's posts prior to going live.
- Ask the influencer to provide ongoing feedback on community engagement. Specify how often this report is required (i.e. daily, biweekly, weekly, etc.).
- Develop a risk mitigation strategy for posts considered off-brand or inappropriate, and brief your internal media unit for any media management issues.
- Provide a formal briefing to each influencer that outlines the department's background, expectations, objectives, content to include, mandatories and content to avoid.