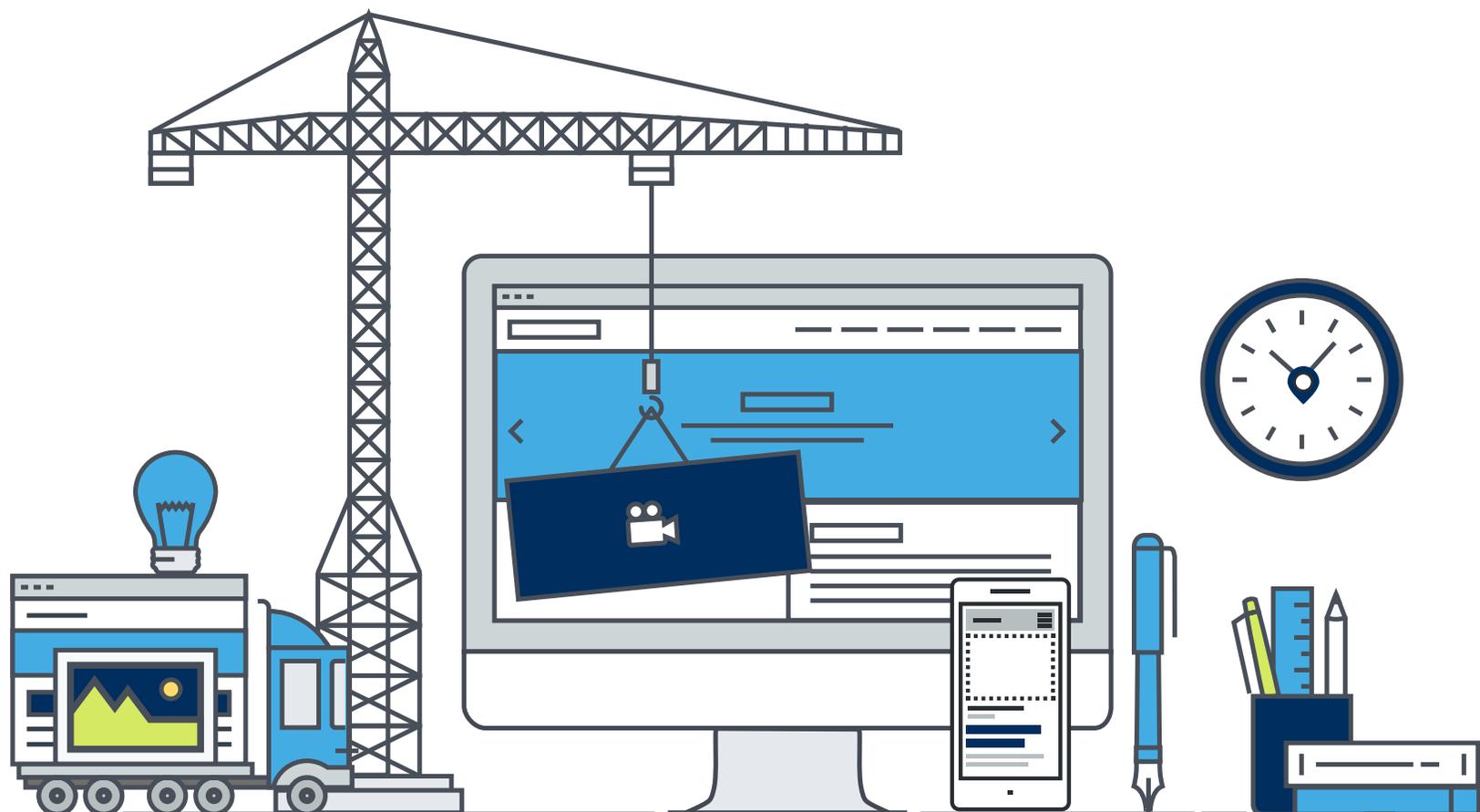


# COMMUNICATIONS GUIDANCE

for eca recipient organizations



# WELCOME

## communications guidance

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

Please reach out to your ECA program officer and/or grants office 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.

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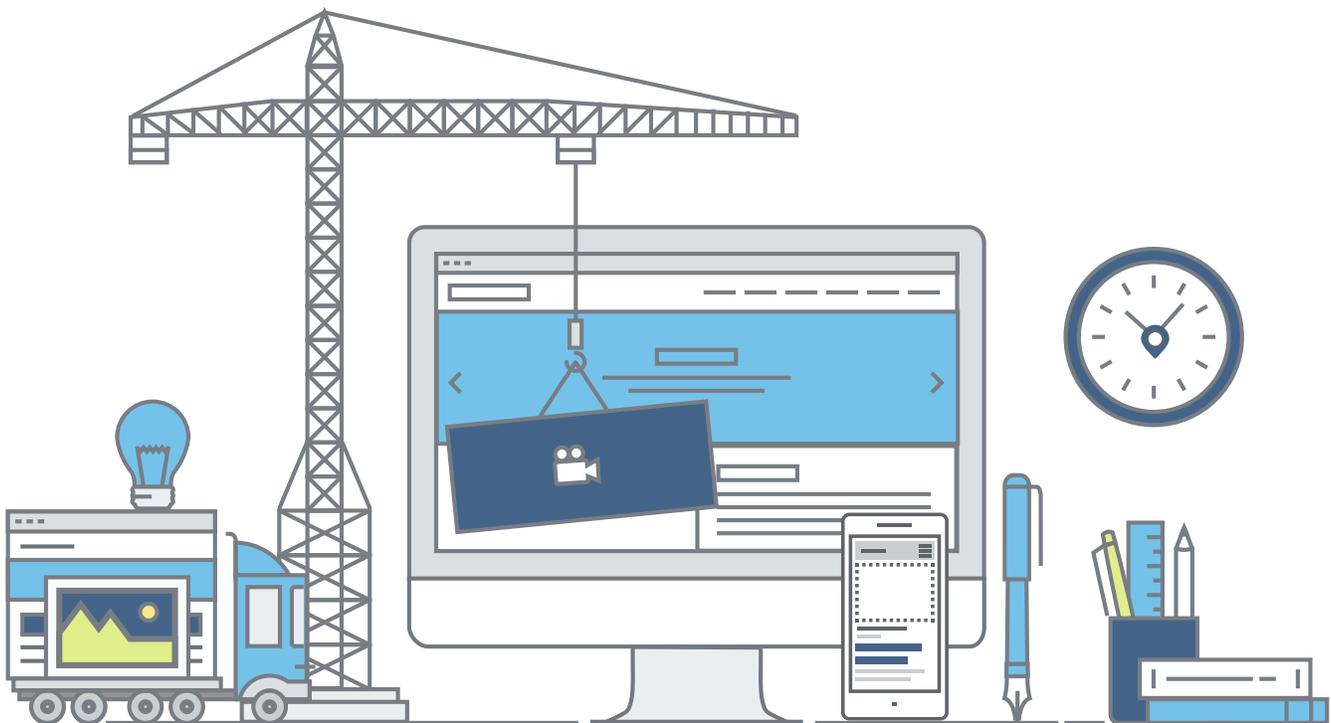
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# I. ECA's Digital Presence

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](http://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](http://exchanges.state.gov)):** Highlights ECA-funded 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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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.

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**Please contact your ECA program officer 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 \(150+\)](#).

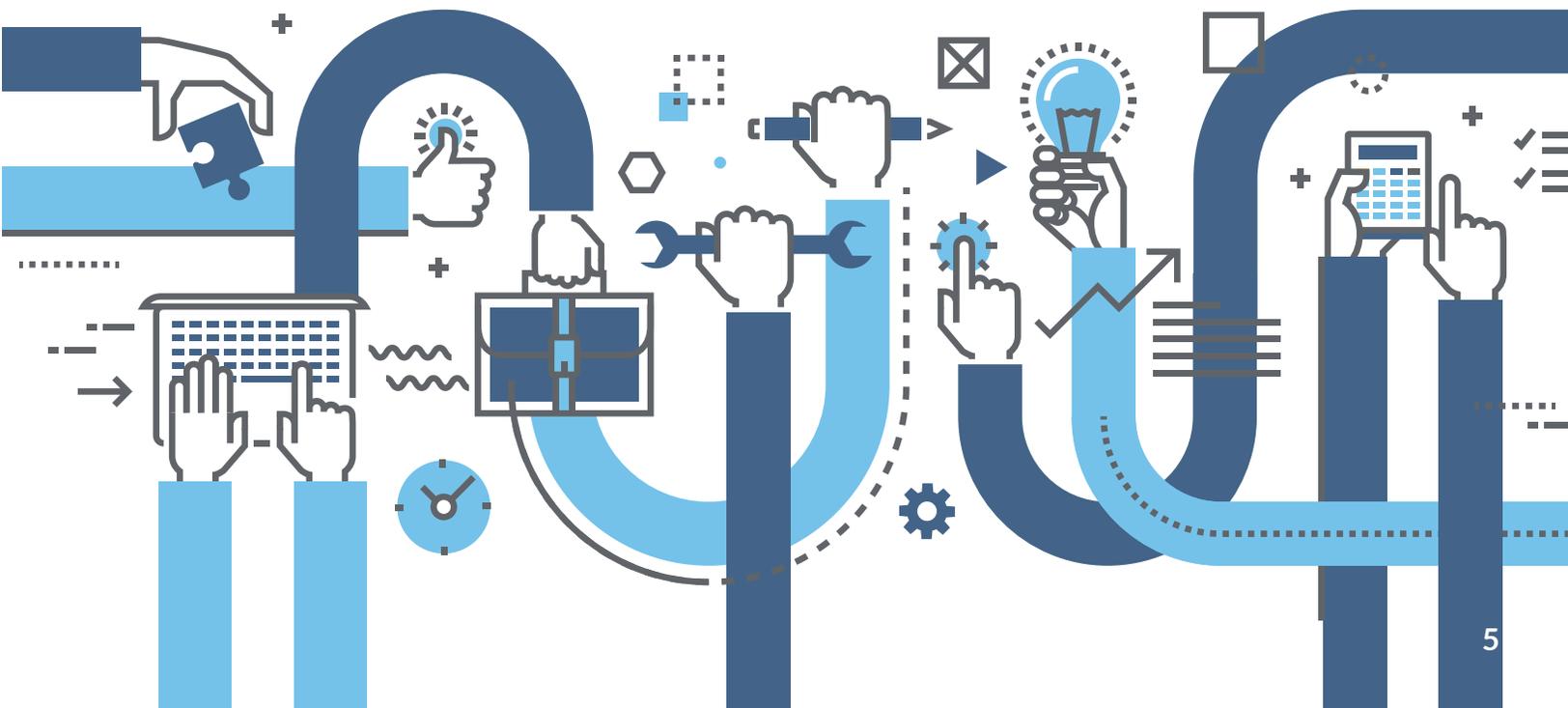
ECA's bureau-wide social media presences include:

- [@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. Relationship with ECA

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 program officer.

If you have any concerns about this requirement, 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 program officer. Exceptions must be approved by your ECA program officer in writing.



# PROGRAM WEBSITE/WEB PAGE

Below is a summary of requirements and recommendations for websites and web pages presenting ECA program and initiatives:

## 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 program officer 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](https://exchanges.state.gov) or [eca.state.gov](https://eca.state.gov) (e.g., [National Security Language Initiative for Youth](https://nationalsecuritylanguageinitiativeforyouth.org)). If you are unsure of which page to link to, please contact your ECA program officer.

- **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 be 508 compliant...“unless an undue burden 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, administered by <name of recipient organization>.” The “This program” 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 program officer 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 program officer and to [ecawebsitesmail@gmail.com](mailto:ecawebsitesmail@gmail.com), ECA's PASC Office Google Analytics account.

**For further instructions on how to set up access, please email [ECADigital@state.gov](mailto: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 program officer 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, ECA program officers 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 program officer 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 program officer 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:**

- o Post on the social media property on a regular basis and respond to comments and queries in a timely manner.
- o Be mindful of spelling, basic grammar, and plain language.
- o Use unabbreviated words and complete sentences whenever possible.
- o Treat all members fairly and respectfully.
- o 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.
- o 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.
- o If the violation is egregiously sensitive and warrants U.S. Department of State notice, document it and email your ECA Program Officer, who may choose to forward it to [CIRT@state.gov](mailto:CIRT@state.gov), the Cyber Incident Response Team.
- o 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.
- o 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 program officer 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 and administered 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 program officer and 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 program officer 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 program officer, or designated ECA program office communications point of contact, 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 program officer and ECA/PASC Office.
- **Credit and Link to U.S. Department of State in Footer:** On all appropriate print materials, such as one-pagers, recipient organizations should add the following in the footer of each relevant page: “This program is funded by the U.S. Department of State and administered 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 ECA-funded 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 program officer 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 program officer 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 the program officer. 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](mailto: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.
- **Include U.S. Department of State Contact Information:** In releases, list both contact information for your organization and [eca-press@state.gov](mailto:eca-press@state.gov) for the U.S. Department of State.
- **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.

## 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 program officer and [eca-press@state.gov](mailto: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 program officer and [eca-press@state.gov](mailto: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 program officer. ECA will help amplify and promote the event, when appropriate, and may provide suggestions or materials.

**For any questions on this guidance, please email [ECA\\_PASC@state.gov](mailto:ECA_PASC@state.gov).**



# THANK YOU.

Issued and maintained by ECA's Public Affairs and  
Strategic Communications Office, ECA/PASC

