# The Standards for American Spaces

**Office of American Spaces**
**Bureau of International Information Programs**
**U.S. Department of State**
**(January 1, 2016)**

The Office of American Spaces developed these standards to provide American Spaces, Embassies/Consulates and host organizations with guidelines for the services and programs an American Space should offer, the resources that should be available and how the American Space should look and feel to a visitor.

The three-level scale (bronze, silver, gold) provides a set of benchmarks for self-assessing where an American Space stands on each of the elements and for setting developmental goals. There is no expectation that an American Space should meet the highest level on any given element, but should strive to continually improve, especially on the elements that are most important to policy objectives in the country. This self-assessment should be conducted once a year, preferably by September.

Table 1

| Standards for American Spaces<br>**Programs** | | | |
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| **Elements** | **Rating Levels** | | |
| | **Bronze** | **Silver** | **Gold** |
| **Information about the USA: Strategic Programming** | Programs are linked to the Integrated Country Strategy (ICS) goals and Public Diplomacy Implementation Plan (PDIP). For non-USG American Spaces, post collaborates closely with partner. | Programs are linked to the ICS goals and PDIP. For non-USG American Spaces, post collaborates closely with partner. | Programs are linked to the ICS goals and PDIP. For non-USG American Spaces, post collaborates closely with partner as needed. |
| **Information about the USA: IIP Products** | Space uses IIP products (ShareAmerica, publications, speakers, posters, etc.) as part of program development. | Space uses IIP products (ShareAmerica, publications, speakers, posters, etc.) as part of program development. Space uses at least 2 IIP products relevant to mission goals or the 5 core programs per month. | Space uses IIP products (ShareAmerica, publications, speakers, posters, etc.) as part of program development. Space uses at least 2 IIP products relevant to mission goals or the 5 core programs per month. |
| **Information about the USA: Onsite Programs** | Space holds 12 in-person policy-related programs about the United States per year. These include target-of-opportunity or mission speakers, presentations highlighting U.S. bilateral issues, eLibraryUSA briefings and programs demonstrating concepts such as civil society, entrepreneurship, human rights, etc. Emphasis is on | Space holds 13-26 in-person policy-related programs about the United States per year. These include target-of-opportunity or mission speakers, presentations highlighting U.S. bilateral issues, eLibraryUSA briefings and programs demonstrating concepts such as civil society, entrepreneurship, human rights, etc. Emphasis | Space holds more than 26 in-person policy-related programs about the United States per year. These include target-of-opportunity or mission speakers, presentations highlighting U.S. bilateral issues, eLibraryUSA briefings and programs demonstrating concepts such as civil society, entrepreneurship, human |

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| | series or regular programming, than one-off programs. | is on series or regular programming. | rights, etc. Emphasis is on series or regular programming. |
| **Information about the USA: Virtual Programs** | Space participates in virtual programs - digital video conferences, IIP webchats/viewing parties or other types of digital programs, such as Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs). Space connects to programming produced or provided by American Spaces that serve as the country/regional hubs. | Space participates in 3-4 virtual programs - digital video conferences, IIP webchats/viewing parties or other types of digital programs, such as Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), per year. Space connects to programming produced or provided by the American Spaces that serve as country/regional hubs and occasionally leads or sponsors a virtual program. | Space organizes live audiences to participate in or originates 6-12 virtual programs - digital video conferences, IIP webchats/viewing parties or other types of digital programs, such as Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), per year. Space serves as country or regional hub for producing and marketing virtual programming. |
| **Information about the USA: eLibraryUSA** | Space makes eLibraryUSA available on its computers and promotes this resource with signs and brochures. Space provides information to users about requesting personal access. | Space makes eLibraryUSA available on its computers and promotes this resource with signs and brochures. Space conducts training sessions with target audiences on eLibraryUSA resources and provides information to users about requesting personal access. | Space makes eLibraryUSA available on its computers and promotes this resource with signs and brochures. Space conducts training sessions with target audiences on eLibraryUSA resources. Space integrates eLibraryUSA resources into its programming and provides information to users about requesting personal access. |
| **English Language Learning** | Space provides opportunity for self-study to improve English through access to current high-quality English-language materials and online resources. | Space offers activities in English and access to English-language speakers and high-quality materials. Resources are available for improving English at a self-managed pace with guidance from or interaction with staff. | Space provides consistent, progressive programming and access to high-quality English resources that enable English learning through training or usage. Space has a strategic plan for English-language learning. Space includes critical thinking skills and U.S. foreign policy objectives in English-language learning activities. Space offers access to trained teachers. Programs in English are designed and implemented by qualified English-teaching professionals. |
| **EducationUSA** | Space makes EducationUSA materials (books, links to EducationUSA website, brochures, etc.) available to visitors and has an eShop Bronze ($500) educational advising collection that is | Space makes EducationUSA materials (books, links to EducationUSA website, brochures, etc.) available to visitors and has an eShop Silver ($750) educational advising collection that is | Space is designated as an EducationUSA advising center, makes EducationUSA materials (books, links to EducationUSA website, brochures, etc.) available to visitors and has an eShop Gold ($1,000) |

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| | updated at least every three years. Staff refers students to an EducationUSA advisor in country for in-depth advising. | updated at least every three years. At least one staff member has completed the New Adviser Orientation training online and/or has received training from a senior EducationUSA adviser or REAC. Space maintains contact with a senior EducationUSA adviser in country. | educational advising collection that is updated at least every three years. A trained EducationUSA adviser has an office/area on site, hosts group information sessions and is part of the global EducationUSA network. The adviser assists students, receives U.S. higher education visitors, participates in outreach to local institutions and conducts virtual consultations.** |
| **Alumni Activities** | Space invites alumni to participate in events and to speak 2-4 times per year. | Space provides a meeting area for alumni associations (YALI, YSEALI or other country- or region-specific groups) and invites alumni to speak 5-7 times per year. | Space provides a meeting area for alumni associations (YALI, YSEALI or other country- or region-specific groups) and invites alumni to speak 8 or more times per year. Space serves as a partner for alumni projects. |
| **Community Engagement** | Space organizes and promotes 6-12 engagement programs per year. Examples include activities involving food, sports, visual arts, music, makerspaces, traveling speakers, IIP's themed poster/art exhibits, Smithsonian materials, etc. | Space organizes and promotes 13-26 engagement programs per year. Examples include activities involving food, sports, visual arts, music, makerspaces, traveling speakers, IIP's themed poster/art exhibits, Smithsonian materials, etc. | Space organizes and promotes more than 26 engagement programs per year. Examples include activities involving food, sports, visual arts, music, makerspaces, traveling speakers, IIP's themed poster/art exhibits, Smithsonian materials, etc. Space forms and maintains partnerships with local ministries or government offices in the community. |

Table 2

| Elements | Standards for American Spaces Management | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | **Rating Levels** | | |
| | **Bronze** | **Silver** | **Gold** |
| **Staff: English Proficiency** | Staff has 2/2 or higher English language skills. | Staff has 3/3 or higher English language skills and education equivalent to a two-year university degree. | Staff has 4/4 or higher English language skills and education equivalent to a 4-year or advanced university degree. |
| **Staff: Programming Capacity** | Staff organizes the 5 core programs incorporating basic policy themes. Partners may need some embassy assistance. | Staff organizes the 5 core programs incorporating foreign policy objectives. Partners need little or no embassy assistance. | Staff independently implements the 5 core programs incorporating foreign policy objectives in line with guidance provided from post. |
| **Staff: Training** | Staff has been trained by the embassy or consulate. Staff | Staff has been trained by the embassy or consulate and/or | Staff has been trained by the embassy or consulate and/or |

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| | has participated in at least one workshop. | the IRO/RELO/REAC. Staff also participates in organized workshops either in country or abroad and has participated in a partner-organized training program. | the IRO/RELO/REAC. One or more staff members serve as trainers in organized workshops and have participated in one or more partner-organized training programs. |
| **Staff: Embassy and Host Institution Oversight** | Embassy/consulate or host institution dedicates the equivalent of at least 20% of one locally employed (LE) or non-U.S. government (non-USG) staff to the American Space. One permanent American direct-hire Foreign Service officer (FSO) provides regular oversight and guidance. FSO has management oversight written into work requirements. Embassy takes a "whole of mission" approach to the American Space. | Embassy/consulate or host institution dedicates the equivalent of 40% LE or non-USG full-time staff to the American Space. One permanent American direct-hire FSO supervises staff or is significantly involved in oversight. Other embassy or consulate staff visits quarterly. Embassy takes a "whole of mission" approach to the American Space. | Embassy/consulate or host institution dedicates the equivalent of 50% or more full-time LE or non-USG staff to the American Space. One permanent American direct-hire FSO supervises staff or is significantly involved in oversight. Other embassy or consulate staff visits weekly or monthly and regularly provides speakers. Embassy takes a "whole of mission" approach to the American Space. |
| **IRO Involvement** | IRO advises posts on their American Spaces, including reviewing support funds requests. | IRO advises posts on their American Spaces, including reviewing support funds requests. | IRO advises posts on their American Spaces, including reviewing support funds requests. |
| **Funding** | Budget is tied to mission and public diplomacy goals. If the American Space is hosted, post and partner contribute funds and resources. | Budget is tied to mission and public diplomacy goals. If the American Space is hosted, post and partner contribute funds and resources. | Budget is tied to mission and public diplomacy goals. If the American Space is hosted, post and partner contribute funds and resources. |
| **Copyright and Intellectual Property** | Space honors intellectual property rights. Database license terms are followed and communicated to user groups. | Space honors intellectual property rights. Database license terms are followed and communicated to user groups. | Space honors intellectual property rights. Database license terms are followed and communicated to user groups. |
| **Planning** | Staff, with collaboration between post and partner if applicable, writes annual plan for resource development and programming. Space uses 5 core programs to plan initiatives and activities noted in the Mission Public Diplomacy Implementation Plan (PDIP) at least annually. | Staff, with collaboration between post and partner if applicable, writes annual plan for resource development and programming. Space uses 5 core programs to plan initiatives and activities noted in the Mission Public Diplomacy Implementation Plan (PDIP). Post reviews plan at least annually. | Staff, with collaboration between post and partner if applicable, writes annual plan for resource development and programming. Space uses 5 core programs to plan initiatives and activities noted in the Mission Public Diplomacy Implementation Plan (PDIP). Post reviews plan at least annually. Plan specifies quarterly implementations. |
| **Reporting** | Staff submits monthly reports on numbers of visitors, programs and attendees on time with no errors. Public | Staff submits monthly reports on numbers of visitors, programs and attendees on time with no errors. Public | Staff submits monthly reports on numbers of visitors, programs and attendees on time with no errors. Public |

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| | Affairs updates appropriate databases monthly. | Affairs updates appropriate databases monthly. | Affairs updates appropriate databases monthly. |
| **Evaluation** | Staff responds to evaluation surveys and requests from post or Washington by stated deadline. | Staff responds to evaluation surveys and requests from post or Washington by stated deadline. Staff seeks informal feedback from audiences on programs and resources. | Staff responds to evaluation surveys and requests from post or Washington by stated deadline. Staff designs and uses evaluations to formally solicit feedback from audiences on programs and resources. Responses are used to develop future programs and resources. Feedback results are regularly reported. |
| **Internal Communication** | Staff monitors relevant listservs (e.g. AC Staff, Regional-IRC, PANAM-PARTNERS). Staff has joined department-managed social media groups, including the American Spaces Facebook group. | Staff monitors relevant listservs (e.g. AC Staff, Regional-IRC, PANAM-PARTNERS). Staff has joined department-managed social media groups, including the American Spaces Facebook group. | Staff monitors and contributes to relevant listservs (e.g. AC Staff, Regional-IRC, PANAM-PARTNERS). Staff has joined department-managed social media groups, including the American Spaces Facebook group and Makers in American Spaces Google+ group. |
| **Hours per week American Spaces are staffed and open to the public** | 20-30 | 31-40 | More than 40 |

Table 3

| | **Standards for American Spaces**<br>**Partner Management** | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Elements** | **Rating Levels** | | |
| | **Bronze** | **Silver** | **Gold** |
| **American Corners Memoranda of Understanding (MOU)** | Current signed MOU on file in the appropriate database. | Current signed MOU on file in the appropriate database. | Current signed MOU on file in the appropriate database. |
| **Binational Center Governance and Finances** | **Board of directors** or executive board is established and bylaws published or made available. | **Board of directors** or executive board is established and bylaws published or made available. | **Board of directors** or executive board is established and bylaws published or made available. |
| | **Board elections** are transparent. Terms of service | **Board elections** are transparent. Terms of service | **Board elections** are transparent. Terms of service |

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| are defined for each member, and turnover is regular. | are defined for each member, and turnover is regular. | are defined for each member, and turnover is regular. |
| | | In WHA, BNC is an active member of the **Association of Binational Centers of Latin America (ABLA)**. |
| BNC provides **merit-based scholarships** for low-income students when financially feasible, including work-study. | BNC provides **merit-based scholarships** for low-income students when financially feasible, including work-study. | BNC provides **merit-based scholarships** for low-income students when financially feasible, including work-study. |
| **BNC bank account** is in the institution's (not a person's) name. BNC is financially solvent and stable. | **BNC bank account** is in the institution's (not a person's) name. BNC is financially solvent and stable. | **BNC bank account** is in the institution's (not a person's) name. BNC is financially solvent and stable. |

Table 4

| Standards for American Spaces Digital Tools and Skills | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Elements** | **Rating Levels** | | |
| | **Bronze** | **Silver** | **Gold** |
| **Social Media** | Space is promoted on post's social media channels. | Space staff actively manages one or more social media accounts. | Space is active on multiple social media platforms and promotes IIP products, post activities, USG initiatives or other information about the United States. Space has a lively community, manages its own content and monitors metrics. |
| **Direct Marketing** | Space has a generic email address (not an individual account) that identifies and helps market it. | Space has a generic email address (not an individual account) that identifies and helps market it. Space has a comprehensive digital strategy to reach target audiences. | Space has a generic email address (not an individual account) that identifies and helps market it. Space has a comprehensive digital strategy to reach target audiences, evaluates metrics and adjusts campaigns accordingly. |
| **Technology Proficiency** | Staff has basic understanding of word-processing, spreadsheet and presentation software and the Internet, and has knowledge of social media. For troubleshooting other than basic technology problems, staff needs outside help. | Staff is adept in word-processing, spreadsheet and presentation software, the Internet and social media. Staff can troubleshoot many technology problems. | Staff is highly skilled in word-processing, spreadsheet and presentation software, the Internet, social media, eLibraryUSA, Open Educational Resources/Massive Open Online Courses (OERs/MOOCs), multimedia and fabrication (makerspace) technology. Staff can troubleshoot most technology problems. Staff can mentor patrons in technology skills. |

| Internet Connection | Connection is less than 2 Mbit/s. | Connection is at least 2 Mbit/s. | Connection is best available with unlimited bandwidth. |
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| Wi-Fi | | Wi-Fi reaches all public access areas with few limitations. | Wi-Fi reaches all public access areas with no limitations. |
| Tech Support | Space has access to qualified routine tech support; service can be contracted. | Space has access to qualified routine tech support; service can be contracted. A staff person has skill level to recommend technology improvements. | Space has access to qualified routine tech support; service can be contracted. A staff person has skill level to recommend technology improvements and train or assist other staff and visitors in using technology. |

**Table 5**

| | Standards for American Spaces<br>Physical Space and Access | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Elements** | **Rating Levels** | | |
| | **Bronze** | **Silver** | **Gold** |
| **Appearance: Branding** | Name and branding are visible to the public. | Name and branding appear on all products (website, social media, print products, email signatures, etc.). | Name and branding appear on all products (website, social media, print products, email signatures, etc.) and are recognized by and known among the general public. |
| **Appearance: Signage** | Space has a clearly visible sign depicting name and relationship with embassy or consulate. U.S. flag or image is present. | Space and the building or complex that houses it have clearly visible signs depicting name and relationship with embassy or consulate. U.S. flag or image is present. Name is visible from the street. | Space and the building or complex that houses it have clearly visible signs depicting name and relationship with embassy or consulate. U.S. flag or image is highly visible. Name is visible from the street. Space has experimented with creative branding techniques (digital signboards, exhibits, etc.). |
| **Appearance: Décor** | Space is attractive and welcoming with elements reflecting the United States. | Space is attractive and welcoming. Furniture and décor are modern and modeled after a U.S. community center. Graphics, posters or framed art representing the United States adorn the walls. | Space is attractive and welcoming. Furniture and décor are modern and modeled after a U.S. community center. Permanent or temporary artwork representing the United States adorns the walls. |
| **Physical Space** | Space can accommodate daily flow of 20-30 visitors, and an area for programming is available. Space is maintained, cleaned regularly and has no safety issues. Lighting, | Space can accommodate daily flow of 40-50 visitors and hold programs. Space is maintained and regularly cleaned and inspected for safety. Lighting, electricity, heating and | Space can accommodate daily flow of more than 60 visitors and hold programs. Space is maintained and regularly cleaned and inspected for safety. Lighting, electricity, |

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| | electricity, heating and ventilation are adequate and reliable. Space can seat 30 people. | ventilation meet local standards. Separate areas, content or staff are provided for learning about the United States, English language and educational advising. Space can seat 50 or more people. | heating and ventilation meet local standards. Separate areas, content or staff are provided for learning about the United States, English language and educational advising. Space can hold small and large programs in different formats. Space can seat 75 or more people. |
| **Furnishings** | Furniture meets basic needs for programming. | Furniture is modern and accommodates maximum number of visitors without overcrowding. | Furniture is modern and ample to easily accommodate maximum number of visitors. |
| **Accessibility** | Space is within commuting distance of business, government or university centers and is accessible by public transportation. Location, whether within or outside an embassy/consulate compound, allows physical public access. Accommodations are made for visitors with disabilities. | Space is within commuting distance of business, government or university centers and is accessible by public transportation. Location, whether within or outside an embassy/consulate compound, allows physical public access and is convenient to embassy/consulate staff. Visitor parking is available at minimum cost. Space accommodates wheelchairs and strives to be fully accessible. | Space is within commuting distance of business, government or university centers and is accessible by public transportation. Location, whether within or outside an embassy/consulate compound, allows physical public access, is convenient to embassy/consulate staff and is easily accessed by foot. Visitor parking is available at minimum cost. Space complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act. |
| **Appointments** | Security meets RSO requirements (local requirements for host institutions) without discouraging the public from seeking access. Admission requests made less than 24 hours in advance are accommodated. | Security meets RSO requirements (local requirements for host institutions). Staff collaborates with RSO (local equivalent for host institutions) to minimize barriers and streamline access procedures. Appointments are not required. | Security meets RSO requirements (local requirements for host institutions). Staff consistently and proactively collaborates with RSO (or local equivalent for host institutions) to minimize barriers and streamline access procedures. Appointments are not required. |

*It is possible that a program will incorporate two or more of the five core program elements. For instance, an alumna could lead a cultural program or English conversation club.

** In some countries, there are fee-based Educational Advisors at our partner institutions.  In those spaces, we are not competing.

[Introduction Revised 11/2016]