Olifantsfontein Business Forum

WhatsApp Group Participation & Communication Policy

1. Purpose and Scope:

The Olifantsfontein Business Forum (OBF) WhatsApp groups have been established as an official communication platform for OBF members, participants and relevant stakeholders. It is intended to facilitate and support day-to-day operational activities, including:

- Reporting and management of service-delivery requests;
- Reporting, coordinating and managing incidents and emergencies;
- Providing feedback and progress reports;
- Requests for operational assistance;
- General enquiries;
- Dissemination of information relevant to business and operational activities; and
- Other communications that may be necessary or beneficial to the effective functioning of the OBF operations.

All participants are expected to use the groups responsibly, professionally and strictly in accordance with its intended purpose.

2. Compliance with Applicable Legislation:

All participants are required to comply with applicable South African legislation and regulatory requirements when accessing, contributing to, or sharing information through these WhatsApp groups, including but not limited to the following legislation, where applicable:

- The **Protection of Personal Information Act, 2013 (POPIA)**;
- The **Cybercrimes Act, 2020**;
- The **Films and Publications Act, 1996, as amended**; and
- The **South African Police Service Act, 1995 (SAPS Act)**.

Participants remain responsible for ensuring that any content, information, images, documents or other material they post, transmit, share or distribute complies with applicable legislation and organisational requirements.

3. Confidentiality and Information Security:

Information shared within these groups is intended exclusively for OBF members, authorised participants and relevant stakeholders.

Information, documents, photographs, messages or other content posted within the groups may not be copied, forwarded, published, distributed, reproduced or otherwise disclosed outside the group without the prior approval of the group administrators and/or the relevant owner or author of the information, where applicable.

Participants are required to exercise appropriate care when handling confidential, proprietary or personal information and must take reasonable steps to prevent unauthorised disclosure or distribution.

4. Personal Information and Participation:

By voluntarily remaining in and participating in the groups, participants acknowledge that certain personal information associated with their messaging profile may be visible to other group participants. This may include, depending on the individual's privacy settings and platform functionality, their name, telephone number, profile photograph, status information and other profile-related information.

Participants are encouraged to review and appropriately manage their privacy settings before participating in the groups.

Participation in the groups constitutes acknowledgement of the above visibility; however, participants should not disclose or distribute another participant's personal information without appropriate authorisation or a lawful basis.

5. Responsibility for Content:

Each participant is responsible for the content they originate, post, forward, distribute, endorse or otherwise make available through the group.

Participants should exercise appropriate judgement before sharing or endorsing content. Any form of interaction with content should not be interpreted as approval where the participant has concerns regarding its accuracy, legality, appropriateness or compliance with this policy.

Where a participant becomes aware of content that is unlawful, inappropriate, defamatory, discriminatory, threatening, offensive or otherwise inconsistent with this policy, the participant should refrain from further distribution and promptly notify the group administrators.

6. Prohibited Content and Conduct:

The following content or conduct is prohibited within the group:

- Explicit, obscene or otherwise inappropriate content, including inappropriate profile or status images;
- Profane, abusive or offensive language;

- Unnecessary chitchat, jokes or content unrelated to the group's purpose;
- Threatening, intimidating or aggressive behaviour;
- Insulting, defamatory, discriminatory or derogatory remarks;
- Racist or sexually inappropriate content or comments;
- Unauthorised political or religious commentary where unrelated to the group's operational purpose;
- Inflammatory or provocative content;
- Harassment or personal attacks directed at fellow participants, representatives, service providers or stakeholders;
- False, misleading or deliberately inaccurate information;
- Unauthorised disclosure of confidential or personal information; and
- Any other content or conduct that may contravene applicable law, organisational policies or the purpose of the group.

Participants are expected to always conduct themselves professionally and respectfully.

7. Advertising and Commercial Content:

Advertising, solicitation, promotional material or other commercial content is generally not permitted within the group unless expressly authorised by the group administrators.

The administrators reserve the right to remove unauthorised advertising or promotional content.

8. Accuracy and Verification of Information:

Participants are required to exercise due care before posting information to the group.

Information should, where reasonably possible, be verified for accuracy, relevance and authenticity before being shared. Participants should not knowingly distribute misinformation, unverified allegations, misleading statements or information that may cause unnecessary confusion, reputational harm or operational disruption.

Where the accuracy of information is uncertain, participants should clearly identify it as unverified or refrain from distributing it until it has been appropriately confirmed.

9. Sharing, Screenshots and Forwarding of Content:

Participants should not screenshot, copy, forward, publish or otherwise distribute messages, photographs, documents, contact details or other information originating within the group without appropriate authorisation.

Care must be taken when information contains personal, confidential, proprietary or operationally sensitive information.

Unauthorised disclosure or distribution of such information may result in disciplinary, contractual, civil or criminal consequences, depending on the circumstances and applicable law.

10. Role and Responsibilities of Group Administrators:

The group administrators are responsible for overseeing the appropriate use of the groups and for taking reasonable steps to ensure that the groups remain aligned with its intended operational purpose.

Administrators may remove inappropriate content and take appropriate action where participants fail to comply with this policy. Such action may include, but is not limited to:

- Issuing a warning or instruction to cease inappropriate conduct;
- Removing inappropriate content;
- Restricting a participant's participation; and/or
- Removing a participant from the group.

Serious or repeated breaches may be escalated through the appropriate organisational, contractual or legal channels.

11. Reporting of Concerns:

Participants are encouraged to promptly report any suspected unlawful, inappropriate, threatening, discriminatory, confidential or otherwise problematic content or conduct to the group administrators.

Participants should avoid further circulating or amplifying problematic content while awaiting appropriate action.

12. Indemnity and Limitation of Responsibility:

To the extent permitted by applicable law, participants acknowledge that they are individually responsible for information and content that they post, share, forward or otherwise distribute through the OBF WhatsApp groups.

Participants agree to indemnify and hold harmless the group administrators, to the extent legally permissible, against claims, losses, liabilities or consequences arising from the participant's own unauthorised, unlawful, negligent or inappropriate use of the groups or the information shared by that participant.

Nothing in this provision is intended to exclude or limit any liability that cannot lawfully be excluded or limited under applicable legislation.

13. Acceptance of the Policy:

By joining, remaining in or participating in any OBF WhatsApp group, participants acknowledge that they have read, understood and agree to comply with the requirements set out in this policy.

Continued participation in the OBF WhatsApp groups constitutes acknowledgement of this communication, confidentiality, information-security and conduct requirements.

The overarching principle is simple:

Use the OBF WhatsApp groups responsibly, protect confidential and personal information, communicate professionally, verify information before sharing it, and keep all communication aligned with the operational purpose of the group.

Please do not hesitate to contact the OBF for any further information or clarity.

Regards,

For and on behalf of the Olifantsfontein Business Forum

Olifantsfontein Business Forum (OBF) Reg. No. 1992/003378/08
Incorporated as a Non-Profit Company in terms of the Companies Act, Act 71 of 2008 since June 1992.
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