



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

HIGHER EDUCATION SUCCESS STORIES

SHARING IMPACT ON SOCIAL MEDIA



DEMONSTRATING IMPACT AND HUMANIZING PROGRAMMATIC EFFORTS

Sharing USAID's higher education (HE) stories shows the impact of USAID investments in HE across technical sectors. By focusing on a protagonist who has benefitted from or driven USAID programming, one can gain a lot of traction by sharing a compelling HE story that demystifies development issues and educates the public about the value that USAID provides to beneficiaries, partners, and the general public.

This fact sheet derived content from the [2021 Higher Education Storytelling Toolkit](#). The HE Storytelling Toolkit summarizes a large body of storytelling and communications resources into an accessible resource that is customized around HE themes and topics.

WHAT IS A SOCIAL MEDIA SUCCESS STORY?

A fascinating HE success story can be short and memorable but still rich in detail. Often, short and compelling stories can be published on social media in 2-3 paragraphs in order to generate interest on a local scale and gain audience engagement.

FINDING THE STORY

Storytelling in HE should be viewed as a journey, in which the beneficiary's past experiences inform current and future successes. Identifying noteworthy stories may not always be a clear task, especially if protagonists have long been removed from their HE experiences.

To begin, identify stories and ways that the target audience will respond positively. If uncertain, opportunities to research and test various stories can help to achieve a better understanding.

CRAFTING THE STORY

Part 2 of the [HE Storytelling Toolkit](#) outlines how to write a success story and provides steps to help develop an engaging and memorable HE story.

Prior to posting, write copy for the posts in a Google doc. The copy should include a descriptive story, hashtags, and photo credit(s).

- Incorporate four elements of a compelling story by...
 - Highlighting a main protagonist
 - Having a catchy title or opening
 - Showing the development journey and discussing USAID HE programming
 - Including context-appropriate language, avoiding technical jargon
- Don't forget to include...
 - Personal details of the person, organization, or institution highlighted
 - Credit for the support and contributions of higher education institutions (HEIs) or other partners
 - High-quality photo(s), video(s), or a hyperlink to a HE success story
 - Engaging content that encourages the targeted audience to read the linked content, comment, or repost
 - Hashtags used to generate additional audience reach and page consistency

Success stories likely have not been made possible without the help of others. Make sure to:

- Recognize others' input...
 - **Receive final permission** to post the success story and give credit to those who supported the success.
 - **Give credit** by putting the logos of the institutions involved, mentioning them in the story, or tagging them in the social media posts.

CREDITING THROUGH TAGS All participants in the story should be included and credited in success stories, whether it be individuals, institutions, government officials, or USAID Bureaus or Missions.

HASHTAGS It is important to strengthen audience engagement through use of hashtags, whether incorporating popular hashtags such as #USAIDTransforms or creating an original hashtag specific to a series of success stories, such as USAID/Egypt's #SuperScholarSunday hashtag. The more specific the hashtags, the more targeted the audience will be.

Popular USAID hashtags: #USAID; #USAIDEducation; #USAIDTransforms; #AmericaActs; #DemocracyIs; #SelfReliance; #DevJourney; #EndPoverty; #PowerAfrica; #FeedTheFuture



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SELECTING VISUALS FOR SUCCESS STORIES

Often, words aren't enough; visuals drive story engagement. These may include:

- Single photo(s)
- Multiple photos for a slideshow (2-5 images) per post
- Video clip under 60 seconds
- Visualizations
- Infographics
- Charts or Graphs

EXECUTING A SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGY

To leverage the full power of social media, communicators are encouraged to schedule time for regular social media monitoring and listening to see what is being discussed about USAID, other NGOs, and topics relevant to international development. By tuning into social media trends, one may be empowered to respond to and create new content that resonates with target audiences.

Schedule social media content in advance Use [Hootsuite](#) to schedule posts on Twitter and the Facebook page.

Schedule stories to be posted on holidays or International Commemoration Days Use the [United Nations Calendar of International Days and Weeks](#) to keep track of international events and holidays.

- **Monitor** government engagements, current events, and trends. These can be incorporated into optimizing when posting story content.

It is also important to independently research social media usage in one's country or region to determine when social media posts will attract the largest audience attention. For example, the work week in the Middle East is Sunday through Thursday, not Monday through Friday, like in the United States. Research may also help to determine how many tweets to post a day and the type of content that is most popular to local audiences (videos, audio podcasts, photos, articles, etc.).

Below are some sources to begin social media best practices research:

- All regions: [Social Networking: A Guide to Strengthening Civil Society through Social Media](#)
- Asia: [Charity Digital Skills Report](#)

REVIEWING METRICS

Measure results and repeat: Tracking efforts and learning what stories successfully engaged audiences and what did not is important. Engagement can be tracked through utilization and management of various [social media metrics](#). Tracking performance and demonstrating results will highlight the importance of investing the time and resources into social media. Metrics measure:

- Engagement
- Awareness
- Traffic



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SOCIAL MEDIA BEST PRACTICES

Below are a few top tips to consider when engaging an audience on Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram:

Facebook

- Limit characters in posts. Convey the story in as few characters as possible.
- Consider breaking up your content into short paragraphs as it improves the readability of your post. Lengthy paragraphs can cause readers' eyes to glaze over or can lead readers to abandon your post at first sight. ([Source](#))
- Tell stories through the human-interest angle; entertain while promoting USAID's successes.
- Use images. On Facebook, visually appealing photos and compelling graphics receive up to 4x more engagement (shares and likes).

Twitter

- Tweets should be no longer than 280 characters; the ideal number of characters for shareable tweets is between 80 and 110 characters, including hashtags and user tags
- Tweets with visuals (photos, pictograms, charts, emojis) have twice the engagement rates than tweets without images. ([Source](#))
- Always include a link in tweets, where possible. Tweets with a link have an 86% higher retweet rate ([Source](#)).

Instagram

- Square Video vs. Vertical Video ([Source](#))
- Up to 50 hashtags allowed on Instagram - Use Hashtags!
- Use mostly VISUALS on Instagram - Visuals/Images > Text
- Length: 125 characters ([Source](#)); ~ 30 seconds (26 seconds), no more than 1 minute

USAID HIGHER EDUCATION SOCIAL EXAMPLES

Part 6 of the [HE Storytelling Toolkit](#) showcases excellent examples of strategic storytelling in HE. These posts contain elements of a compelling story through the creation of effective and engaging social media posts.

USAID SOCIAL MEDIA TOOLKITS FOR REFERENCE

- [Acting on the Call Social Media Toolkit](#)
- [Let Girls Learn Social Media Toolkit](#)
- [#USAIDPartners Social Media Toolkit](#)

Resources

[Higher Education Storytelling Toolkit](#)

[USAID Branding Resources](#)

[Inclusive Design for Social Media: Tips for Creating Accessible Channels](#)

[Improving the Accessibility of Social Media for Public Service](#)

[How to Create a Social Media Strategy](#)