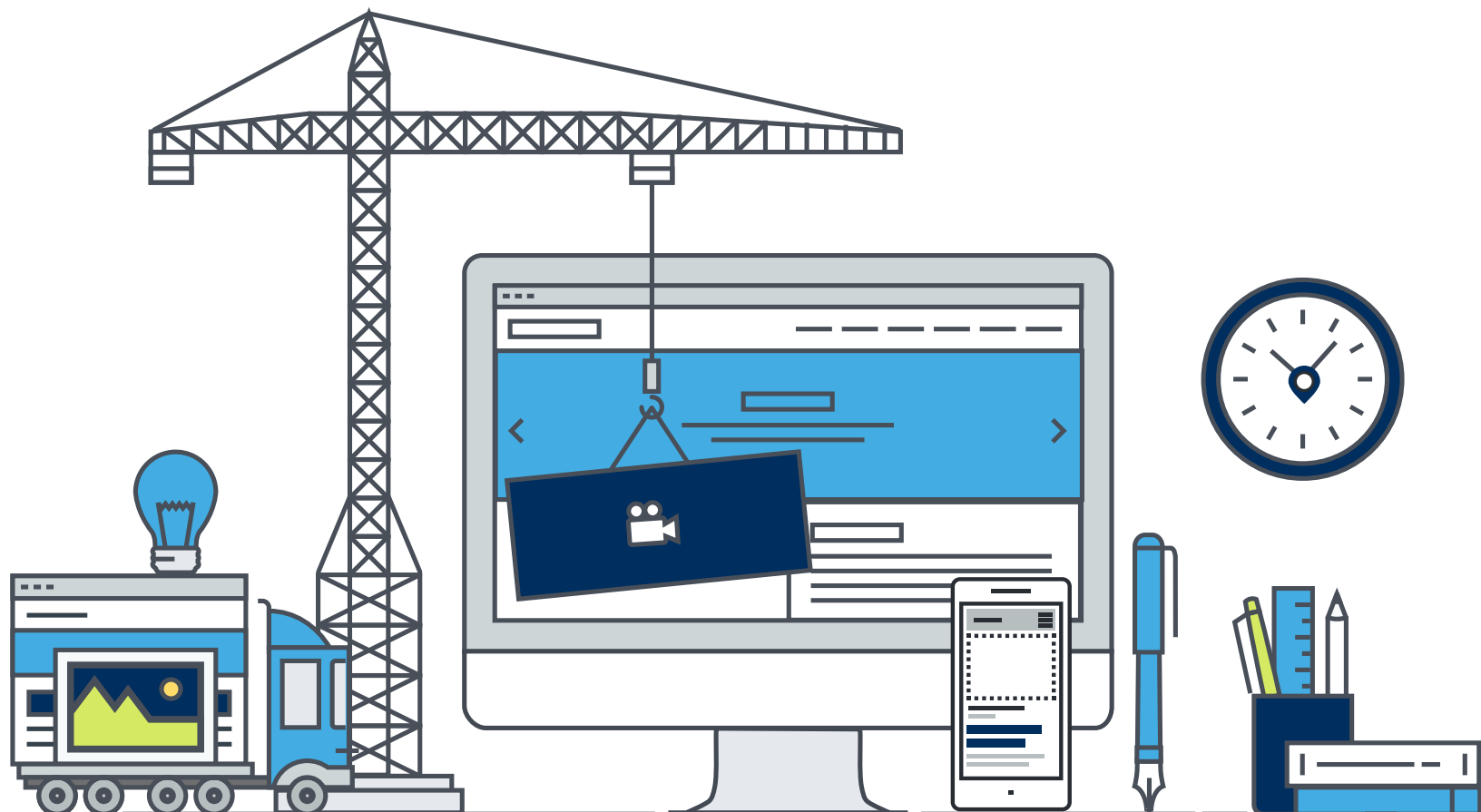


COMMUNICATIONS GUIDANCE

for eca recipient organizations



WELCOME

communications guidance

This Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs' (ECA) Communications Guidance outlines requirements and recommendations for program external communications, including branding, websites, social media, video, print materials, and press, for recipients of ECA grants and cooperative agreements (hereafter referred to as "recipient organization(s)"). All recipient organizations who receive 51% or more of their funding from ECA to run an exchange program are mandated to adhere to this guidance for that program's materials. As a note, even if this 51% or more provision does not apply to your organization, you must still adhere to the U.S. Department of State Standard Terms and Conditions Branding and Marking Strategy.

This Communications Guidance will be updated periodically. The most up-to-date version will always be [hosted online](#).

Please reach out to your ECA grants officer representative to learn more about ECA's policies and strategic priorities. This will help your organization develop a coordinated outreach strategy to strengthen the program's identity, increase its visibility, and raise public awareness.

The grants officer representative may designate another ECA official to be your point of contact. Throughout this document, the term "ECA representative" refers to the grants officer representative or their designate.

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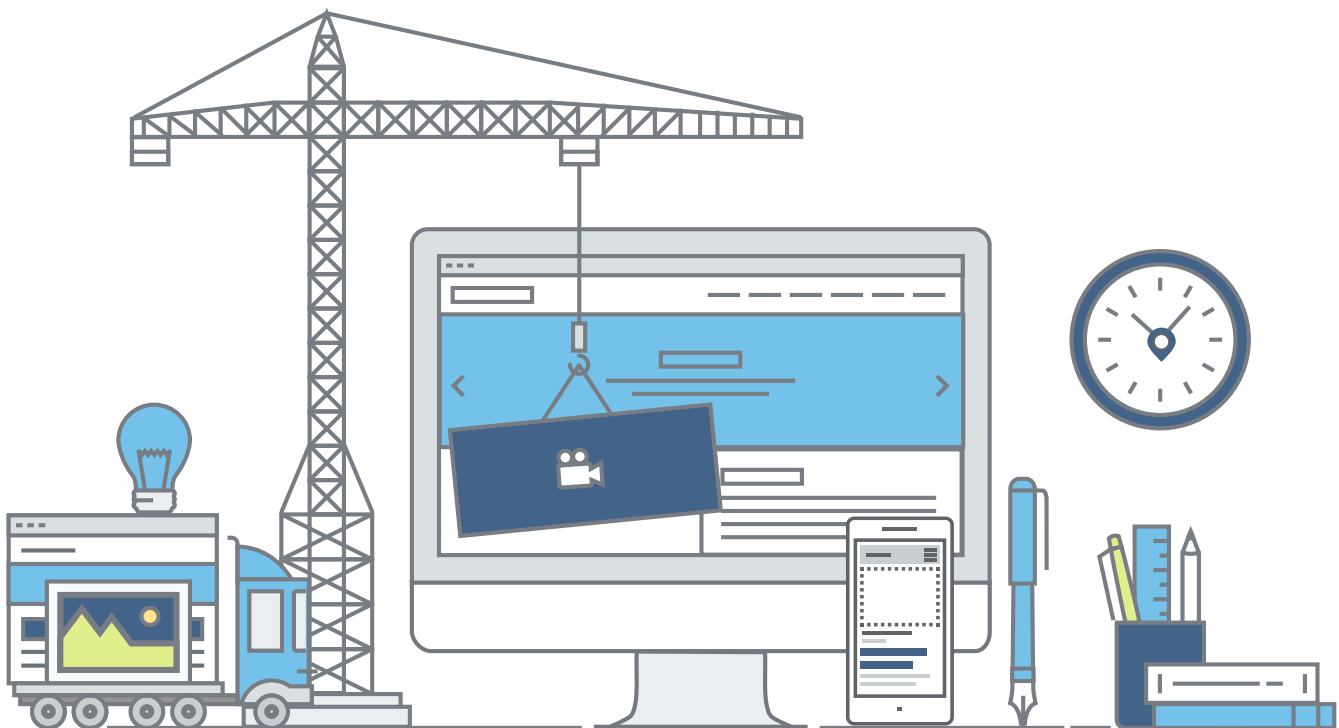
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I. ECA's Digital Presence

ECA's specialized websites receive more than six million visitors each year. ECA aims to maintain current program information and links to relevant program web pages maintained by grant recipient organizations, driving additional traffic to those sites. ECA's websites include:

- **ECA** (eca.state.gov): Provides an overview of the Bureau, highlights featured programs and initiatives, and offers data on the impact of ECA programs, resources for the press, and information for recipient organizations.
- **Exchanges** (exchanges.state.gov): Highlights ECAfunded exchange programs and serves foreign and domestic audiences by allowing visitors to find programs that best fit their needs and interests. The site also features participant stories, rich multimedia content, and provides direct links to recipient organization program web pages and social media.
- **American English** (americanenglish.state.gov): Offers engaging materials and resources for English teachers' professional development and for English students inside and outside the classroom.
- **International Exchange Alumni** (alumni.state.gov): Offers informational and professional resources and networking opportunities for all past and current participants of U.S. government-sponsored exchange programs. Resources include \$33 billion worth of grant opportunities; professional development resources; exclusive video webchats with VIPs; and 20,000 online magazines and newspapers. Most alumni are now automatically invited to join the website.
- **J-1 Visa** (j1visa.state.gov): Hosts information, including rules and regulations, for J-1 Exchange Visitor Program participants, sponsors, host families, and employers. The site also hosts the Route J-1 blog, which explains the program through encounters with participants and sponsors.
- **EducationUSA** (educationusa.state.gov): Online presence for a global network of more than 400 ECA-supported advising centers. The website promotes U.S. higher education to students around the world, and provides services to the U.S. higher education community to help institutional leaders meet their recruitment and campus internationalization goals.
- **Study Abroad** (studyabroad.state.gov): Aggregates foreign and U.S. government-funded resources for studying abroad including scholarships and health and safety information for U.S. students and their families, and information on building study abroad program capacity for U.S. and foreign higher education institutions.

Please contact your ECA representative if you notice any inaccuracies or out-of-date information on ECA websites.

You are encouraged to follow and interact with our social media presences and make program participants and alumni aware of opportunities for engagement on social media. ECA also has many specialized program social media properties (150+).

ECA's bureau-wide social media presences include:

- [@ECAatState](#) (Bureau Twitter)
- [@ECA_AS](#) (Assistant Secretary Twitter)
- [Exchange Programs At State](#) (Bureau Facebook)
- [Exchange Our World](#) (Bureau Instagram)
- [Exchanges Video](#) (Bureau YouTube)
- [Exchanges Video](#) (Bureau Vimeo)
- [Exchanges Photos](#) (Bureau Flickr)

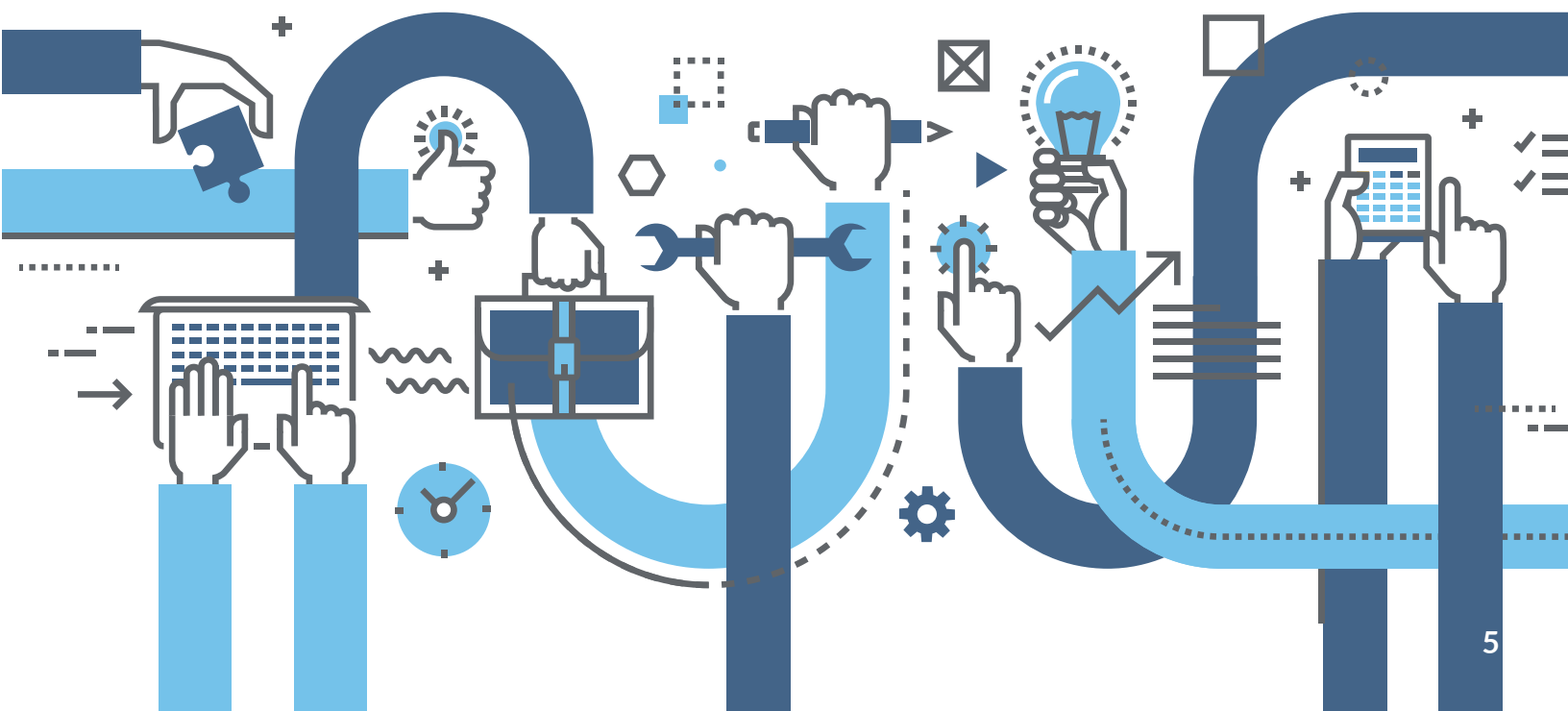
II. About the Guidance

As you will read below, the Communications Guidance covers many different aspects of communications. Certain requirements, such as branding language and use of the American flag, are drawn from and dictated by the U.S. Department of State Standard Terms and Conditions Branding and Marking Strategy, which is independent of this guidance and applicable to all awards. Exceptions to the flag guidance in this Branding and Marking Strategy must be approved by your ECA grants officer in writing.

Other requirements listed are specific to ECA grants and cooperative agreements only.

As detailed in your grant or cooperative agreement documents, the relationship between the U.S. Department of State and the program must be clear in all of your program communications materials. All promotional materials should be developed in consultation with your ECA representative.

If you have any concerns about any of the requirements set forth in this document, or believe that defining the program relationship with the U.S. Department of State would negatively affect the success of a program or the safety of participants, please contact your ECA representative and the ECA/PASC Office to discuss.



III. Setting up Program Outreach

PROGRAM WEBSITE/WEB PAGE

Requirements

- **Clearance of Websites and Web Pages:** All new web pages or websites dedicated to ECA programs, participants, or alumni of ECA programs must be developed in consultation with and cleared by the ECA representative and the ECA Office of Public Affairs and Strategic Communications (PASC).
- **Credit and Link to U.S. Department of State upon Introduction:** When you first introduce an ECA program on your web page or website, you must mention the U.S. Department of State as the program sponsor in a prominent location early on in the text and also include a clear hyperlink to the program page on exchanges.state.gov or eca.state.gov (e.g., [National Security Language Initiative for Youth](#)). If you are unsure of which page to link to, please contact your ECA representative.
- **Accessibility of Content:** ECA Program web pages, websites and mobile applications maintained by recipient organizations must be compliant with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act, which addresses accessibility of content to persons with disabilities. It states that they must would be imposed on the department or agency.” Even if there is an “undue burden,” the U.S. Department of State and recipient organizations must provide accessible alternatives for all non-accessible content that they publish. It is important to note that all videos, live streams and webinars on websites are required to be closed-captioned when the platform allows. This means that videos uploaded to YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook must include closed captioning. You are encouraged to choose platforms that do allow for closed captioning over those that do not. However, in cases where closed-captioning is not available technically, such as on platforms like Periscope, the program can still be streamed without the closed captioning. For a more detailed list of information on what is required for websites to be Section 508 compliant, visit the [WebAIM Accessibility Checklist](#).
- **Credit and Link to U.S. Department of State in Footer:** On all web pages or websites dedicated to a U.S. Department of State-funded program, recipient organizations must add the following in the footer of each relevant page: “This is a program of the U.S. Department of State with funding provided by the U.S. Government, administered by <name of recipient organization>.” Alternatively, you can use: “[Program Name] is sponsored by the U.S. Department of State with funding provided by the U.S. Government and supported in its implementation by <name of recipient organization>.” The “This program” or [Program Name] text should hyperlink directly to your program’s page on the U.S. Department of State site (e.g., [National Security Language Initiative for Youth](#)).

- **Use of Flag and Seal:** The U.S. flag and U.S. Department of State seal must be prominently placed on each program web page or website dedicated to an ECA-funded program, typically in the footer and accompanying the text found in the above bullet. The flag and official seal cannot be obscured or altered in any way and should be proportional in size or larger than all other logos on the web page. Please note that the U.S. flag must be the first icon on the left or top in horizontal or vertical groupings of multiple logos, followed by the seal and then the program logo. Additional design guidance materials and the image files can be found on our website. You must also clear designs with your ECA representative to ensure compliance.
- **Mobile-Friendly:** Given the prevalence of mobile device use worldwide, the U.S. Department of State makes it a priority to meet the needs of audiences that access our information from mobile devices. As such, all new websites, including your program application materials (if applicable), must utilize mobile-responsive design. Note that the accessibility requirements also apply to mobile applications.
- **Website Analytics:** The U.S. Department of State uses various performance-measuring analytics programs and ECA staff regularly reviews the performance of its websites and social media presences. Recipient organizations who manage websites dedicated solely to ECA programs are required to add Google Analytics code to track engagement on the websites, and all use must be consistent with applicable law. Access to Google Analytics to manage users, edit, collaborate, read and analyze must be provided to your ECA representative and to ecawebsitesmail@gmail.com, the ECA/PASC Office Google Analytics account.

For further instructions on how to set up access, please email ECADigital@state.gov.



PROGRAM SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCE

ECA recognizes the value of strategically-planned and well-maintained social media presences for program and alumni outreach and for promoting the opportunity to participate in program evaluations. Recipient organizations that administer ECA programs and initiatives may be granted permission on a case-by-case basis to administer a social media property on behalf of the U.S. Department of State. When you manage a social media property on behalf of an ECA program, you must work together with the U.S. Department of State to manage this property responsibly.

It is also vital that these presences be easily recognized as part of the larger U.S. Department of State social media family. Plan to meet with your ECA representative and ECA/PASC Office representatives to discuss any potential new social media presence and special communications ideas or projects, such as program-related challenges or contests that you would like to manage in coordination with or on behalf of the U.S. Department of State. Since the social media landscape and U.S. Department of State guidelines are constantly changing, your ECA representative will communicate updates to you by email as they occur.

Requirements

- **Creation of New Social Media Accounts:** Due to the resources needed to manage social media properties, your ECA representative and ECA/PASC Office must approve all new accounts prior to activation.
- **Closure of Social Media Accounts:** Social media accounts may sometimes need to be closed due to lack of resources or activity, or the end of a program or initiative. However, closure of any account should be discussed with your ECA representative and ECA/PASC Office prior to any action being taken.
- **Provide ECA Administrative Access to ECA Social Media Properties:** Recipient organizations must provide their ECA program officers full administrative access to the social media properties that they manage on behalf of ECA. For crisis communications and because online communities and social media presences may exist beyond the period of your grant, it is valuable for ECA to have continuous access.
- **Provide Analytics Access:** All U.S. Department of State social media accounts for Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, including those run on behalf of official ECA programs or initiatives, are also required to provide analytics access to the U.S. Department of State's analytics team. Instructions on how to provide this access can be found on the ECA Communications Guidance web page. Being able to access analytics data from across all of our social media properties at once allows U.S. Department of State leadership to view trends, determine which properties are performing well and explore the potential to reach different audiences.
- **Expectations for Conduct as an Online Community Manager:**
 - » Post on the social media property on a regular basis and respond to comments and queries in a timely manner.

- » Be mindful of spelling, basic grammar, and plain language.
- » Use unabbreviated words and complete sentences whenever possible.
- » Treat all members fairly and respectfully.
- » Welcome discussion that falls under “free speech” guidelines, whether it is relevant, agreeable, irrelevant, or disagreeable. You are only permitted to delete or hide a post if it violates the Terms of Use “Member Content” section.
- » Before deleting or hiding content that violates the Terms of Use, write “This post violates our Terms of Use,” take a screenshot, and save it in a “Community Manager Log” for your records.
- » If the violation is egregiously sensitive and warrants U.S. Department of State notice, document it and email your ECA representative, who may choose to forward it to CIRT@state.gov, the Cyber Incident Response Team.
- » Safeguard the account password by changing the password at least every quarter and do not share the password with those employees who have not received training, unless under proper supervision.
- » Do not post any personally identifiable information (PII) on social media platforms.
- **Terms of Use:** Per U.S. Department of State policies and procedures (5 FAM 793.4), U.S. Department of State Facebook pages must include the U.S. Department

of State Terms of Use template. The template can be downloaded on the ECA Communications Guidance web page. Be familiar with the Terms of Use, particularly the “Member Content” section, which specifies which content violates the Terms of Use and can be removed, and which cannot.

- **Profile Photo:** The official ECA program or initiative logo must be used as the profile photo. If there is no logo, you must consult with your ECA representative to determine the most appropriate image to use.
- **Facebook Description:** This official ECA program description must be included in the Facebook About section: [Short description of program]. [Program Name] is sponsored by the U.S. Department of State with funding provided by the U.S. Government and administered by <name of recipient organization>. Alternatively, you can use: “[Program Name] is sponsored by the U.S. Department of State with funding provided by the U.S. Government and supported in its implementation by <name of recipient organization>.”
- **Twitter Description:** On Twitter, you must include the text “An @ECAatState program,” in the About section.

Recommendations

- **Strive for Accessible Social Media Platforms:** Recipient organizations should make every effort to select social media sites that are compliant with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act, which addresses accessibility of content to persons with disabilities.



PROGRAM VIDEOS

Video is a powerful medium that allows you to communicate your message clearly and succinctly. ECA produces a range of videos, hosted on our YouTube and Vimeo channels. Some recipient organizations, if they have the necessary skills and resources, may choose to create videos related to ECA programs. Below is a summary of our video requirements and recommendations for recipient organizations:

Requirements

- **Promotional Video Approval:**

Recipient organizations must clear any video products intended to widely promote ECA programs with your ECA representative and the ECA/PASC Office. ECA does not need to review videos produced by participants or videos not intended for public dissemination, unless otherwise requested.

- **Video Accessibility:** Grant recipients must ensure compliance of videos with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act, which addresses accessibility of content to persons with disabilities. You must create and upload a manual transcription to display with the video or view as subtitles to ensure accuracy. YouTube's automatic closed captioning tool does not meet this requirement. Live video streams must also be closed captioned in real-time, if it is technically possible on the platform. Contact your ECA representative to request assistance with live-captioning webinars and other programming.

- **Use of Flag and Seal in Videos:** The U.S. flag and Department of State seal should be placed in all videos promoting U.S. Department of State

programs or in any video funded by the U.S. Department of State. The flag and official seal cannot be obscured or altered in any way and should be proportional in size or larger than all other logos. Please note that the U.S. flag must be the first icon on the left or top in horizontal or vertical groupings of multiple logos, followed by the seal and then the program logo. Typically, the flag is included in the closing scene of the video, along with website and social media links for more information. An animated video template file with the flag and seal to use for this purpose may be downloaded from the ECA Communications Guidance web page. Additional design guidance is also available on our website.

Recommendations

- **High-Quality Video:** Shoot footage in high definition, if possible, and edit the piece to tell a compelling story.
- **Video Plans:** It is recommended to draft and clear video plans with your ECA representative before starting a video project. A sample video plan template can be downloaded on the ECA Communications Guidance web page.



PRINT MATERIALS

Requirements

- **Clearance of Print Materials:** All print materials and other promotional products meant to widely promote ECA programs, participants, or alumni of ECA programs must be developed in consultation with, and cleared by, the ECA representative. The representative will work with the ECA/PASC office to ensure consistency in messaging.
- **Credit and Link to U.S. Department of State in Footer:** On all appropriate print materials, such as fact sheets and one-pagers, recipient organizations should add the following in the footer of each relevant page: “[Program Name] is sponsored by the U.S. Department of State with funding provided by the U.S. Government and administered by <name of recipient organization>.” Alternatively, you can use: “[Program Name] is sponsored by the U.S. Department of State with funding provided by the U.S. Government and supported in its implementation by <name of recipient organization>.”
- **Use of Flag and Seal:** The U.S. flag and U.S. Department of State seal must be prominently placed on each printed material dedicated to an ECAfunded program. Exceptions will be made for items that are too small or otherwise unsuitable to include these logos, such as pencils, pens and USB drives. The flag and official seal cannot be obscured or altered in any way and should be proportional in size or larger than all other logos. Please note that the U.S. flag must be the first icon on the left or top in horizontal or vertical groupings of multiple logos, followed by the seal and then the program logo. [Additional design guidance materials and the image files can be found on our website.](#) Recipient organizations must also clear designs with your ECA representative to ensure compliance.
- **Use of Program Logos:** Whenever one exists, you may use the official program logo in addition to the U.S. flag and Department of State seal on materials. Note that the creation of new program logos for international audiences has been generally prohibited since 2012 as part of the Department of State’s Visibly American mandate. Logos created prior to 2012 may be used and refreshed, if needed. Discussions regarding any new or revised logos or branding, regardless of audience, must involve the ECA representative and the ECA/PASC office.



ENGAGING WITH THE MEDIA

ECA encourages recipient organizations to share news and highlights about the program(s) they administer with media and stakeholders, while abiding by the following requirements and recommendations. Participants ages 18 and older are free to decide if they want to interact with the media, as long as it does not significantly impact the program schedule.

No permission from the U.S. Department of State is necessary. For interviews with minors, consult with your ECA representative. Please ensure that all participants, including those over 18 years old, understand the implications of speaking with the media, and that they could have their name, photo, and other personally identifiable information appear in U.S. and home country media as a result, with quotes attributed to them.

Requirements

- **Press Releases & Announcements:** Any public announcement or release to the press issued by a grant recipient and concerning an ECA-sponsored program must be reviewed and cleared by ECA. To submit a press release for review, send it directly to the ECA program officer and eca-press@state.gov. Please send a draft of your press release at least one week prior to the intended release date to allow time for review, although ECA will make every attempt to honor requests for quicker turnaround when needed. ECA may recommend timing for a release to maximize impact and to align with other outreach efforts.
- **Obtain Participant Consent:** In order to feature a participant in any U.S. Department of State or recipient organization outreach or promotion (e.g., digital, print, or video), you must first obtain a signed Participant Consent & Release Form signed by the participant or parents/guardians of those under the age of 18. You can download ECA's Participant Consent & Release Form from the ECA Communications Guidance web page. Discuss with your ECA program officer how you should best distribute the forms and maintain the signed copies and be sure to relay any sensitivities to both your ECA program officer and ECA/PASC Office so that we are aware which participants do not be promoted. Also, please remind participants to check with one another before tagging each other in posts or photos online.
- **Include U.S. Department of State Contact Information:** In releases, list both contact information for your organization and eca-press@state.gov for the U.S. Department of State.

Recommendations

- **Keep It Short:** Try to keep releases to three to five paragraphs in length so reporters can quickly see the who, what, where, when, and why. Link to websites or other materials for more information.
- **Mention Sponsorship:** Mention in the first paragraph of the release that the program is sponsored by the U.S. Department of State.
- **Make A Local Link:** Show a direct connection between the subject of the article, the intended audience, and the local community. Make it easy for reporters to understand why they should cover this story and why the community would care.
- **Media about a Program or Initiative:** Please notify the U.S. Department of State when you receive inquiries from the media. For media focused on a program, ECA wants the opportunity to provide a U.S. Department of State perspective when appropriate, and also to notify any relevant U.S. Department of State offices and U.S. embassies. Please provide a brief summary of the request, detailing who, what, where, when, and the deadline. Summaries or requests should be sent simultaneously to both your ECA representative and eca-press@state.gov. Please keep in mind that if the media want to speak with exchange participants, it is the participants' decision whether to be interviewed, but you still need to notify the U.S. Department of State of the media attention.
- **Interview Follow-Up:** Upon publication, share the final article with both the ECA representative and eca-press@state.gov, ideally as a hyperlink to an online article.
- **Events and Speakers:** If you are sending recipient organization staff to give a presentation about an ECA-sponsored program at conferences or events, please notify your ECA representative. ECA will help amplify and promote the event, when appropriate, and may provide suggestions or materials.



CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS

In an emergency, communications channels are an important way to account for the safety and security of participants and to disseminate information quickly. Many participants will check social media during times of crisis, not only to receive accurate, timely, and official information but to also ask questions, seek assistance, or provide firsthand accounts and other valuable information. However, the speed and reach of social media and other mass communications channels requires that you and the State Department remain coordinated before communicating.

For any crises – including an incident that is drawing negative media attention, a natural disaster, the death of participant, or if a participant is the victim or perpetrator of a serious crime – safety comes first. You should make a good faith effort to coordinate with your ECA representative, but if you cannot reach someone, you can use the tools at your disposal to account for participants and ensure that they are safe or have instructions on how to get to safety. Once that occurs, any additional mass communications must be coordinated with your ECA representative or ECA's Public Affairs and Strategic Communications office.

Requirements

- **Coordinate with your ECA Representative or ECA Public Affairs and Strategic Communications:** During a crisis, before you send any mass messages, you must get approval from ECA. This applies to all mass communications, including social media messages, text messages to a group, and emails to a mailing list.

Recommendations

- **Prepare Crisis Content Ahead of Time:** General messages and contact information should be crafted in preparation for a crisis, keeping tone in mind. Consider the types of messages that will need to go out as soon as the crisis occurs and for the following hours and days, including emergency numbers that American citizens and the local population may need. Ensure that the emergency numbers on the program website are up-to date and accurate.
- **Delete Any Prescheduled Content that has Not Yet Been Published:** Suspend routine social media activities and disable automated content previously scheduled via Hootsuite or other tools. All content posted after the onset of a crisis should be pertinent to the crisis situation.
- **Correct, But Do Not Delete, Erroneous Information:** If you post incorrect information, correct it when accurate information comes to light but do not delete the erroneous information. Deleting previously posted content can cause confusion.
- **Consistently Post Status Updates:** Even if the information has not changed, continue reposting the latest information and directing people to the most up-to-date messages. Extended silence may indicate that the previous information is no longer accurate. People will continually check for new information and repeating information that has already been posted indicates that it is still accurate.

THANK YOU.

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