



American Spaces

Engaging Foreign Publics in Support of U.S. Foreign Policy



The American Center in Hanoi models a high-tech look and feel.

American Spaces are modern physical settings tailored for engaging with foreign audiences in support of United States foreign policy objectives. They serve to build bridges between people of the United States and other countries, increasing understanding, collaboration and partnership.

Connecting People to Policy

American Spaces reflect the qualities of openness and accessibility that are associated with American ideals. They are well positioned to deliver compelling programming designed to attract and engage specific audiences in conversations and activities tied to broad U.S. foreign policy interests as well as to country-specific objectives.

Residing in universities, shopping malls, libraries and other public places, as well as embassy compounds, American Spaces impart a welcoming and inspiring American-themed environment. They are geared to promote open, free-flowing dialogue, showcasing American values, ideals, ideas and opinions. Trained staff and modern technology connect with foreign publics -- virtually and in person.

Global Reach - Prioritized Investment

The Office of American Spaces in the State Department's Bureau of International Information Programs (IIP) provides centralized oversight, strategic direction, training and guidance for all American Spaces worldwide. In that role, the office administers an annual distribution of funds focused specifically on enhancing the impact of American Spaces in advancing U.S. foreign policy priorities.

The American Spaces Support Funds budget allocates \$15 million for programming, modern technology, internet connectivity, staffing and facility enhancements. The budget supports approximately 500 American Spaces in more than 150 countries. The individual embassies and consulates that manage and set goals for the American Spaces in their areas provide additional funding.

For fiscal year 2016-17, the Department of State designated 67 American Spaces to receive priority for investment. The designations, which are reviewed every other year, recognize the need to develop the highest capabilities and capacities in locations where the department has determined that strong public engagement venues are of the greatest strategic value in supporting U.S. foreign policy priorities.

Various Models - Same Mission

The phrase “American Spaces” is an umbrella term that encompasses a variety of models worldwide based on the capabilities, opportunities and U.S. government needs in various foreign environments. These are the primary types of American Spaces:

- **American Centers:** These facilities, numbering only 34 worldwide, are owned or leased by the U.S. government and operated by a U.S. government staff. In many cases the United States has owned the facilities for decades, according them strong positions in the bilateral relationships. This model is important in authoritarian environments where the United States can do public outreach and provide true freedom of information only at a U.S. government-controlled facility.
- **Binational Centers:** Concentrated in Latin America, these are the oldest types of American Spaces. Formed as partnerships with local independent organizations, they support connections with the United States through teaching English and providing cultural and other programs.
- **American Corners:** The most prevalent model by far, these are embassy or consulate partnerships with host country organizations (often public libraries and universities) that provide rent-free space and often staff support for a venue that offers access to accurate information about the United States. Programs include policy discussions, English language learning, advising on study in the USA and civil society development, among many others. Many host institutions contribute additional funding.



American Corner Mostar conveys a strong visual presence.

Reaching Millions

Preliminary statistics from fiscal year 2016 show that over 71 million people visited American Spaces, participating in over 2 million instructive and high-impact programs. This 15 percent increase over the previous year demonstrates the significance of transforming American Spaces from library-style information access points to interactive programmatic platforms that not only build understanding but also inspire positive action.

Targeted investments have established American Spaces as attractive, innovative, interactive and engaging on foreign policy themes. As several American Spaces proudly completed renovations, they also achieved what previously had been a vague concept—building a common, modern identity and greater affinity across the American Spaces network.

Through partnerships with the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, the Smithsonian Institution, non-governmental players, and other State Department offices focused on policy priorities from countering violent extremism to increasing trade, American Spaces provide the platforms and programs to fulfill IIP’s mission of Connecting People with Policy.

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