



## United States Department of State

*Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs*

*Washington, D.C. 20522*

May 8, 2014

Dear Sponsor,

It is hard to believe I am embarking on my third year as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Private Sector Exchange. I am proud of our many shared accomplishments throughout the past two years. I have seen sponsors embrace our messages and vision, and take ownership over the new direction of the Exchange Visitor Program. I look forward to continuing to develop and strengthen the Department's relationship with sponsors in 2014, and to seeing continued excellence in private sector exchange programs.

### Communicating our progress

Communication has always been important to me, and I will continue the practice of conducting quarterly conference calls with sponsors this year, and of incorporating outreach and listening sessions with sponsors in categories we are reviewing. We have received positive feedback from sponsors on these initiatives. Also, we are meeting with program participants to hear their impression of their exchange programs firsthand, and to draw on their ideas for new directions. I asked you to share examples of ways the Exchange Visitor Program advances our public diplomacy goals, and we will continue our efforts to share those stories with the public through our website, [www.J1Visa.state.gov](http://www.J1Visa.state.gov). This site shows sponsors, hosts, and program participants what is going on around the country, and provides new ideas for their own programs.

### Measuring the impact of our programs

We hope to improve the quality of our programs by measuring their impact, and we are increasing surveys and field visits as part of that. You are an important part of this effort. I want to thank sponsors who have encouraged their participants to fill out our surveys. Robust participation is essential in this endeavor. Compliance also has an impact on program quality and we have seen sponsors contribute to our efforts by correcting course on their own and creating stronger programs as a result. These actions bring all of us closer together in advancing the same top priority: a safe and exceptional Exchange Visitor Program that meets the Department's highest standards.

### Achieving U.S. foreign policy goals together

What we do together is an important part of U.S. foreign policy. Many of you have told me that you are eager to learn about the Department's top priorities, and what you can do to advance them. To put a sharp focus on how our work together serves the American people, we

shared Under Secretary Rick Stengel's first message with you earlier this year. We are extremely pleased he was confirmed and has begun his ambitious tenure as Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs. If you are on Twitter, I encourage you to follow him regularly at @stengel. If you didn't get a chance to read his message, it is copied at the end of this letter.

As Under Secretary Stengel mentioned in that message, environmental diplomacy, entrepreneurship and youth engagement are top themes for the entire Department. There is a great deal we can do together to advance these policy objectives. On the issue of environmental diplomacy, as many of you may know, John Kerry has been an advocate for environmental and climate issues for decades. During my time on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, I witnessed then Chairman Kerry's full and total commitment to advancing the climate agenda on Capitol Hill. Now, as Secretary of State, he has called upon all of us to embrace President Obama's climate agenda through specific objectives. Attached is a document detailing the Department's major goals in this area. I would like to invite those of you who have climate or environmental programming – be it academic or on-the-ground practical work – to send us stories and examples of your programs. We are working to compile a picture of how exchanges are contributing to the Department's specific goals, and the climate and environmental agenda writ large. We are thinking broadly, so if you have even a related program, send it along to [EVPbestpractices@state.gov](mailto:EVPbestpractices@state.gov).

Many sponsors have heard us talk about entrepreneurship. President Obama and Secretary Kerry are passionate about promoting the idea of entrepreneurship and providing tools for aspiring entrepreneurs, especially to youth around the world. Secretary Kerry's recent remarks at the Fourth Global Entrepreneurship Summit lend an insightful view into how we conceptualize entrepreneurship. The link to his remarks can be found [here](#). Entrepreneurship already serves as a central component to many EVP sponsors' programs. In the spirit of sharing best practices, we also encourage you to tell us about your entrepreneurship or related programs (photos, narratives, and participant testimonials are encouraged as well). Again, we would like to see what is already happening in this space, and we are eager to hear from you if this applies to a program you are implementing. We encourage you to send your examples to us at [EVPbestpractices@state.gov](mailto:EVPbestpractices@state.gov).

### Fostering alumni engagement

Many of you have heard me talk about ensuring a lasting impact of exchanges and alumni engagement. This year, we are doubling down on those interconnected objectives. As Assistant Secretary Evan Ryan said recently,

*Throughout our programs we are redoubling our emphasis on lasting impact and action. We want to ensure that our exchange participants return and have a personal*

*plan about how they can be change agents in their own communities. We have to be able to tell the stories about how international exchanges are moving the needle for America's goals and relationships around the world. This will mean not only tailoring our programs to be action-oriented, but providing follow-on opportunities for participants when they return home, ongoing connection with ECA and the United States, providing mentorship opportunities, seed funding for projects, and plugging them into networks that will expand their reach.*

Assistant Secretary Ryan is focused on building our alumni engagement potential in ECA. You all have enormous opportunity in your hands to develop long-lasting relationships with the participants you sponsor. I encourage you to focus on high functioning programs, to measure their quality, and to build alumni networks. We know exchange participants have a specific reason for investing their own time and means to come to the United States, and to do so through your exchange programs. This is powerful and we only want to heighten their enthusiasm as they return home and begin mapping out how their exchange experience will fit into their next professional steps. In the future, we hope to launch a system for your participants to opt into an alumni network with the Department. In the meantime, you can start the ball rolling by creating alumni networks, and keeping track of your current and former participants. I encourage you to let us know what alumni efforts you are making, what programs you have, and what compels, excites, and inspires your alumni. Please feel free to send those stories to [PrivateExchangeAlumni@State.gov](mailto:PrivateExchangeAlumni@State.gov). And, by the way, you can find Assistant Secretary Ryan's entire speech [here](#). I encourage you to follow her on Twitter, as well, at @ECA\_AS.

This is the year of lasting effects, and building even stronger collaboration with our partners. I look forward to learning more about your efforts in these areas, and more.

With warm wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robin J. Lerner". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Robin" being the most prominent.

Robin J. Lerner  
Deputy Assistant Secretary  
for Private Sector Exchange  
Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs

A Message to the Public Diplomacy Community  
From  
Richard Stengel, Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs

On my first morning as Under Secretary, I wanted to reach out to our many friends and partners who extend, amplify and inform our public diplomacy. You are valued stakeholders in the public diplomacy community and I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself and share my vision for public diplomacy.

While I am new to government service, I feel I've been involved in a form of public diplomacy for much of my life as a journalist and editor. We are living in a new age of diplomacy and global engagement and America is leading that effort. As Secretary Kerry always says, "Diplomacy works." Diplomacy can, and does, make the world a better and safer place, and every day, in thousands of different ways, America is engaged all across the globe.

Public diplomacy and public affairs have a vital role to play in our foreign policy and national security. We will continue to make sure that our public diplomacy is focused on advancing our foreign policy objectives and goals. To that end, I'm looking at a few priorities vital to our national interests.

First, two larger points about youth and technology that affect everything else.

- With nearly half the world's population under the age of 30, we need to forge new and deeper connections with young leaders so that they see America as a beacon and as an ally. It is important to our strategic interests that they understand our foreign policy even if they don't always agree with it. Young people do not have the longstanding connections to or perceptions about America that their parents might have, and this is both a challenge and an opportunity. Our youth focus will put special attention on girls and under-served youth.
- Social media and mobile technology are transformational tools. We need to move toward a digital-first strategy. That doesn't mean digital only; far from it. It means that our content and programs and messaging should build out from an integrated digital platform. In places around the world where FM radio is the way to reach people, we will build it out from a digital foundation. This isn't pie-in-the-sky; this is reality. These new technologies will be especially helpful in reaching young people who expect to have a conversation with us, rather than just receiving messages.

Now some specific areas of focus:

**Entrepreneurism:** We are the entrepreneurial nation and our ability to innovate is one of our most valuable exports. It is also an integral and positive part of the American brand, especially with young people. Economic diplomacy is also a priority for the President and the Secretary. I intend to scale up programs that help entrepreneurs and start-ups around the world and connect

successful American business leaders with aspiring entrepreneurs. We should be looking not only to promote economic opportunity but to do so among disadvantaged groups.

**Educational Diplomacy:** Higher education is one of America's greatest strategic assets, and we must use it. Our educational institutions are laboratories of democracy, while English skills are critical to success in the new global economy. Our educational exchanges need to move into the 21st century and adapt to new technologies like MOOCs and new areas of expertise such as STEM so that they can continue their role as incubators of democracy. We need to use our leadership in technology and innovation to create young scientific and technological innovators – especially young women who have been under-served in this area.

**Environmental Diplomacy:** Secretary Kerry has stressed from day one that it will take nothing less than a global conversation to educate, inform, awaken and activate millions of people around the world about the environmental challenges the world faces – challenges which cannot be solved by any single nation. Whether it's global climate change or the plight of the oceans, the Secretary is determined to help the President awaken our consciousness globally about a range of environmental issues. This requires a massive public diplomacy effort.

**Countering Violent Extremism:** It is vital to our national security that we provide people, particularly young people in at-risk environments, with alternatives to the misguided ideological justifications for using violence. We must confront distortion with reality and rebut lies with truth. We will expand and coordinate the State Department's worldwide efforts to counter radicalization and combat violent extremist messaging.

**Professional Growth:** We cannot succeed unless our people are prepared and supported to succeed. It is critical that public diplomacy be valued as a core element of our overall foreign policy mission and that our public diplomacy professionals receive the training, resources and institutional recognition to ensure success in that mission. We need a new 21st century tool kit for public diplomacy. I am passionately committed to the growth and development of our profession.

These are big issues that require a focused alignment of resources, and sustained effort. I aim to reinvigorate public diplomacy, ensure our practitioners are on the forefront of technology, and keep public diplomacy an integral part of our larger policy goals. I am keenly aware of the robust contributions you can bring to our mutual interests. So I welcome your thoughts and seek your support. You are part of a broad public diplomacy network and your partnership is critical to successful, dynamic American public diplomacy. I look forward to meeting and working with you in the coming weeks.

# ADDRESSING CLIMATE CHANGE: A TOP U.S. PRIORITY



*“The global climate challenge is about opportunity, security, even our very survival in the long term.”*

- Secretary of State John Kerry

Climate change is one of our most urgent, complex, and far-reaching challenges. It also presents opportunities to strengthen U.S. and global security and promote economic growth.

## URGENT ACTION NEEDED

Climate change poses multiple threats to U.S. and global security. It is likely to exacerbate economic and social inequality, and increase competition and conflict over agricultural, marine, and water resources. It can result in the massive displacement of people, including those whose livelihoods depend on these resources.

The case for climate action is rooted in sound science and economics. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has laid out clear and compelling scientific evidence of climate change and its link to human influence. Glaciers are melting, heat waves are more frequent and longer-lasting, and sea levels are rising more quickly than anticipated. Climate change also presents an opportunity to advance new technologies, grow our economies, and strengthen communities. Working together, we can rise to meet this global challenge and create cleaner, healthier communities.

## PRESIDENTIAL PRIORITY

Recognizing the threats and opportunities presented by climate change, President Obama announced a three-part Climate Action Plan in June 2013:

- Cut carbon pollution in the United States: the United States has implemented stringent, long-term standards for vehicle emissions, increased building and appliance efficiency, doubled electricity generation from wind and sun, and is developing standards to cut carbon pollution from power plants;
- Prepare the United States for the impacts of climate change; and
- Lead international efforts to address global climate change.

The Plan builds on President Obama’s 2010 Policy Directive on Global Development that elevated the Global Climate Change Initiative (GCCCI) as a Presidential development

initiative. The GCCCI integrates climate change considerations into U.S. foreign assistance and advances practical, on-the-ground solutions worldwide – helping developing countries reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve resiliency to climate change impacts.

## LEADING INTERNATIONALLY

Building off his decades of leadership on climate change, Secretary Kerry is making global climate change a top foreign policy priority, including focusing the Department’s efforts to:

- **Conclude a new international climate change agreement** – working through the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change to negotiate a new, ambitious international climate agreement applicable to all countries by 2015 to take effect in 2020;
- **Implement the GCCCI** – undertaking a pragmatic, whole-of-government approach to speed the transition to a low-carbon, climate-resilient future, including 1) promoting clean energy solutions around the world; 2) slowing, halting, and reversing emissions from land use; and 3) helping the most vulnerable countries strengthen climate resilience;
- **Enhance other multilateral and bilateral engagement** – helping lead efforts in the Major Economies Forum, Clean Energy Ministerial, Montreal Protocol, and the Climate and Clean Air Coalition to Reduce Short-Lived Climate Pollutants, as well as through bilateral efforts with over 50 partner countries;
- **Mobilize financial resources** – working to mobilize and leverage billions of dollars of funding to transform our energy economies and promote sustainable land use, as well as working to reduce fossil fuel subsidies and to limit public funding for high-carbon energy production and infrastructure; and
- **Integrate climate change with other priorities** – better integrating climate solutions into cross-cutting challenges, including women’s empowerment, urbanization, conflict and security, and our own management and operations.