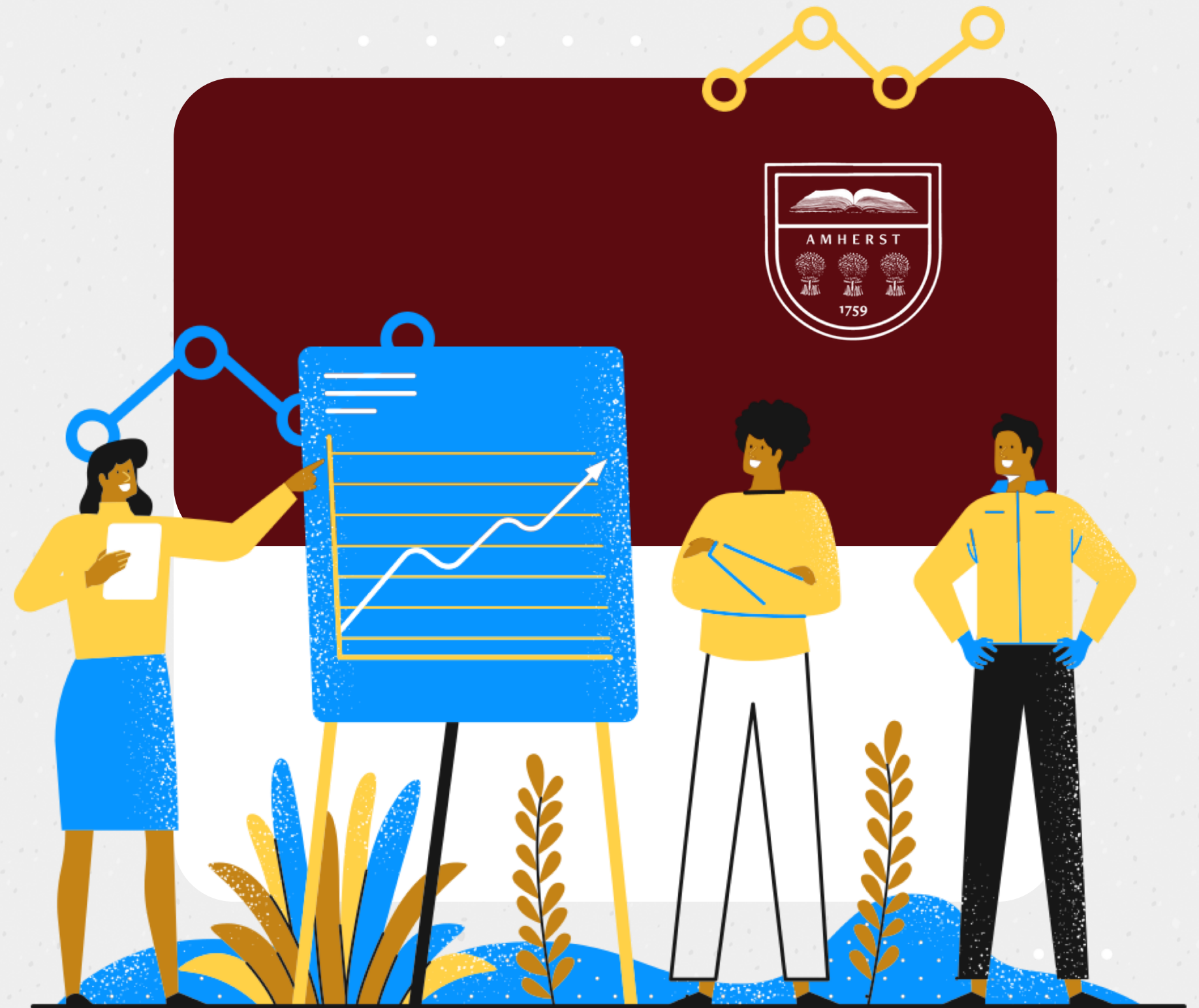


# Future of #SocialGov

Trends | Challenges | Opportunities

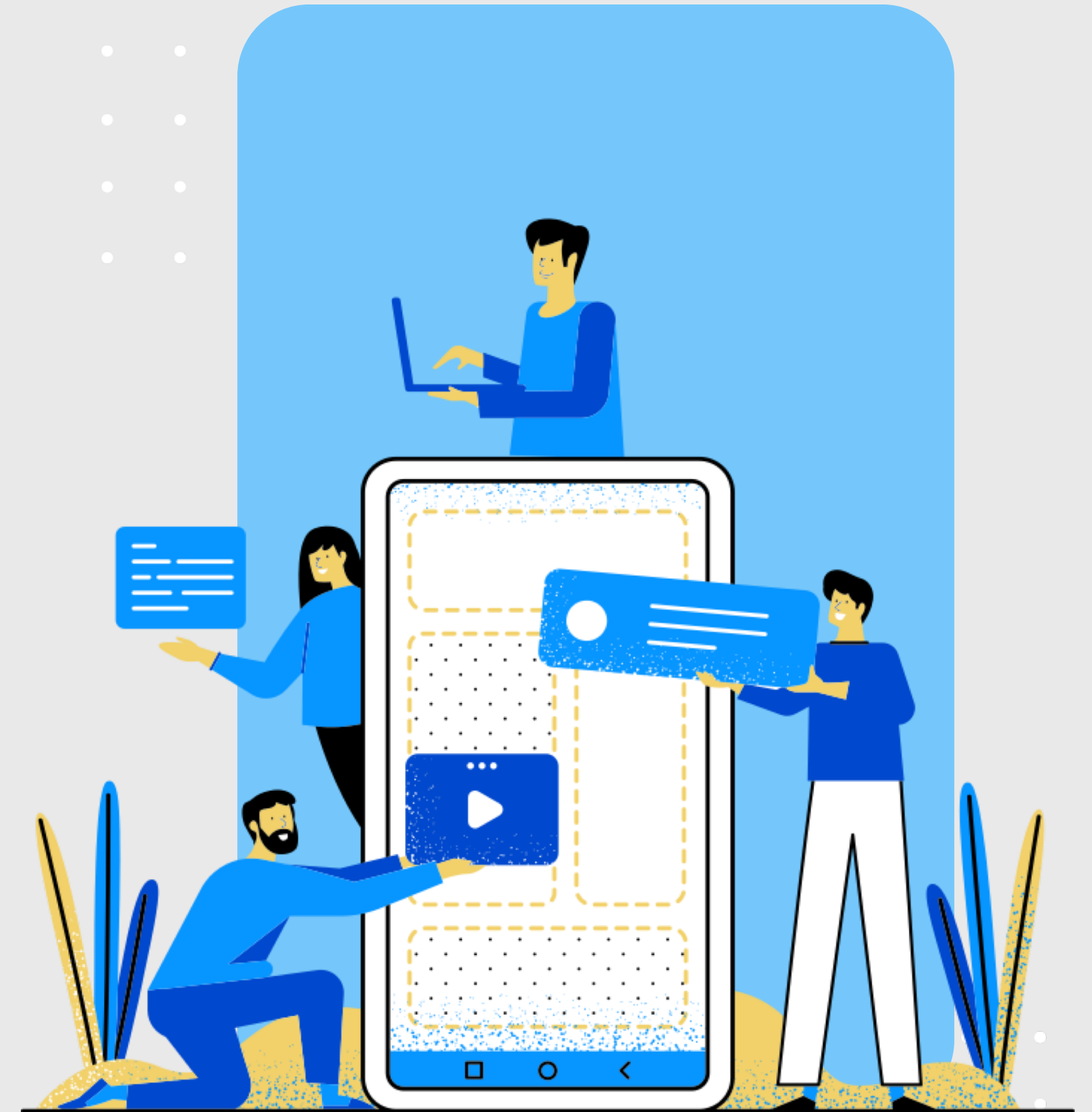
Town of Amherst, MA  
@TownofAmherst  
#AmherstMA



# Brianna Sunryd

Communications Manager  
Community Participation Officer  
Town of Amherst, MA

- IT & Communications in Local Gov for 10 years
- School of Public Policy Graduate Student
- ICMA x UMass Founding Chapter President
- ICMA Digital Strategies Advisory Board Member



#SOCIALGOV #AMHERSTMA



# Community Snapshot

- Population: 37,819 (2010)
- 58% is aged 15-24, 15% is aged 55+
- Median age =21.6
- UMass, Amherst College & Hampshire College
- Recent Government Transition



# A Government in Transition: Representative Town Meeting to Town Council-Manager

- Legislative: from Town Meeting (240 members) --> Town Council (13 members)
- Meetings: from 2x per year --> every other Monday
- Agenda: Could not set own --> Sets own
- OML/COI Laws: Not bound by --> Bound by
- CEO: Select Board --> Town Manager, added function to existing role

# Context: Urgency for Transparency & Community Participation

- Creation of Community Participation Team from existing staff (new charter)
- A new, sharper focus on timely information sharing
- New lens: One-way communication not enough!
  - Meaningful opportunities to dialogue with community members



# Platforms



## •Official Users/Account

- Town, Police, Fire, Senior Center and Rec. Department

## •Town Manager and Councilor

- TM Twitter account that is self-managed, several Councilors as well

## •Control

- All request to set up a new account have to be approved by Communications Manager and Town Manager

## •Staff

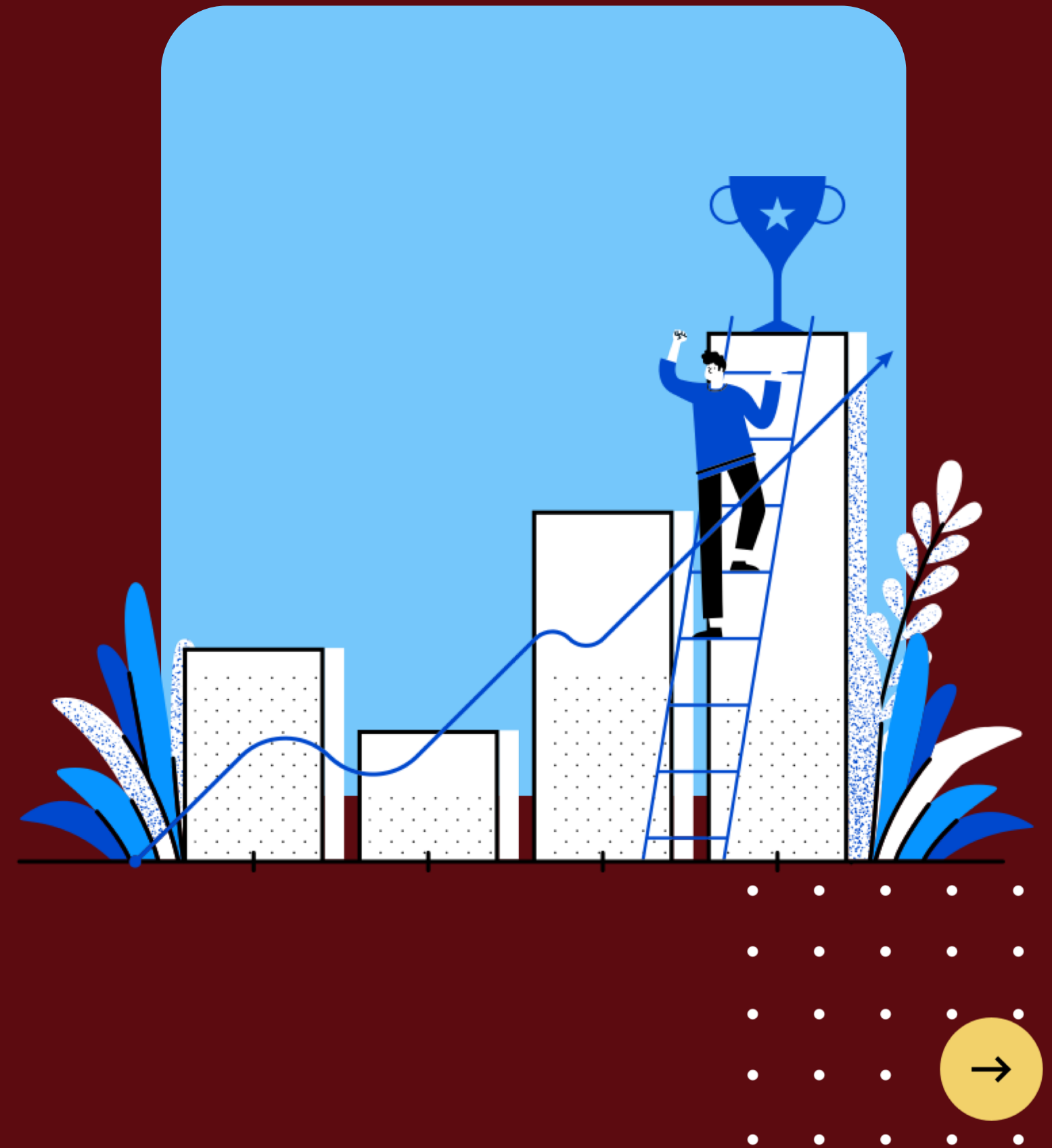
- Sign a technology use policy, that includes rules of engagement on social media



# Investment in Socials

As part of larger digital strategy

- Followers doubled after dedicating gatekeeper
- Turned off automated "1 size fits all" sharing
- Content & messages platform specific
- Can't be an after thought



# Content

Leverage Existing for Convenience & Engagement

- User (Community Member) Generated Content
  - Interaction opportunity
- Other Community Stakeholder Content
  - Increase reach
  - New audiences

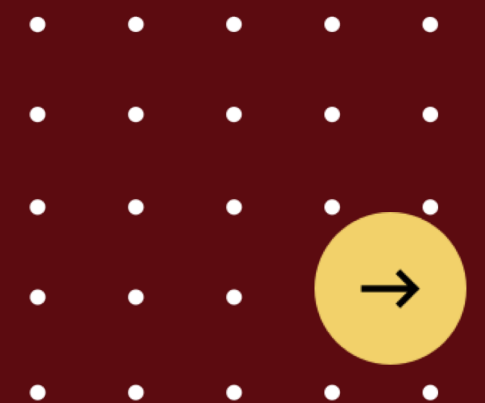




# Emergency Management

Critical Tool in a Crisis

- Automated integrations with Emergency Notification Tool (Civic Ready)
- Share updates & important information quickly





# Calls to Action

## Using Socials to Bring People Together

- Rally around specific cause or day
- Make it fun!
- Recent: City Hall Selfie Day | Community Clean Up Day

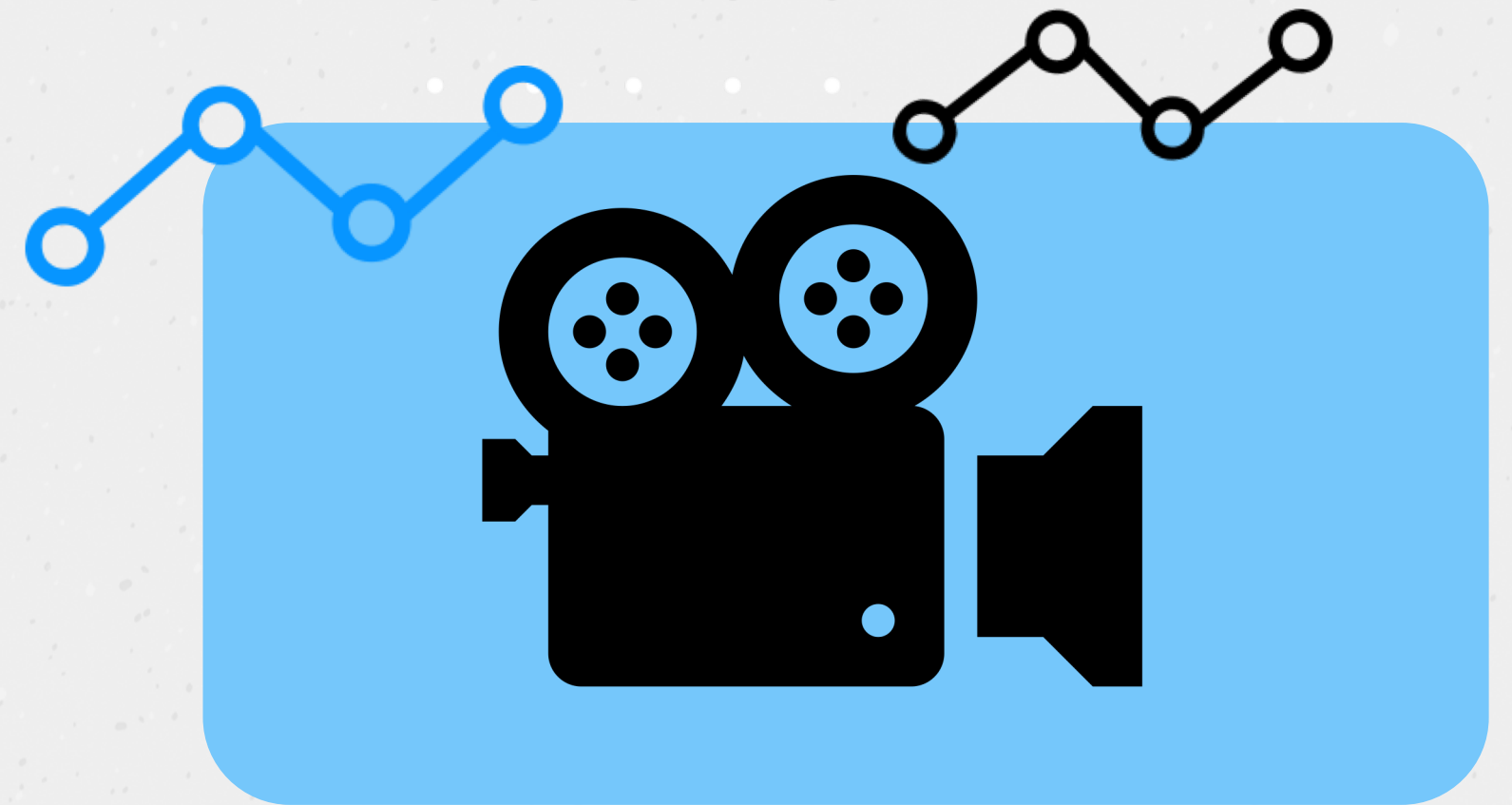


#SOCIALGOV #AMHERSTMA



# Video, video, video...

- Grabs more attention
- More time spent on your page
- More likely to be shared, 6x more likely!
- Tells a better, more complete story
- Low-tech hits the mark





# Tell Your Story

## Personalizing Municipal Services

- Feature your team
- Behind the scenes
- Put a face to a name, service or process
- Share employee success/awards
- Recent: #SheLeadsAmherst, Volunteer Spotlight
- Huge bump in reach and engagement





# Addressing Criticism

Embrace & Manage



## •Correct Misinformation

- Quickly combat incorrect information and help to stop the spread by replacing with correct details. Help control the narrative.

## •Respond or Not?

- Is the comment a one-off? Is it a request for service or info?

## •Problem Solving

- Can you offer a solution to rectify or help the situation? Convert issues to reporting system and report back.

## •Policy

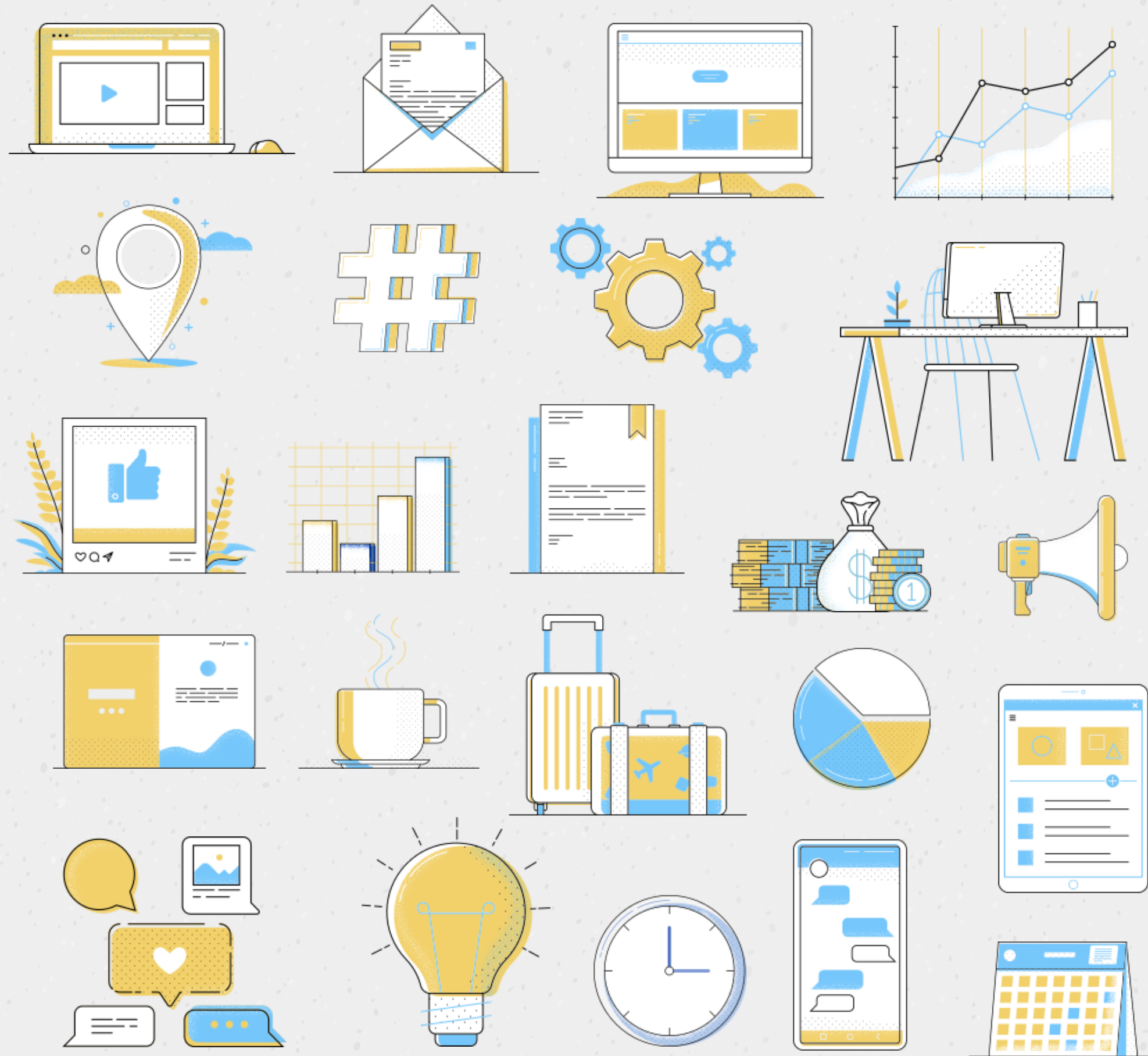
- Have a statement for appropriate use allowing you to take down offensive language/content if needed, be sure to document and archive your official social content.



# Keeping Up

What platforms to use?

- Poll your community!
- Line up resources before expanding
- Fit with your strategic plan?
- Sustainability over time





# Key Points



## STRATEGY

- Does it fit in with your strategic plan and goals? Decide on key messages & tone.

## STORYTELLING & ENGAGEMENT MINDSET

- Make this a priority from the top down. Everyone in org can contribute to success.

## HERE TO STAY

- Embrace responsibly as part of bigger strategic plan to better serve our communities. Paired with other tools can enhance participation & build trust. Meet your community where they are.

