



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

ENGLISH  
LANGUAGE  
PROGRAMS

The World is  
Your Classroom

# *Virtual English Language Educator Program Policy Handbook*



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## Table of Contents

Overview of the Virtual English Language Educator Program .....	3
Introduction to the Handbook .....	3
Glossary of Acronyms .....	3
Contacting GU/CIED.....	3
Overview of Responsibilities.....	4
1. Employment Policy and Remuneration from Other Sources .....	5
2. Payments and Allowances .....	6
3. Schedule and Duration of Virtual Educator Projects.....	6
4. Orientation and Administrative Resources .....	7
5. Virtual Activities Allowance .....	7
6. Leave, Absences, and Extensions .....	8
7. Termination .....	9
8. Reporting Requirements – Expense Reports and Program Reports.....	10
9. Taxes and Withholdings .....	13
10. Community of Practice (COP) and Highlights.....	14
11. Social Media, Blogging, and Photographs.....	14
12. Representing English Language Programs and Using English Language Programs Logos .....	15
13. Materials Developed During the Agreement Period.....	16

## Overview of the Virtual English Language Educator Program

The U.S. Department of State created the Virtual English Language Educator Program to offer virtual programming opportunities for partners of the English Language Programs around the world. Virtual Educators work via online platforms with the Public Affairs sections and Regional English Language Officers based at U.S. Embassies, as well as with local host institutions to provide English language teaching and learning support. Projects may include:

- Teaching regularly scheduled, online courses;
- Facilitating online conversation clubs;
- Assisting with online curriculum and program development or redesign;
- Conducting webinars; and/or
- Conducting Facebook live events, or other outreach activities.

## Introduction to the Handbook

This handbook has been prepared to help inform applicants of the many policies that will apply before, during and after a Virtual Educator project. Note that many policies referenced in this handbook are further described or additional detail may be provided in the agreement that each selected Virtual Educator will sign with the program. It will complement the agreement, and together the agreement and the handbook will represent the full terms and conditions of a Virtual Educator's participation in the Virtual English Language Educator Program.

This is a preliminary version of the handbook. The policies referenced in this handbook are subject to change prior to the start of, or during, a Virtual Educator project. The most recent version of the handbook will always be posted on the English Language Programs [website](#).

## Glossary of Acronyms

COP – English Language Programs' Community of Practice

DOS – U.S. Department of State

ECA – Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs at the U.S. Department of State

GU/CIED – Georgetown University, Center for Intercultural Education and Development

VAA – Virtual Activities Allowance

PAS – Public Affairs Sections of U.S. Embassies abroad

RELO – Regional English Language Officer

## Contacting GU/CIED

Georgetown University's Center for Intercultural Education and Development (GU/CIED) is the current recipient of a cooperative agreement from the U.S. Department of State to administer the Virtual English Language Educator Program. GU/CIED can be contacted at any time via email at [virtualeducator@elprograms.org](mailto:virtualeducator@elprograms.org).

## Overview of Responsibilities

There are many stakeholders involved in the administration and execution of the Virtual English Language Educator Program. The table below outlines which organization is responsible for specific components of the program.

U.S. Department of State (DOS) – ECA / Office of English Language Programs	U.S. Embassy Public Affairs Sections (PAS) & Regional English Language Officers (RELO)	Host Institution(s)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sets and monitors program policies</li> <li>• Reviews all Virtual Educator project proposals</li> <li>• Notifies PAS/RELO which projects have been selected for funding</li> <li>• Communicates and works with PAS/RELO and GU/CIED to resolve issues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develops Virtual Educator project proposals and sends them to DOS/ECA for approval</li> <li>• Determines Virtual Educator duties alongside host institution(s)</li> <li>• Works with host institutions to determine adequate support for Virtual Educators during their projects</li> <li>• Acts as first point of contact for Virtual Educators on any programmatic issues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Determines Virtual Educator duties alongside PAS/RELO</li> <li>• Provides counterparts for Virtual Educators during their projects</li> </ul>
<b>Georgetown University (GU) – Center for Intercultural Education and Development (CIED)</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Issues Virtual Educator acceptance letters and processes Virtual Educator agreements</li> <li>• Coordinates the pre-project orientation</li> <li>• Issues payments and processes expense reports</li> <li>• Facilitates participation in the Community of Practice</li> <li>• Answers questions regarding the Virtual Educator agreement</li> <li>• Acts as first point of contact for Virtual Educators on all administrative issues and concerns</li> <li>• Amends Virtual Educator agreements, as needed</li> <li>• Facilitates Virtual Educators’ participation in alumni and outreach activities</li> </ul>		

## 1. Employment Policy and Remuneration from Other Sources

### What is my employment status as a Virtual Educator?

You are not employed by the U.S. Government, GU/CIED, or any agency or government of your country of assignment. You are instead considered a grantee and, for tax purposes, a supplier or independent contractor. You are bound by the terms and conditions of your agreement and cannot expect any additional compensation or benefits, except what is detailed and explained within your agreement and this handbook.

### Am I eligible to receive stipend payments if I am also filing for unemployment benefits?

It is incumbent upon you to check with your state's employment commission to determine whether you are eligible to receive other compensation while receiving unemployment benefits (including Pandemic Unemployment Assistance). This is not a decision made by DOS/ECA or GU/CIED. If you choose to forgo the program stipend, you must notify GU/CIED before you sign your agreement.

### What happens if I need employment verification?

Since you are a grantee/independent contractor and not employed by the U.S. Government or GU/CIED, the only verification the program can provide is a letter confirming what is stated in your agreement such as your project dates, your host institution(s), and your benefits package. The program is unable to complete and/or sign any documents that require employment confirmation for items such as (but not limited to) job applications, background checks, employment continuity, unemployment benefits, loan forgiveness, loan deferment, Medicare applications, Social Security, etc.

### Who can I ask for a letter of recommendation?

Letters of recommendation need to be requested either from the U.S. Embassy or PAS/RELO overseeing your project, or from your host institution. GU/CIED is not in a position to provide any evaluative comments related to your project.

### Can I undertake other work, either paid or unpaid, during my project?

In most cases yes. However, performance of any other professional activity which you may be independently contracted to execute must not interfere with or be in conflict with the duties of your Virtual Educator project.

If, however, you will have a coinciding full-time employment contract with or will be employed by another USG agency during the agreement period, you are required either to waive the Project Planning Supplement and the Stipend for Contact Hours as specified on page one of your agreement, or to take an unpaid leave of absence from the other United States government agency for the duration of the agreement period. You must provide confirmation, in writing, indicating which of these two options has been agreed upon and, in the case of the unpaid leave of absence, documentation from the other United States government agency confirming the leave.

### Does the Virtual English Language Educator Program participate in the federal Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program?

No. The Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program originates at the Department of Education. It stipulates that it covers employment only; because you are not an employee, you cannot be considered for the program. Peace Corps and AmeriCorps were written into the regulation as specific exceptions; the Department of Education noted it would not reopen the regulation or consider new groups as

exceptions to the employment requirement. If the regulation changes, the program will notify all participants.

## 2. Payments and Allowances

### How will I be paid for my participation in a Virtual Educator project?

As a Virtual Educator, and if specified in your agreement, you will receive a Pre-Project Planning Supplement in support of pre-project planning and preparation, a Project Planning Supplement in support of planning and preparation throughout the agreement period, and a Stipend for Contact Hours, based on the number of contact hours specified on page one of your agreement and in Appendix A. These are taxable benefits as outlined in your agreement. In addition, you are eligible to receive reimbursement for costs under the Virtual Activities Allowance (VAA). Refer to your agreement for details on your benefits, a detailed payment schedule, and more information on taxes.

Virtual Educators do not receive a living allowance or health benefits coverage of any kind.

All payments from GU/CIED will be deposited electronically into a single, United States bank account. The program cannot pay you via wire transfer, divide your payments to more than one account, or make payments to foreign bank accounts. If you need to change the bank account used by GU/CIED, contact GU/CIED for next steps. Any change in account information during your agreement period may result in a delay of payment.

Some payments may be processed through a third-party vendor called Viewpost. If you have any questions, contact GU/CIED.

### Do I have to retain and/or submit receipts for any expenses during my Virtual Educator project?

The Pre-Project Planning Supplement, the Project Planning Supplement, and the Stipend for Contact Hours are non-reimbursable benefits, which means these do not require the submission of receipts and are paid directly to you according to the payment schedule outlined in your agreement.

To receive reimbursement for costs incurred under VAA, however, you must retain receipts. To use VAA funds, you will make purchases in advance, and then submit an expense report (including receipts and PAS/RELO approval!) to GU/CIED for reimbursement. Do not incur VAA costs before your agreement is signed, or before reviewing the relevant sections of this handbook and your agreement regarding allowable costs and the details and policies regarding the submission of expense reports. Contact GU/CIED with any questions.

## 3. Schedule and Duration of Virtual Educator Projects

### How long is my project and what is my schedule of activities?

Your agreement period is stated on page one of your agreement. Appendix A of your agreement details a general schedule of your project and description of duties. The schedule is provided to guide your preparations, but is subject to change.

Your PAS/RELO is your first point of contact for any questions regarding your contact hours, schedule, or duties. If there are formal changes to your agreement period, duties, or schedule, you will receive an amendment to your agreement.

### **Do I get any breaks?**

See Section 6 of this handbook.

### **What if I leave my project early?**

See Section 6 of this handbook.

## **4. Orientation and Administrative Resources**

### **Am I provided an orientation to the program before my project begins?**

Yes. All Virtual Educators are required to complete a virtual pre-project orientation, and attend a live, virtual welcome session facilitated by ECA. In addition, GU/CIED will contact you to schedule a pre-project call to discuss any remaining questions you may have.

### **Where can I find administrative resources, such as report templates, branded materials, or required forms?**

You will receive an acceptance letter from GU/CIED with links to the administrative resources folder. You can also access these resources at any time through the Participant Documents page on the Community of Practice (COP). The Participant Documents icon appears in the header of any page on the COP. Follow the links to administrative resources for Virtual Educators.

## **5. Virtual Activities Allowance**

### **What is the virtual activities allowance (VAA)?**

VAA is provided to supplement and enhance your activities as a Virtual Educator. VAA is a reimbursable benefit, which means you will make purchases and conduct ad-hoc activities in advance and then submit an expense report to GU/CIED for reimbursement of those costs.

Do not incur VAA costs before your agreement is signed, or before reviewing the relevant sections of this handbook and your agreement regarding allowable costs and the details and policies regarding the submission of expense reports. Importantly, for any purchases and ad-hoc activities: you must obtain advance approval – in writing! - from your PAS/RELO, and always keep receipts for any items purchased to submit with your expense report.

### **How much money do I have to spend?**

Your VAA ceiling is indicated on page one of your agreement. You are responsible for keeping track of your VAA expenses, as you will not be reimbursed for any expenses that exceed the VAA ceiling listed in your agreement.

### **What kinds of things can I spend my VAA on?**

The most typical VAA expenses for Virtual Educators include new subscriptions to Zoom or other video/web conferencing services, online teaching platforms, specialized software required by the project, computer peripherals necessary to deliver quality online instruction, and ad-hoc activities not included in the original project duties.

Importantly, for any purchases and ad-hoc activities, you must:

- obtain advance approval – in writing! - from your PAS/RELO,
- always keep receipts for any items purchased to submit with your expense report, and

- follow all guidelines regarding allowable expenses outlined in this handbook and in your agreement.

### **Are there any restrictions associated with the purchase of subscriptions to web conferencing services, online teaching platforms, and specialized software?**

Yes. The program will reimburse you only for the cost of the least expensive subscription necessary to meet the needs and duration of your project. In addition to including receipts for your subscription purchase, your expense report must include the available subscription pricing plans and their duration. Section 8 of this handbook provides complete details on the submission of expense reports.

### **Are there any expenses that are not covered by my VAA?**

A list of unallowable expenses is included in your agreement – even if PAS/RELO approves, you cannot receive reimbursement for items on that list. If you are unsure whether your purchases will be reimbursed, ask GU/CIED in advance of the purchase.

### **Can I provide grants to local colleagues using VAA? Can I use VAA funds to procure services from a third party?**

No. Granting funds to a local colleague or engaging with a third party (individual or business) to procure or provide services are not allowable VAA expenses for Virtual Educators. Contact GU/CIED with any questions.

### **Can I incur VAA expenses prior to the start of my project?**

Receipts must be dated between the date your agreement is signed by GU/CIED and the end date of your agreement period. Any expenses with receipts dated outside of that range cannot be reimbursed.

### **Can I incur VAA expenses after my project ends?**

No. All VAA expenses must be incurred no later than the end date of your agreement period.

### **What do I do with the items that I purchased with my VAA?**

At the end of your project, any items purchased with VAA that exceed \$100 (per item cost), must be sent to either your PAS, host institution, or GU/CIED. In your Final Report, you will submit an inventory of those items and confirmation that the items have been sent to an appropriate recipient. In some cases, you may be required to transfer subscriptions purchased with VAA, or login information, to your host institution and/or PAS/RELO.

## **6. Leave, Absences, and Extensions**

### **Do I get any breaks during my project?**

Virtual Educator projects do not include specific leave times; you need to ensure you are available to complete the project according to the description and schedule in Appendix A of your agreement, and as determined in consultation with your host institution and PAS/RELO.

### **What if I cannot start my project because of a personal reason?**

If you cannot start your project for any reason, you must notify your host institution, PAS/RELO, and GU/CIED as soon as possible. At that point, your agreement will be terminated and all termination conditions outlined in your agreement will apply.



### **What if I have a personal or medical issue and need to stop working?**

If you can't continue to perform your project duties, if you need to take a break, or if you need to leave the project before the end date of your agreement – for any reason – you must contact your PAS/RELO and GU/CIED right away. DOS/ECA and PAS/RELO will determine if the project can continue or if your agreement will be terminated. If your agreement is terminated, all termination conditions outlined in your agreement will apply.

### **If I have to leave my project for a personal or medical reason, is it possible to return to my project?**

If you are away from your project for any reason, DOS/ECA and PAS/RELO will determine if the project can be continued or if it should be cancelled, resulting in termination and all termination conditions outlined in your agreement will then apply.

### **What if my project is extended?**

If DOS/ECA and your PAS/RELO decide to extend your project's end date, you will receive an amendment from GU/CIED reflecting the amended agreement period and any changes to your benefits, if applicable.

## **7. Termination**

### **What are program-related reasons for which a project may be terminated?**

Your PAS/RELO can direct GU/CIED to terminate your agreement at any time prior to the start of, or during, your agreement period. Program-related grounds for termination of your agreement may include, but will not be limited to, the following:

- the host institution(s) and/or PAS/RELO cancels or terminates the project due to conditions beyond your control in the country(ies) of assignment or related to the host institution(s);
- unforeseen political and economic unrest, natural disasters, public health emergencies, terrorist attacks, etc.

### **What are non-program related reasons for which a project may be terminated?**

Your PAS/RELO can direct GU/CIED to terminate your agreement at any time prior to the start of, or during, your agreement period. Non-program-related grounds for termination of your agreement may include, but will not be limited to, the following:

- you fail to achieve the goals of the program;
- you choose to abandon your duties before the end of the agreement period;
- you perform your duties unsatisfactorily;
- you are unable to perform your duties for personal or medical reasons;
- you fail to observe satisfactory professional ethics;
- you violate any law of the United States or the country(ies) of assignment;
- you violate the rules and/or policies of the host institution(s);
- you fail to observe the social norms of the country(ies) of assignment;
- you do not respond to requests by PAS/RELO and/or by GU/CIED in a timely manner;
- you refuse to follow directions/guidance from PAS/RELO;
- you give offense, intentionally or otherwise, to the United States or the country(ies) of assignment, which is contrary to the spirit of mutual understanding;
- you engage in any unauthorized income-producing activity;
- you materially misrepresent yourself in a program application form or a Virtual Educator document;

- you conduct yourself in a manner that could bring DOS/ECA, PAS/RELO, GU/CIED, and/or the host institution(s) into disrepute;
- you act in a way that is inappropriate to yourself or others; and
- you fail to comply with the agreement and the Terms and Conditions.

**How will I know I have been terminated? What payments will I receive?**

You will receive an official termination letter via email. This letter provides the date on which your agreement was terminated (in other words, it amends your agreement period) and outlines details on payments you have received to date, specifying what funds you can keep, and what funds, if any, you are required to return to the program.

**What other conditions should I be aware of if my agreement is terminated?**

- You shall cease performing your duties as of the date stated in your termination letter.
- Within 30 days of termination, you must submit expense reports to claim any reimbursement for approved VAA purchases. Any reimbursement due to you will not be issued until any amount owed to the program is refunded in full by the due date specified in the termination letter.

**8. Reporting Requirements – Expense Reports and Program Reports**

**Do I need to submit reports as part of my project?**

Yes. There are two kinds of reports:

1. Program reports: These include the monthly progress reports (for projects of 45+ days), and the final report.
2. Expense reports: These must be submitted in order for you to get reimbursed for approved, allowable VAA expenses.

**What program reports do I have to submit?**

Monthly progress report	For projects of 45+ days; due in 30 day increments, starting 30 days following the start date of your agreement period. Monthly progress reports are submitted online via the link provided by GU/CIED.
Final report	Due within 30 days after the end date of your agreement period; the final report also includes a required “Highlight” submission on the Community of Practice (COP). The final report must be submitted online via the link provided by GU/CIED and cannot be submitted before the end date of your agreement period.

**What expense reports do I have to submit?**

You must submit expense reports (and therefore retain receipts for all expenses incurred) to GU/CIED for PAS/RELO approved expenditures under the VAA.

You are NOT required to retain receipts or submit expense reports for the following benefits:

- Pre-Project Planning Supplement
- Planning Supplement
- Stipend for Contact Hours

**How do I prepare my expense report(s)?**

There are strict policies around expense reports. The more precise and detailed you are, the faster you will receive your reimbursement. Contact GU/CIED with any questions.

**Note: Expense reports must be submitted to GU/CIED within 60 days of incurring an expense, and no later than 30 days after the end date of your agreement period. Expense reports which are received late will not be processed.**

**All receipts must be dated between the date your agreement is signed by GU/CIED and the end date of your agreement period. Any expenses with receipts dated outside of that range cannot be reimbursed.**

Here is a brief overview of what you need to do when preparing an expense report:

<p>Fill out an expense log.</p>	<p>You can find a blank expense log linked through the Participant Documents icon on the COP, or you can request one from GU/CIED via email. List every single expense on the log. Each line of the expense log should correspond to a receipt.</p> <p>Fill out the log completely and include as many details as possible regarding each expense, following the who/what/where/when/why principle. The program needs this for audit purposes. The more specific and precise you are, the faster GU/CIED can process your claim.</p>
<p>Organize and number your receipts following your expense log entries.</p>	<p>Every expense you list on your expense log must have a corresponding receipt or description of the ad-hoc activity. Do not aggregate different cost categories or expenses incurred on different dates. Be sure to reconcile your expense log with your receipts before sending to GU/CIED or it could delay the processing of your claim.</p> <p>If you do not have a receipt for a purchase, contact GU/CIED for instructions on what to do in this situation.</p>
<p>For subscription purchases, include information about available pricing plans.</p>	<p>The program will reimburse you only for the cost of the least expensive subscription necessary to meet the needs and duration of your project. In addition to including receipts for your subscription purchase, your expense report must include the available subscription pricing plans and their duration. For example: if your project is three months in length, and a monthly subscription plan is available that meets the needs of your project, you must purchase the monthly plan versus a year-long option. If you purchase a year-long option, but a monthly plan is available, the program will prorate your reimbursement for the duration of your assignment.</p>
<p>Include a copy of the exchange rate(s).</p>	<p>If your expenses were paid in a currency other than U.S. dollars (USD), you may choose to include a historical exchange rate for EACH of the dates the purchases were made (an exchange conversion should be then attached to each expense in another currency).</p> <p>You can use an online exchange rate website such as <a href="http://www.oanda.com">www.oanda.com</a>. You can also include a copy of your credit or debit card statement, if it includes the exchange rates or an exchange receipt from a bank.</p>

	If you choose not to include a historical exchange rate for EACH of the dates the purchases were made, GU/CIED will use the historical exchange rates found on <a href="http://www.oanda.com">www.oanda.com</a> .
Make a copy of your complete expense report for your records.	Make a copy of all pieces of your expense report, including the log and all receipts.
Send completed expense report to GU/CIED.	Email a PDF of your complete expense report in one document to GU/CIED. Expense reports must be submitted within 60 days of incurring the expense and within 30 days of the end of your agreement.

### Can I dispose of the original receipts now that I have sent them to GU/CIED?

No, for audit purposes, you must keep all the original receipts for 60 days after the end of your agreement period.

### Are there deadlines for my expense reports?

Yes. In accordance with GU/CIED policies and IRS publication 463, you must account for expenses by submitting complete expense reports to GU/CIED within 60 days after the expense was incurred. In addition, final requests for reimbursement must be submitted to GU/CIED no later than 30 days after the end of your agreement period, including termination.

**Expense reports which are received late will not be processed.**

### Could my reimbursement request be denied?

Yes. GU/CIED must follow strict rules around financial matters for auditing purposes. Following are examples of reasons why an expense report claim may be denied:

- Expense report was submitted 61 or more days after the expense was incurred or 31 or more days after the end of your agreement period;
- Your VAA ceiling, as listed in your agreement, has been exceeded;
- Incomplete documentation: you must submit all your documentation for an expense report in one complete package;
- Insufficient expense details: your receipts should show the breakdown of each expense in detail. If the receipt is not detailed, it is up to you to include an explanation of what the precise expense was;
- Disallowed expense items: if the expense is not allowed under the program policies, your reimbursement will be denied. If you are not sure if an expense is allowable, contact GU/CIED prior to purchase;
- The scan of your expense report is illegible (too small or too blurry to read);
- Recurring expenses only have one receipt instead of multiple receipts for each of the recurring expenses;
- Receipts pasted on top of one another blocking information and therefore considered incomplete;
- Split receipts not showing clearly your share of the expense;
- Receipts for subscription services do not include sufficient back-up information about available pricing plans and their duration;

- Submitting the exact same expense more than once; and/or
- Amazon or other on-line vendor receipts without proof that the purchased items have been shipped and delivered.

If your expense report contains errors or incomplete information, it will be returned to you for revision. You will receive your payment once your expense report is correct and approved for payment.

Reimbursement payments can generally be expected within 10-15 business days following submission of a **complete, approved** expense report.

#### **What is the minimum amount I can claim on my expense report?**

There is no minimum amount required to claim reimbursement. Since you must submit your reimbursement requests within 60 days of incurring the expense or no later than 30 days after the end of your agreement period, it is important that you submit your reimbursement request within that time frame regardless of the claimed amount.

#### **What happens if I exceed my VAA ceiling?**

It is your responsibility to keep track of your VAA expenses and make sure that you do not exceed your VAA ceiling, as stated in your agreement. The program cannot reimburse you for amounts that exceed your VAA ceiling. In some cases, your VAA ceiling may be increased with advance approval from your PAS/RELO and a corresponding agreement amendment from GU/CIED.

#### **What else do I need to know about expense reports?**

There are numerous “fine points” when it comes to expense reports. If you have questions or you are not sure about something, contact GU/CIED. We will answer your questions and provide you with helpful examples and tips to make these reports easier for you.

## **9. Taxes and Withholdings**

#### **Do I have to pay U.S. income tax?**

Yes. For taxation purposes, you are considered a supplier or independent contractor. You are not employed by the U.S. government or GU/CIED. As such, you are providing a fee-for-service. As these fees are taxable, your payments received from GU/CIED will be reported both to you and to the IRS on Form 1099-NEC in Box 1. These fees are called “non-employee compensation” and they are considered taxable income. Taxable income and benefits received from GU/CIED include, but may not be limited to:

- Pre-Project Planning Supplement
- Planning Supplement
- Stipend for Contact Hour
- VAA for ad-hoc activities

You should consult your tax advisor or the IRS for guidance. GU/CIED and DOS/ECA cannot provide any tax guidance. Filing and paying your taxes are solely your responsibility.

#### **What about my withholdings?**

You are responsible for all applicable withholdings such as, but not limited to, federal personal income tax; state personal income tax; Federal Unemployment Tax Act (FUTA); state unemployment insurance tax; Old-Age, Survivors and Disability Insurance Program (OASDI); state disability insurance tax; Social Security; and Medicare.

## 10. Community of Practice (COP) and Highlights

### What is the COP and what role does it play in my project?

The COP is a virtual meeting space for all participants and alumni of the English Language Programs to:

- submit Highlights to share details about unique events or activities you conducted during and after your project;
- share resources, ideas, and best practices;
- connect with other program participants;
- participate in professional development opportunities provided by the program;
- stay up-to-date on the latest events and resources available on the English Language Programs and American English websites;
- post job announcements and search for post-project job opportunities; and,
- stay connected and contribute to the program as alumni.

If your project is terminated, you may be unsubscribed from the COP. Any questions regarding the COP can be directed to [cop@elprograms.org](mailto:cop@elprograms.org).

### What are Highlights? Am I required to submit one?

Highlights, which are submitted on the COP, are one of the best ways to get stories about your experience to the many stakeholders involved in English Language Programs. You are required to submit at least one Highlight as a part of your final report; however, we encourage you to submit as many Highlights as you would like during your project.

English Language Programs is always looking for Highlights to share across our social media channels and website. Several stories are selected each week. Additionally, exceptional Highlights are selected for inclusion in activity reports that are circulated throughout U.S. Embassies and State Department offices.

## 11. Social Media, Blogging, and Photographs

### I have a blog or website. Are there any restrictions on what I post to it during my project?

No, but understand that U.S. freedom of speech guarantees may not be applicable in your country of assignment. Privacy settings, even if you enable them, may not work and your posts may be viewable by the authorities or even citizens of your country of assignment. Be aware of this when you are posting comments on blogs, websites, or other social media platforms. Be aware of any local sensitivities, and consider the reaction of your students, local colleagues, and authorities who may read your posts. Offensive posts could create tension and ultimately result in the termination of your project.

Also, as these will be your personal views and not those of the DOS during the time of your project, you are asked to post the following disclaimer on your personal blog or website for added clarity:

*"This website is not an official U.S. Department of State website. The views and information presented are the Virtual Educator's own and do not represent the Virtual English Language Educator Program or the U.S. Department of State."*

### How do I share my Virtual Educator experience on social media?

We hope that you will engage with English Language Programs on social media throughout your project. Social media is an opportunity to share your work as a Virtual Educator with your friends, family, and the world and it's also a great way to stay connected with your fellow Virtual Educators. The most important

thing to remember about sharing your stories with us is to tag us, mention us, and/or use hashtags. Also, posts that include photos and videos always get more engagement online than text-only posts.

All of our accounts on social media have the @ELPrograms account handle, so we're easy to find and tag.

Make sure to also follow your RELO's Facebook page, if they have one, or ask how you can be involved. Often, there are opportunities to host Facebook Live events or social media campaigns you can contribute to.

You can access our social media platforms as follows: [Twitter](#); [Facebook](#); [Instagram](#); [LinkedIn](#); [YouTube](#).

### **Are photos encouraged? How do I share these with English Language Programs?**

Your project is conducted online, but there are many opportunities for you to capture your engagement with participants and project impact.

You will be asked to upload photos with your Highlights submissions, but English Language Programs will also use your photos on our social media channels, and website. We encourage you to send photos with you in them, materials you helped design, screenshots, and photos submitted by participants. Regardless of what is in the photo, the higher the resolution and the more colorful, the better.

Share a Google Photos album with GU/CIED via email; or you can share photos on social media. We also encourage you to submit your stories to your employer's communications office to showcase how your project benefits your work-place community.

### **Am I required to sign a consent form or release waiver? What about the subjects of my photographs?**

You will be asked to sign the **Participant Consent and Release Form** to ensure we have your permission to use photos of you in outreach materials. GU/CIED will contact you if the form is not on file, but in most cases, the form is submitted to GU/CIED along with your agreement.

Additionally, you will need your participants' consent to use photos of them. You can show the disclaimer, linked through the Participant Documents icon on the COP, before virtual sessions begin, which lets them know that photos of them may be used by English Language Programs. Or, each participant can sign and send back to you the **Non-Participant Consent and Release Form**, also linked through the Participant Documents icon on the COP. You can also contact GU/CIED via email for copies of these forms at any time.

## **12. Representing English Language Programs and Using English Language Programs Logos**

### **I have been asked to make a presentation during my project. How should I introduce and represent myself as a Virtual Educator?**

There may be times when you are asked to present, participate in a media event, or represent the Virtual English Language Educator Program in another way during your project. You should present yourself as a Virtual Educator of the Virtual English Language Educator Program, a program funded by the U.S. Department of State. Remember you are not an employee of your host institution, DOS/ECA, or GU/CIED.

### **Am I required to use English Language Programs branded templates?**

When appropriate, you should use the branded templates, linked through the Participant Documents icon on the COP, which feature the English Language Programs logo, to create branded items, including PowerPoint presentations, certificates, and business cards. Check with your PAS/RELO to confirm whether they have a separate arrangement with your host institution(s) regarding the use of logos. If you create new branded items, you must only use logos provided via the link above, and with no alterations to text or aspect ratio (proportional relationship between its width and its height), and you must use the DOS/ECA logo only in conjunction with the English Language Programs logo, never on its own. You can also only use these branded items during your agreement period and in relationship to the performance of your duties as a Virtual Educator.

## **13. Materials Developed During the Agreement Period**

### **I developed materials specifically for use during my Virtual Educator project. Do I own the copyright? What about materials that I create during my project?**

All materials created or developed by you in advance of and/or during the agreement period for the specific fulfillment of the project duties become the exclusive property of English Language Programs. The spirit of this exchange program is to provide access to educational materials to all and therefore, you may be asked to provide a full copy of any product or accompanying materials (PowerPoint presentations, handouts, etc.) you create for your host institution(s), PAS/RELO, GU/CIED, and/or participants. For example, a participant in a workshop may request a copy of your presentation to adapt for his/her own classroom. If you developed the presentation specifically for your Virtual Educator project, the program asks that you make those materials available upon request.

If you are adapting materials created previously and for a different purpose than for your Virtual Educator project, note that English Language Programs cannot control what happens to materials that are used on a project. Workshop participants may choose to record your presentation, take pictures of slides you show, or make copies of handouts provided. The use of materials and resources created previously is at your own discretion.