

CULTURAL EXCHANGES THROUGH THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Strengthening Ties Between the United States and the World

ACTION NEEDED

We urge Congress to:

- Appropriate \$115 million to the Office of Citizen Exchanges within the State Department’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs in the FY 2023 State and Foreign Operations appropriations bill.
- Direct the State Department to dedicate increased resources to, and increase operational capacity within, the Cultural Programs Division to strengthen its ability to oversee grants and programs. Despite increases overall for the Office of Citizen Exchanges—the Cultural Programs Department is funded at lower levels now than five years ago, including competitively awarded programs and those run by the State Department.
- Encourage the State Department to evaluate and publicly report on the impact, value, and success of arts diplomacy as part of its strategies to build cross-cultural understanding.

Office of Citizen Exchanges Annual Appropriations, FY 2010 to present (in millions of dollars)*

| FY10 | FY11 | FY12 | FY13 | FY14 | FY15 | FY16 | FY17-18 | FY19-20 | FY21 |
|-------|--------|--------|------|-------|-------|-------|---------|----------|----------|
| \$102 | \$95.4 | \$99.4 | \$96 | \$101 | \$100 | \$102 | \$111.4 | \$111.86 | \$115.86 |

*These amounts represent the total funding for the Office of Citizen Exchanges, which includes a variety of exchange programs, including sports and youth programs. Federal budgets do not indicate totals for these individual programs.

TALKING POINTS

- **Policymakers and diplomacy experts agree that cultural exchange enhances international understanding.**
 - A January 2017 report from the nonpartisan Center for Strategic and International Studies states that while the U.S. has invested heavily in hard power tactics to fight terrorism, “it has overlooked the soft power necessary to blunt the appeal of extremist ideologies.” The report also states that public diplomacy “requires a toolkit of information, cultural, and educational activities and is not defined by one particular program,” and that it is important to understand the “role that [public diplomacy] as a whole plays in our national security.”
 - At South by Southwest (SXSW) in 2014, U.S. House Homeland Security Committee Chairman Michael McCaul (R-TX), said, “I think Western music could have an influence in countries where people otherwise don’t want to listen to us. We need a combination of hard and soft power, and I think the music piece goes to that soft power idea.”
 - Cultural diplomacy programs are implemented through public-private partnerships. In 2020, the Cultural Programs Division, which manages programs such as the American Film Showcase, American Music Abroad, and the Arts Envoy Program, received \$12.15 million, according to the [U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy](#).
 - According to the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA), 85,000 participants attended a concert/interacted with American Music Abroad musicians in 2016. And in 2013, cultural programs reached 9 million foreign participants.
- Increased funding and operational capacity for the Cultural Programs Division will strengthen exchange and collaboration in the arts and culture fields that build bridges among people of different countries, cultures, and faiths.

- According to a January 2017 report released by the State Department’s U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy, public diplomacy programs receive only 2% of the entire State Department and USAID FY 2016 planned budget.
- A review of 29 studies on public diplomacy in 2005 identified the most popular recommendation for public diplomacy reform was to increase U.S. exchange programs. The studies were compiled by the nonpartisan Congressional Research Service.
- An October 2009 report by the New York University Brademas Center called for America to have a renewed role in cultural exchange and cultural diplomacy. “To these ends, [the] report recommends that international arts and cultural exchanges be integrated into the planning strategies of U.S. policymakers as a key element of public diplomacy. History has proven that robust public diplomacy is essential to U.S. national security and the promotion of American interests around the globe. The arts community has observed first-hand the value of international artistic exchanges in promoting moderation and tolerance among widely diverse religious and cultural groups.”
- **Cultural exchange supports U.S. industry and employment.**
 - According to the National Governors Association’s report, *How States Are Using Arts & Culture to Strengthen Their Global Trade Development*, state governments find that including artistic and cultural exchanges in their international trade and business development serves to expand trading relationships with other nations and open markets abroad as a complement to more traditional efforts to generate exports.
 - 90% of ECA’s appropriation is spent in the United States or invested directly in American citizens or American organizations, according to a 2015-2016 NAFSA Economic Analysis.
 - International exchange prepares Americans for success in the global economy. Data shows 73% of U.S. employers put significant value on international experience when hiring, according to a study from the British Council and NAFSA: Association of International Educators.
 - Exchanges bring resources to U.S. communities. Virtually the entire State Department exchanges budget is spent on American participants or in the United States.

BACKGROUND

The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) at the State Department is responsible for the public diplomacy activities of the United States, including international cultural exchange programs. Within ECA, the Cultural Programs Division focuses on cultural diplomacy, exchange, and collaboration by sharing the rich artistic traditions of the United States. The Cultural Programs Division provides grant opportunities to U.S. nonprofits for cultural exchange activities; residencies, mentoring, and training programs; programs that are carried out overseas by or under the sponsorship of U.S. Embassy public diplomacy offices; and presentations at major international visual arts exhibitions and cultural centers.

Congress has continued to demonstrate bipartisan support in recent years for cultural exchange programs. For Fiscal Year 2022, Congress funded U.S. Department of State’s educational and cultural exchange programs at \$753 million, which is the largest amount of funding in recent years.

For a complete listing of programs, please visit: <http://exchanges.state.gov/us/special-focus-areas>

Issue brief prepared by the Cultural Advocacy Group, a collaboration of arts and culture stakeholders working collectively to advance federal policy. Updated 2021.