



## Functional Bureau Strategy

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# Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs

**FOR PUBLIC RELEASE**

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## 1. Executive Statement

The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) designs and implements educational, professional, and cultural exchange programs that promote American leadership and advance U.S. foreign policy goals. Increasingly, technology connects people globally and directly, without the intermediacy of leadership structures and media institutions. The U.S. Government likewise must engage foreign audiences directly and individually, bring together their views and aspirations with those of Americans, and encourage collaboration to identify workable solutions to common challenges.

ECA receives strategic direction on foreign policy from the Secretary of State, as well as the White House and Congress, and embraces goals that represent the highest priorities of policy makers, as reflected in the National Security Strategy (NSS) and the Department of State (DoS)/USAID Joint Strategic Plan (JSP). In consultation with other Department bureaus, ECA identifies policy-relevant global trends, selects thematic priorities, and targets emerging and current leaders who can effectively be reached through international exchanges. We engage foreign and U.S. citizens in exchanges to build the foundation of trust and mutual understanding between nations essential to a secure and peaceful world; strengthen American international competitiveness and prosperity; protect America by addressing the threats of radicalization and disinformation; and promote U.S. leadership by spreading American values of democracy, press freedom and civic participation.

To pursue these foreign policy goals, ECA designs programs with specific operational emphases. We focus on youth to cultivate the next generation of global leaders. We stress outreach to underserved and marginalized communities to demonstrate the American values of diversity and fairness. We seek international opportunities for American citizens and U.S. institutions to make them more competitive in our globalized economy. We promote the learning of English as a gateway to educational and economic advancement and as a foundation for a rich international dialogue. We promote study in the United States for foreign students and study abroad for Americans to expand cultural, social and economic ties. We seek to empower alumni of our exchange programs, and to sustain relationships with them, to maximize the investment already made in these influencers and to benefit from their energy and experience. We use technology resourcefully and innovatively to broaden and enhance the impact of exchange programs.

ECA is committed to ensuring that our programming is responsive not only to foreign policy priorities, but also to new information and changes in context. Monitoring and evaluation have long been integral components of ECA program design and management. The Bureau continually collects data through performance monitoring, partner reporting, and third-party evaluations. These data are used to determine whether programs are achieving our goals and objectives or if course modifications or program revisions are necessary. The Bureau continues to prioritize and refine its monitoring and evaluation efforts to ensure that our programming is relevant, dynamic and responsive.

ECA's operations through 2022 will chiefly be devoted to advancing four foreign policy goals for which international exchanges have a demonstrated positive impact, and to one management goal. ECA will:

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1. Promote American leadership through people-to-people exchanges that advance American foreign policy objectives and deepen the mutual understanding that underpins U.S. relationships with foreign countries.
2. Renew America's competitive advantage for sustained economic growth by increasing the global skills of Americans and expanding the reach of U.S. businesses and institutions.
3. Counter foreign government disinformation and foster alternatives to radicalization through international exchange programs.
4. Promote American values through professional, educational, and cultural programs that bolster democratic principles and encourage strong civil society institutions, human rights, and independent media.
5. Ensure effectiveness of ECA programs and accountability to the American taxpayer by evaluating programs robustly, expanding use of virtual technologies, and leveraging relationships with program alumni.

## **2. Bureau Strategic Framework**

**Goal 1. Promote American leadership through people-to-people exchanges that advance American foreign policy objectives and deepen the mutual understanding that underpins U.S. relationships with foreign countries.**

Objective 1.1: Foster greater understanding of the United States and its foreign policy through flexible, targeted, and responsive exchange programs.

**Goal 2. Renew America's competitive advantage for sustained economic growth by increasing the global skills of Americans, bridging the skills gaps that are keeping some workers from jobs, and expanding the reach of U.S. businesses and institutions.**

Objective 2.1: Expand participation of diverse U.S. institutions and Americans in ECA's academic, professional, and cultural exchange programs through vigorous and targeted promotion and recruitment.

Objective 2.2: Extend the impact of exchange programs for American participants by providing alumni outreach and networking, professional development and mentorship opportunities.

Objective 2.3: Increase the contribution of exchange programs to local economies in the United States, and engagement of U.S. businesses, non-governmental organizations and educational institutions.

Objective 2.4: Encourage an increase in foreign student enrollment in U.S. higher education institutions through EducationUSA advising centers worldwide.

Objective 2.5: Increase job skills of U.S. and foreign exchange participants.

**Goal 3. Counter foreign government disinformation and foster alternatives to radicalization through international exchange programs.**

Objective 3.1: Counter foreign government disinformation through programs that develop critical thinking and media literacy skills and empower emerging and established leaders and influencers.

Objective 3.2: Combat radicalization by building the professional capacity of exchange participants and expanding their networks and skills.

**Goal 4. Promote American values through professional, educational, and cultural programs that bolster democratic principles, strengthen the rule of law, and encourage strong civil society institutions, human rights, and independent media.**

Objective 4.1: Promote American values through programming that focuses on issues related to youth, women, and other under-served populations in international exchange programs.

Objective 4.2: Enhance foreign exchange participants' understanding of American values through ECA programming.

**Management Goal. Ensure effectiveness of ECA programs and accountability to the American taxpayer by evaluating programs robustly, expanding use of virtual technologies, and leveraging relationships with program alumni.**

Management Objective 5.1: Extend the reach and impact of ECA exchanges to larger audiences through the use of innovative public diplomacy tools, including virtual platforms and on-demand programming.

Management Objective 5.2: Amplify the impact of exchange alumni programming through expanded engagement with American and foreign alumni.

Management Objective 5.3: Heighten transparency and validate accurate reporting across all ECA offices by implementing a Bureau-wide knowledge management system.

Management Objective 5.4: Enhance the quality and effectiveness of ECA programs through collaborative program monitoring and robust evaluation, both internally and externally with all ECA partner organizations.

Management Objective 5.5: Safeguard the health, safety and welfare of exchange participants through program and participant monitoring, increased resource awareness training, and continued timely response to emergency incidents.

### 3. Goals and Objectives

**Bureau Goal 1. Promote American leadership through people-to-people exchanges to advance American foreign policy objectives and deepen the mutual understanding that underpins U.S. relationships with foreign countries.**

**Description and Linkages:** ECA exchange programs deepen mutual understanding between the United States and foreign populations, supporting our work with international partners on global challenges and building stronger relationships with foreign nations. ECA provides the people-to-people exchange mechanism to advance foreign policy goals over time and during periods of fast-moving international crises or opportunities. Goal 1 links with the Champion American Values objective under Goal IV in the 2017 National Security Strategy.

**Bureau Objective 1.1** Foster greater understanding of the United States and its foreign policy through flexible, targeted, and responsive exchange programs.

**Justification:** ECA's exchange programs are uniquely positioned to promote greater understanding and trust between influential foreign participants and American institutions and people. Established and emerging foreign leaders who visit the United States make life-changing professional and personal contacts and understand better the context of American foreign policy decision-making. Through performance monitoring, ECA's Evaluation Division continually collects data on the Bureau's programs to track results. Baseline, end-of-program, and follow-up data are collected from program participants and compared across these three points to assess effectiveness. Both program officers and senior management incorporate these data into program planning and goal setting. **Risk.** Attitudes of participants towards the United States can be shaped by external circumstances unrelated to ECA programs that cannot be controlled.

**Bureau Goal 2. Renew America's competitive advantage for sustained economic growth by increasing the global skills of Americans, bridging the skills gaps that are keeping some workers from jobs, and expanding the reach of U.S. businesses and institutions.**

**Description and Linkages:** The ability of Americans to work in the global economy is enhanced through foreign language learning and exposure to foreign cultures, and professional opportunities abroad. ECA exchange programs provide these tangible benefits to Americans. To increase global competitiveness, ECA helps to internationalize U.S. campuses and workplaces through providing Americans with exposure to and knowledge of foreign cultures by attracting foreign students and professionals to the United States to study and work alongside Americans – an effort that contributes more than \$39 billion a year to the U.S. economy. Goal 2 links with the FY 2018-22 Joint Strategic Plan's Objective 3.3 to increase partnerships with the private sector and civil society organizations to mobilize support and resources and shape foreign public opinion.

**Bureau Objective 2.1** Expand participation of diverse U.S. institutions and Americans in ECA's academic, professional, and cultural exchange programs through vigorous and targeted promotion and recruitment.

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**Justification:** All ECA exchange programs seek out Americans of diverse backgrounds. Participant recruitment has expanded to many American higher education institutions, including community colleges and minority-serving institutions (MSIs), that have not traditionally benefited from international exchange programs. These schools, through the impetus of ECA's funded exchanges, can host international students and scholars, as well as encourage their own students to take advantage of study abroad programs. This international exposure reaps direct academic and professional benefits for under-served Americans. **Risk.** Exchange participants often prefer more well-known institutions, and could reject opportunities at other institutions. American participants from under-served backgrounds can be more subject to economic pressures that keep them from participating in exchanges.

**Bureau Objective 2.2** Extend the impact of exchange programs for American exchange participants and alumni by providing networking, professional development and mentorship opportunities.

**Justification:** ECA exchanges for American participants and alumni are both academically and professionally enhancing. The content of each exchange is enriched by mentoring and other follow-on professional development programs that provide a structured introduction to new opportunities for work and collaboration. **Risk.** Because alumni participation is voluntary, it is possible that alumni might not take advantage of opportunities afforded to them. Alumni have existing local professional networks and opportunities that may be more compelling than those offered by ECA and the Embassy.

**Bureau Objective 2.3** Increase the contribution of exchange programs to local economies in the United States, and engagement of U.S. businesses, non-government organizations and educational institutions.

**Justification:** ECA has an expanding pool of U.S. private sector partners. These partners range from professionals who share their specialized skills with foreign exchange participants, to schools and universities hosting educational exchanges, to businesses that host foreign professionals who, in the process, contribute to Americans' international expertise and networks. The in-kind contributions of the American private sector to U.S. government-funded or managed exchange programs are captured by these categories: U.S.-based hosting educational institutions (K-12 and higher education institutions) for academic exchanges; hosting and mentoring U.S. businesses, universities, NGOs and foundations for citizen exchanges; U.S. professionals with specialized skills for the International Visitor Leadership Program, and American business or organizational sponsors for private sector exchanges. **Risk.** Economic factors not under ECA's control could affect the willingness of organizations to pursue partnership with ECA.

**Bureau Objective 2.4** Encourage an increase in foreign student enrollment in U.S. higher education institutions through EducationUSA advising centers worldwide.

**Justification :** EducationUSA advising centers offer free professional student advising, and reach out worldwide to potential students through open houses, trainings, presentations at



universities, social media campaigns, videos, and other resources. Study in the United States by international students directly contributes to the U.S. economy through the influx of funds for tuition, housing, and related expenses, with nearly 70% of the costs borne by the international students, their families, foreign governments, and other foreign entities. American students and communities are enriched through living and learning alongside individuals from different cultures and with different perspectives, thereby enhancing the personal and professional skills of Americans to compete in the 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce. More than one million foreign students studied in the United States in 2016/17, supporting more than 450,000 domestic jobs and contributing more than \$39.4 billion to the U.S. economy. **Risk.** A variety of factors, including foreign competition, economic issues, and perceptions of safety that are not under ECA's control could affect the willingness of individuals to study in the United States.

**Bureau Objective 2.5** Increase job skills of U.S. and foreign exchange participants.

**Justification:** There are worldwide skills gaps, especially in the area of STEM education, that have kept some workers from being able to find jobs in developing new fields. ECA endeavors to bridge those skills gaps by making professional skills development a central part of many exchanges. Many ECA programs provide training in STEM and IT skills, training in English language for foreign exchange participants, business development, professional internships or mentoring, or seminars. Training programs and network building incorporated in ECA exchanges also help researchers bring their discoveries to the marketplace. Both American citizen and foreign participants in ECA exchanges are equipped with skills which directly enable them to develop professionally, expand their networks, and bridge the skills gap. For many, this is a key factor in future success. **Risk:** ECA's establishing legislation bases our activity on forging and strengthening people-to-people relationships which move foreign policy objectives. Job skills elements are successfully incorporated into a wide range of exchange activities but are not the central focus. Successful exchanges depend on many factors, some of which are not controlled by ECA.

**Bureau Goal 3. Counter foreign government disinformation and foster alternatives to radicalization through international exchange programs.**

**Description and Linkages:** In response to the Administration priority of combatting radicalization, ECA offers exchange programs that encourage participants to share information on the drivers of violent extremism, to promote messages that counter extremist narratives and recruitment tactics, to explore educational approaches to building resilience, and to engage tribal and religious leaders, youth, women, and civil society. Goal 3 links with Objective 1.3 of the FY 2018-22 Joint Strategic Plan to counter instability, transnational crime and violence and the National Security Strategy objective to combat radicalization and recruitment in communities. Additionally, in response to Congressional priorities of countering foreign disinformation campaigns, ECA has plans to expand exchange programs that engage participants in expanding media literacy and journalism skills. This links directly to Congressional mandates provided in ECA's FY 2018 appropriation.

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**Bureau Objective 3.1** Counter foreign government disinformation through programs that develop critical thinking and media literacy skills and empower emerging and established leaders and influencers.

**Justification:** Where disinformation campaigns seek to sow mistrust in democratic institutions and distort public opinion, ECA programs offer opportunities for individuals to see, hear, and speak for themselves. Exchanges promote the critical thinking that fosters reality-based narratives, build audience resilience to disinformation, empower civil society, and deepen relationships with local leaders who can amplify U.S. government efforts to gain credibility and trust among key audiences. ECA programs strengthen independent media and improve media literacy among vulnerable audiences by sharpening their judgment and analysis skills. **Risk.** Audiences which have already been influenced by disinformation may distrust any USG information.

**Bureau Objective 3.2** Combat radicalization by building the professional capacity of exchange participants and expanding their networks and skills.

**Justification:** ECA exchange programs on countering violent extremism (CVE) focus on many aspects of this global challenge, including religious intolerance and sectarian conflict, terrorist finance and recruitment, and cultural heritage destruction. ECA exchange program participants gain exposure to new methods for preventing and countering extremism, develop networks with their counterparts in other countries and in the United States, and share best practices to deploy in their workplaces and communities. ECA will survey what participants themselves report that they learned and are applying from their CVE programs in the United States. **Risk.** Labelling some ECA exchanges as CVE programs can make them suspect and keep people from participating.

**Bureau Goal 4. Promote American values through professional, educational, and cultural programs that bolster democratic principles, strengthen the rule of law, and encourage strong civil society institutions, human rights, and independent media.**

**Description and Linkages:** ECA exchange programs expose participants to democratic practices and institutions. They promote human rights, inclusivity, the rule of law, independent and responsible journalism, and respect for the dignity of the individual. This goal supports Joint Strategic Plan Objective 3.3 to increase partnerships with the private sector and civil society organizations as well as Strategic Goal 4 of the FY 2017 National Security Strategy to advance American influence by championing American values.

**Bureau Objective 4.1** Promote American values through programming that focuses on issues related to youth and young professionals, women, and traditionally underrepresented populations in international exchange programs.

**Justification:** ECA's diverse programming is a concrete demonstration of the United States commitment to human rights and strong, inclusive democracies. This is especially true of our targeted programming for youth. ECA programs in this broad category cover the ages 15-35,

including secondary school students and those emerging into professional and academic careers. Young people who apply for professional, study and/or cultural experience in the United States – or who are recruited for State Department-sponsored international exchanges – remain a priority for Embassies and Consulates and for the relevant Department of State program offices. **Risk.** Identifying potential leaders is more difficult than identifying current and rising leaders.

**Bureau Objective 4.2** Enhance foreign exchange participants' understanding of American values through ECA programming.

**Justification:** ECA programs are designed to expose foreign visitors to as many aspects of American culture as possible in communities, workplaces, and homes. Visitors learn through observation and experience how American values inform choices and civic responsibilities. Through performance surveying, ECA's Evaluation Division monitors the Bureau's programs to track results. Baseline, end-of-program, and follow-up data collected from program participants and compared across points in time assist in assessment of effectiveness. Both program officers and senior management incorporate this data into program planning and goal setting. **Risk.** In spite of rigorous administrative oversight and care, there will inevitably be some negative exchange program experiences.

## 4. Management Goals and Objectives

**Management Goal. Ensure effectiveness of ECA programs and accountability to the American taxpayer by evaluating programs robustly, expanding use of virtual technologies, and leveraging relationships with program alumni.**

**Description and Linkages:** ECA's management goal reflects our aspiration to the highest standards possible in the design and implementation of international exchanges. Goal 5 links with Goal 4 (Ensure Effectiveness and Accountability to the American Taxpayer) of the FY 2018-2022 Joint Strategic Plan.

**Management Objective 5.1** Extend the reach and impact of ECA exchanges to larger audiences through the use of innovative public diplomacy tools, including virtual platforms and on-demand programming.

**Justification:** Offices across ECA promote innovation in public diplomacy by incorporating digital elements into in-person exchanges and promoting the use of virtual and blended exchange program models. For example, the Collaboratory pilots multi-faceted programs that create models for reaching new audiences, involving more Americans in exchanges, and strengthening person-to-person engagement around the globe. Digital platforms are also helping ECA continue to strengthen the quality of English language teaching by expanding access to teaching materials and virtual learning tools. **Risk.** Connectivity and Internet-enabled devices are in short supply among many target groups for virtual exchange; program design has to take this factor into account.

**Management Objective 5.2** Amplify the impact of exchange alumni programming through expanded engagement with American and foreign alumni.

**Justification:** Alumni of ECA exchanges are some of the most credible foreign voices of support for the United States abroad. Engagement with these alumni maintains and builds U.S. relationships with current and emerging leaders. In partnership with U.S. missions overseas, we support country-specific and regional networks through which exchange alumni engage with one another and participate in initiatives that promote U.S. foreign policy goals. **Risk.** Alumni engagement requires on-going management; building programming and communication for post-exchange program connection is subject to the personnel and time commitment of Public Affairs Sections and can be overwhelmed by other priorities.

**Management Objective 5.3** Heighten transparency and validate accurate reporting across all ECA offices by implementing a Bureau-wide knowledge management system.

**Justification:** Knowledge management is a priority of the Bureau. The use of multiple databases requires a concerted plan for efficient reporting of program participants and budgets. The Bureau's leadership has committed to the development of a dashboard that can produce enterprise-wide reports in real time. **Risk.** Unexpected challenges to the implementation.

**Management Objective 5.4** Enhance the quality and effectiveness of ECA programs through collaborative program monitoring and robust evaluation, both internally and externally with all ECA partner organizations.

**Justification:** ECA must sustain an organizational culture of collaborative monitoring, evaluation, both within the Bureau and among our partner organizations. By supporting the monitoring and evaluating of our programs under a cohesive framework, ECA will be able to more effectively utilize the data gathered to identify and remediate real-time challenges associated with our programs, measure our programming efforts against the goals and objectives of our foreign policy goals, and provide greater accountability and transparency to our primary stakeholders, the American people. **Risk.** Collection and interpretation of evaluation data require intensive coordination of effort among senior Bureau managers, program officers and implementing partners. Any element of this coordination can prove difficult to implement due to intervening events or staffing gaps.

**Bureau Objective 5.5** Safeguard the health, safety and welfare of exchange participants through program and participant monitoring, increased resource awareness training, and continued timely response to emergency incidents.

**Justification:** The welfare and safety of exchange participants are paramount to ECA. ECA takes this responsibility seriously not only as the exchange provider, but also given the need to ensure the continued viability of international exchange as a public diplomacy tool for forging and maintaining relationships with influencers and leaders around the world. The Bureau seeks to enhance all the possible training and communications mechanisms at its disposal to ensure the best conditions for exchange participants. **Risk.** Multiple actors increase the difficulty of coordinating rapid responses to emergency situations.