

GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION  
Washington, DC 20405

OSC 1808.3A  
September 10, 2024

GSA ORDER

SUBJECT: GSA Visual Information Program

1. Purpose. This Order issues and transmits updated policy regarding the General Services Administration's (GSA) Visual Information (VI) Program.
2. Background. In addition to policy regarding GSA's logo, visual system and video production, this program guidance includes policy and procedures related to purchase of VI production hardware and software by agency organizations and live video streaming events by agency organizations and personnel to external audiences.
3. Roles and Responsibilities. The GSA Visual Communications Program Management Office (PMO) exists to ensure that all VI products created and released by the agency meet a level of quality and professionalism consistent with the platform and audience intended to consume these products. The PMO also:
  - a. Manages the policies regarding the agency's visual brand and design system, including the appropriate use of the GSA Star Mark, and reviews and approves any GSA organization's requests for supporting brands or logos;
  - b. Ensures that the agency's VI activities are consistent with GSA's consolidation efforts to reduce duplication of work within the agency and reduce costs by providing a shared VI service; and,
  - c. Researches and recommends technologies to improve the agency's ability to produce and release VI products, creates policies and guidance related to agency VI activities, and supports agency organizations and personnel in creation and release of VI products.
4. Scope and applicability.
  - a. This Order provides policy guidance for GSA's VI Program and creation and release of VI products by agency organizations and personnel. The Office of Strategic Communication (OSC), Visual Communication Program Management Office manages

GSA's VI Program, ensuring all VI activities within the agency meet Federal laws, statutes, and GSA policies.

b. This Order applies to all GSA components, contractors, and employees of GSA and to all GSA events, without regard to funding source, including no-cost contracts.

c. This policy does not apply to GSA's Office of Inspector General and the Civilian Board of Contract Appeals.

5. Cancellation. This Order supersedes OSC 1808.3.

6. Summary of Changes.

- a. Added Chapter 2, Management of GSA's Brand.
- b. Previous Chapter 2, GSA Star Mark and Visual System becomes Chapter 3.
- c. Added Chapter 8, Virtual Communications.
- d. Updated guidelines for GSA Star Mark and Visual System to reflect changes to agency policies and guidelines.
- e. Updated Chapter 4, Procedures, to reflect changes in agency procedures and industry standards.

6. Signature.

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Channing Grate  
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## CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

1. General. As an agency GSA communicates on a daily basis to a varied audience in the execution of its mission to deliver the best customer experience and value in real estate, acquisition, and technology services to the government and the American people. These communications include internal facing to our agency personnel and external facing to the Federal agencies we support, civilian businesses, other stakeholders, and the American people. An important part of this communication effort is the use of Visual Information (VI) products, such as; photographs, graphics, multimedia and video productions, and live video streams of events. Technological advancements have made creation of VI products by any GSA employee a reality. Government provided smartphones can shoot high quality still imagery and video. Software is available through GSA IT to create graphics and edit photography. Audiovisual production equipment costs have decreased substantially, free software is readily available to create graphics for use on social media, and virtual meeting platforms such as Zoom and Google Meet allow GSA employees to livestream to both internal and external audiences. Because of the availability and ease of use of this technology, it is vital that GSA employees have clear guidance about GSA's VI program, what is acceptable, what guidelines must be followed, and what steps must be taken before a VI product is released.

a. The Visual Communications Program Management Office (PMO), within the Office of Strategic Communication (OSC), is responsible for management of the agency's VI program and all VI activities undertaken by agency personnel. PMO employees are subject matter experts in all VI production disciplines and stay abreast of all applicable Federal laws, statutes and guidance, in addition to VI industry best practices, technology, and trends.

b. The policies and procedures outlined in this handbook are intended to comply with the provisions of various laws and regulations applicable to the agency VI program, including:

- (1) Copyright Act of 1976
- (2) Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973
- (3) Federal records guidance on digital manipulation of official photographs
- (4) Privacy Act
- (5) GSA Directive 5450.39D, GSA Delegations of Authority Manual

(6) GSA Order 2106.2A OSC, GSA Social Media Policy

(7) GSA Order 2140.2A OSC, Management of the General Services Administration's Digital Presence

(8) GSA Order 5090.1A CHGE 1, Purchase of Promotional or Memento Items

(9) GSA Order 2185.1A CIO, Use of Artificial Intelligence at GSA

c. Historically, due to technological limitations, GSA organizations could only have VI materials produced by agency visual information and audiovisual specialists or through contracted vendors, a system that largely ensured all standards, policies, and quality levels were understood and met. With advancements in technology, many employees within the agency can now produce and release VI products without support from a visual information or audiovisual specialist. These capabilities, while having advantages, increase the risk that VI products will be released that do not meet Federal laws, agency guidelines, or industry quality levels. The guidance in this Order will ensure that the agency's VI program and the VI products created by agency personnel remain professional, engaging, high quality, and respectful of GSA's reputation.

2. Scope. In addition to VI activities in direct support of GSA organizations and activities, this Order may extend to work performed for other Federal agencies and councils.

## CHAPTER 2. GSA BRAND MANAGEMENT

1. General. GSA's brand is made up of several components, including; a visual identity and brand architecture; a brand story; and messaging platforms. Proper use of, and adherence to, the agency branding guidelines at all times is critical to meeting the agency's strategic communication objectives and reinforcing the importance of GSA's work. Per GSA Directive 5450.39D, GSA Delegations of Authority Manual, OSC has delegated authority to manage GSA's brand program and is the sole approving authority for new branding activities, no brands may be created or used without OSC's approval. This order outlines guidelines for proper use of the visual components of the GSA brand.

2. Brand Architecture. The cornerstone of GSA's visual brand program is our agency brand architecture. Brand architecture sets the visual standards and relationship between the various offices, programs, products, and services that GSA provides.

a. GSA uses a hybrid brand architecture, allowing for a flexible system to best support the wide range of services offered by the agency. GSA's hybrid architecture is broken out into the following categories:

(1) Parent Brand - The Star Mark is GSA's parent brand and leads all communications when speaking on behalf of the agency for external and internal customers. It also represents all GSA Business Lines and offices.

(2) Sub-brands - have a direct and dependent identity relationship to the parent brand, as a service, for its program and its products. As such, sub-brands rely on the GSA Star Mark as the primary visual identity in their brand.

(3) Co-brands - have an independent identity but an interdependent relationship with the parent brand that is emphasized and promoted. The corporate identifier is still present but doesn't lead the design system. Co-brands are generally reserved for services and products in emerging markets that GSA is not traditionally associated with. While programs within this category may have a unique visual identity, it must always be partnered with GSA's parent identity, the GSA Star Mark.

(4) Mono-brands - have an indirect and independent identity relationship to the parent brand that is not apparent or actively marketed. Mono-brands can be a service, product, or multi-agency council or partnerships. Programs within this category may have unique visual identities that do not have to be partnered with GSA's parent brand.

b. OSC, in collaboration with the GSA office or business line, will determine the appropriate category for new brand activities within the agency. OSC has final approval

authority on which category is most appropriate for branding new agency programs or services.

c. More information regarding GSA's brand architecture and its application can be found in the GSA publication, *Strengthening Our Brand*, January 2015. This document appears on [GSA InSite](#).

## CHAPTER 3. GSA STAR MARK AND VISUAL SYSTEM

1. GSA Star Mark. The GSA Star Mark is the official visual identity of the agency; no other marks may be used to represent the U.S. General Services Administration.

a. The GSA Star Mark represents GSA's parent brand, and holds equity with our customers and employees, as demonstrated by a brand study conducted in 2023-2024. Consistent and correct use of the Star Mark strengthens the agency's corporate identity and ensures our customers see GSA as a cohesive organization.

b. The GSA Star Mark is the only approved identifier for agency stationary, business cards, print, email signatures and electronic communication products throughout the agency.

c. The GSA Star Mark is trademarked and shall not be altered in any way. Size, placement and color of the GSA Star Mark shall be in accordance with guidelines set forth in the GSA publication, *Strengthening Our Brand*, January 2015. This document appears on [GSA InSite](#).

d. The GSA Star Mark may not be combined with any other agency seals or logos to create a new logo, seal, or graphic.

e. Except for the GSA Star Mark, and approved sub-, co-, and mono-brands, no logos shall be used by any GSA component or in conjunction with any GSA program without the consent of OSC.

f. OSC must approve use of the GSA Star Mark for any applications not detailed in section (b) above (the Office of the General Counsel may also need to review and clear these uses). This includes; use on websites not managed by GSA; agency produced promotional items, communication products created by external federal agencies and non-governmental organizations; and signage or other physical installations.

(1) The GSA Star Mark should not be used on physical items that receive high wear and use, such as floor mats. Customizing these types of items increases the cost to the agency and yield little benefit to enhancing the agency's brand.

(2) The GSA Star Mark may not be used on clothing items or other memento items. More information can be found in [GSA Order 5090.1A CHGE 1, Purchase of Promotional or Memento Items](#).

2. GSA Seal. The GSA Seal is reserved for legal and ceremonial uses only.

a. Legal use includes official documents.



b. Ceremonial use is limited to awards outlined in GSA Order, CPO P 9451.1 GSA Associate Performance Recognition System (APRS).

c. Use of the GSA Seal for any other purpose must be approved by OSC.

3. GSA Advantage, contract, and schedule logos.

a. GSA Multiple Award Schedule Program or contract-holder's may use the GSA Star Mark logo along with appropriate identifiers;

b. All branding guidelines for use of the GSA Star Mark apply to vendor use of the logo.

c. Vendors may not use the Star Mark logo in any way that states or implies that their product or service is endorsed or preferred by any element of the Federal Government.

d. The full policy regarding vendor use of the GSA Star Mark can be found on [GSA.gov](http://GSA.gov).

e. GSA personnel who find inappropriate use of the GSA Star Mark by a commercial enterprise should notify OSC via their designated [Client Communication Team](#).

4. Visual system. Stationary, business cards, print, and electronic communications must conform to the guidelines presented in *Strengthening Our Brand*, January 2015.

a. Stationery and templates for Google Slides presentations and agency letterhead are available on [GSA InSite](#).

(1) Use of available Google Slides templates is not mandatory; GSA personnel may create original presentations as long as presentations adhere to all applicable branding guidelines.

(2) GSA Letterhead may be edited to reflect a specific organization and must remain in compliance with GSA's sub-branding guidelines; font style and size, and the GSA Star Mark graphic may not be altered in any way.

b. The mandatory source for business cards is Envision Business Cards.

(1) This provider has been given the GSA Logo and template for business cards, any requests to deviate from this template must be approved by OSC.

(2) Policy regarding procurement of business cards is located on [GSA InSite](#).

c. The only approved icon for official GSA social media accounts is the GSA Star Mark. More information can be found in [GSA Order 2106.2A OSC, GSA Social Media Policy](#).

d. All GSA official websites not hosted on www.gsa.gov must include the GSA Star Mark on all site pages in order to distinguish them as official GSA sites. More information can be found in [GSA Order 2140.2A OSC, Management of the General Services Administration's Digital Presence](#).

## CHAPTER 4. PROCEDURES

1. General. This chapter outlines the procedures GSA employees must follow when creating VI products for official use. GSA employees are encouraged to contact their designated [OSC Client Communication Team](#) prior to producing VI products to determine if OSC staff can support their requirements. OSC employs trained visual information and audiovisual production specialists for the purposes of supporting the VI requirements of the agency. This support is prioritized based upon several factors, including, but not limited to; requests from senior leadership, scope and scale of program, potential audience size for completed product, and targeted audience. OSC VI production capabilities vary by Region.

2. Imagery created using Artificial Intelligence. GSA employees must follow all guidance found in [GSA Order 2185.1A CIO, Use of Artificial Intelligence at GSA](#) when creating or working with AI-generated imagery.

- a. AI-generated images may not be used if the image is intended to serve as visual documentation of an official event or subject for historic or news purposes.
- b. AI-generated images must be clearly labeled or watermarked in a manner that makes the recipient aware of the system(s) involved and whether they edited or authored the work.
- c. All AI-generated imagery must be reviewed and approved by OSC prior to use.

3. Still photography. GSA employees are authorized to use both original (images captured by employee) or stock still photographic images from an OSC-approved provider in the creation of communication products in support of their official duties. This includes imagery for use in newsletters, internal and external web pages, and official social media platforms.

a. Original imagery must show GSA staff, buildings, and events in a professional and ethical manner.

b. Original imagery captured using GSA equipment, captured during official duty, or used in official work becomes the property of GSA. The photographer relinquishes all rights to ownership of the photograph.

c. Original official imagery cannot be digitally manipulated beyond what could normally be done in a traditional photographic darkroom.

(1) Images may be cropped, resized, and adjusted for lightness, darkness, contrast, color and correction; areas of the photo may be darkened (burned) or lightened (dodged);

(2) Images may not be digitally manipulated to add items that were not present when photograph was taken or remove items in background or foreground;

(3) Images may not be digitally manipulated to remove wrinkles in subject's face or clothes;

(4) Photo-illustrations, which are "conceptual images" not intended to serve as visual documentation of an event or subject for historic or news purposes, may be digitally altered as necessary. The digital alterations must be obvious to the viewer of the product;

d. Use of stock imagery must conform to all U.S. Copyright laws. See Chapter 5 of this Order for more details. Employees may not use stock imagery that was not procured by GSA for official work;

(1) OSC is the delegated manager of GSA's stock imagery service

(2) GSA offices shall not subscribe to stock image providers without approval from OSC.

(3) Using OSC's managed solution ensures the agency receives the most favorable terms regarding cost and that all images are properly licensed for their intended use.

e. All imagery for use in externally-released publications or on external-facing websites must be approved by OSC staff prior to release. OSC staff can delegate this authority to certain GSA employees who, as a part of their official duties, regularly manage or release external-facing products;

f. Only OSC can approve release of original imagery featuring the GSA Administrator, Deputy Administrator, Chief of Staff, or those serving in "Acting" capacity in those roles;

g. Imagery must meet quality standards to ensure proper display (print or electronic) and be aesthetically pleasing to the viewer. Images should not be grainy, stretched, out of focus, poorly lit, incongruous with the main communication, or have poor resolution. Imagery must reflect well on GSA, both in quality and reputation of the agency; and

4. Graphics. For the purposes of this Order, the term "graphics" refers to any VI product which is not photographic or video-based. PowerPoint or Google Slides presentations are not graphics, but may have graphic components contained within. GSA employees are authorized to use both original (created by employee) or stock graphics in the creation of communication products in support of their official duties.

This includes graphics for use in newsletters, internal and external webpages, presentations, and official social media platforms.

- a. Graphics should comply with all GSA branding and visual system policies;
- b. Graphics should represent the agency in a professional manner;
- c. Original graphics created using GSA equipment, created during official duty, or used in official work becomes the property of GSA. The designer relinquishes all rights to ownership of the graphic;
- d. Use of stock graphics must conform to all U.S. Copyright laws. See Chapter 5 of this Order for more details. Employees may not use stock graphics not procured by GSA for official work;
- e. All graphic products for use in externally-released publications or on external-facing websites must be approved by OSC staff prior to release. OSC staff can delegate this authority to certain GSA employees who, as a part of their official duties, regularly manage or release external-facing products;
- f. OSC-produced graphics in support of GSA-wide programs, initiatives, communications, or special emphasis months are the only ones to be used by GSA organizations. Organizations are not authorized to create substitute graphics for these events. Content adjustments can be made to the graphics to denote unique event dates and times, but no large-scale alteration of graphic is permitted without OSC approval;
- g. Graphics must meet quality standards to ensure proper display (print or electronic) and be aesthetically pleasing to the viewer. Graphics should meet design standards for balance, composition, color use, and font selection. Graphics must reflect well on GSA, both in quality and reputation of the agency; and
- h. GSA offices shall not subscribe to stock graphic providers, or purchase graphic creation software, without approval from OSC.

5. Video and multimedia productions. For the purposes of this Order, “Video and Multimedia Productions” refer to VI products that include original or stock video and/or audio, imagery, graphics, and music, edited together in any fashion to produce a finished piece intended to be viewed by an audience. The term “Video” refers to productions where more than 50% of the content is audiovisual in nature. The term “Multimedia” refers to productions where more than 50% of the content is graphical or still imagery in nature. GSA employees are authorized to create three types of video and multimedia productions (leadership, training, and live informational webinars) without first obtaining approval from OSC.

a. Leadership and training videos.

(1) A GSA Head of Service or Staff Office, Regional Administrator, or Public Buildings Service (PBS)/Federal Acquisition Service (FAS) Regional Commissioner may record a video to address staff, teams, or internal groups within their organization. Organizations must submit the final video to OSC for a technical review before distribution, but do not need to obtain prior review and approval of the script.

(2) GSA employees may produce training videos, multimedia presentations, or conduct live webinars or presentations that include a presenter, screenshots of applications, presentations, or other information, for internal or external release, without first obtaining approval from OSC. If production requires procurement of audiovisual equipment or software to produce, then the employee must obtain OSC approval prior to purchasing. Software must go through the GSA IT Standards Profile process (detailed in CIO 2160.F.) This restriction does not include the purchase of webcams or screen-capturing software. Organizations must submit the final product to OSC for a technical review before distribution, but do not need to obtain prior review of scripts, presentations, screen captures, or other content used in production of video or multimedia presentation.

(3) Leadership, training videos, and live presentations must both adhere to U.S. Copyright Laws.

(4) The OSC technical review is required to ensure final videos meet [industry and GSA standards](#).

(5) GSA employees are encouraged to contact their OSC Client Communication Team prior to recording to ensure the best possible final product.

b. GSA employees shall consult with their OSC Client Communication Team for all other types of videos or multimedia productions at the start of planning for such productions. Consultation should take place prior to writing scripts or storyboarding. Consultation with OSC will ensure the final production meets these criteria:

(1) Connection to mission. The product provides a clear connection to mission or vision of GSA;

(2) Professionalism. The tone, appearance and contents of the product are professional, show GSA in a good light, and are compelling to the viewer;

(3) Clarity of message. The product is clear, concise, and conversational in tone;

(4) Production quality. Final product meets industry standards for lighting, color balance, composition, and audio quality;

(5) Return on investment. The target audience and resources required for production are analyzed, using available metrics, to determine if the proposed video or multimedia product is the appropriate communication vehicle;

(6) Effective communication strategy. The desired outcome or goal of the product is identified in order to focus the message; and,

(7) Final approval. Production does not begin until OSC approves script and storyboards.

c. GSA organizations without a dedicated Client Communication Team shall consult with the Visual Communications Program Management Office prior to production.

d. The process of producing a video or multimedia product is broken down into three phases; pre-production, production, and post-production.

(1) Pre-production. During pre-production, the most important phase of the project life cycle, the message is determined, research conducted, the script written, key visuals identified, storyboards developed (if needed), logistics planned, on-screen talent identified and scheduled to participate, and reviews by subject matter experts conducted. All components should be approved and finalized before moving into the production phase.

(2) Production. During this phase, all necessary components for the product are acquired. Video or still imagery is captured, audio narration recorded, graphics created, music selected, etc. The success of this phase is largely dependent on materials created during the pre-production process. Well-developed storyboards and scripts provide an easy-to-follow roadmap to capture imagery and create graphics that support the message and communications goals. Without storyboards or a script, imagery is often captured that is not usable or does not best support the message.

(3) Post-production. During this phase, all captured video, stills, graphics, etc., are edited together to form the final product. As with the production phase, the best way to conduct the post-production phase is by following the storyboards and script developed in the pre-production phase. Moving into the post-production phase with no developed idea regarding how the final product should look or flow creates a situation where the editor is left to make these decisions in a vacuum, usually lengthening the time it takes to edit the production and risking the final product not meeting the client's expectations.

e. GSA employees shall submit their completed production to their Client Communication Team for approval prior to release.

(1) OSC will conduct both a content and technical review of the video;

(2) If edits are required after review, the communication team will meet with the producer to explain the nature and reason for the edits; and,

(3) Once the production is approved, any alterations will require additional review by OSC.

f. All video and multimedia products produced by GSA employees for official use must meet accessibility guidelines found in Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act before they can be released.

(1) All video and multimedia productions must be closed captioned to ensure accessibility of information by hearing-impaired or deaf individuals.

(2) Videos must have audio that describes or gives context for essential visual information to ensure accessibility by visually-impaired or blind individuals.

(3) More information on Section 508 compliance can be found on [InSite](#)

(4) Due to lower accuracy rates, automatic captioning features are not acceptable for meeting Section 508 requirements for posting recordings of live presentations.

g. Video and multimedia productions can be released once approved by OSC. OSC manages the two approved channels for uploading and releasing video and multimedia products agency-wide, which are GSA's YouTube page or the private Vimeo channel.

(1) Only members of OSC shall have administrator access to GSA's YouTube and Vimeo accounts. OSC staff will perform all upload functions.

(2) GSA employees requesting release and upload of their product shall submit an upload request form, which can be found on [InSite](#).

(3) Productions for external release will be uploaded to GSA's YouTube page. All videos on GSA's YouTube page must be "public" and accessible by any visitor to the page.

(4) Productions for agency-wide internal release or to be posted to password-protected websites will be uploaded to GSA's private Vimeo channel. Videos on this channel cannot be seen by the general public or anyone who does not have access to GSA's intranet or password-protected sites.



(5) Use of Google Drive is approved in certain cases. More information regarding when offices can distribute videos using GSA Google Drive accounts can be found on [InSite](#).

(7) Official video and multimedia productions may not be uploaded onto non-GSA video-sharing accounts without OSC approval.

(8) Products that have been released and posted to GSA's public YouTube account may be shared or embedded on any other Federal web or social media site without further OSC approval.

#### 6. Release forms.

a. Non-Federal employees who are the primary subjects of photography or video recordings (i.e., speakers, panel members, etc.) must sign release forms prior to being photographed or videotaped for official VI products. A copy of the release form is available on [InSite](#).

b. A signed copy of the release form must be kept on file for as long as the production is actively in use or as otherwise required under the Federal Records Act.

c. Release forms are not required for Federal employees who are documented as part of an official production while performing their official duties. If practical, VI producers should be respectful of any Federal employee's requests not to be documented for the production.

d. Permission to document GSA presenters at events not hosted by GSA must be granted by event organizers prior to any still, video, or audio recording.

#### 7. Records management.

a. VI products created by GSA organizations and employees are subject to the Federal Records Act of 1950 and all amendments of this Act. GSA organizations and employees that create VI products must preserve and dispose of these records in accordance with all Federal laws, guidelines and GSA Orders.

b. GSA's YouTube and Vimeo accounts are delivery systems for content and do not qualify as archive locations.

c. OSC does not keep an archive of GSA organizational or employee produced VI products. Responsibility for preservation rests with the organization or employee who created the VI product.

d. Information on proper management of Audiovisual Records can be found on the [U.S. National Archives and Records Administration website](#).

- e. Information on GSA's Records Management Program can be found on [InSite](#).

## CHAPTER 5. USE OF COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL

1. U.S. Copyright Law. The United States (U.S.) copyright law is contained in chapters 1 through 8 and 10 through 12 of title 17 of the United States Code (USC). The Copyright Act of 1976 provides the basic framework for current copyright laws. The information in this Order is not intended to replace official legal guidance regarding U.S. Copyright laws; only to provide general guidance regarding appropriate use of copyrighted imagery, video, and audio by GSA employees. In most instances this guidance will be sufficient; in cases of ambiguity, GSA employees should contact their designated Client Communication Team, which will consult with the GSA Office of the General Counsel.

a. GSA adheres to all provisions contained in U.S. copyright laws. GSA employees and contractors performing work for GSA must follow all copyright laws when creating VI products.

b. GSA employees are prohibited from using copyrighted material in VI products without OSC approval. Approval will not be given if a suitable non-copyrighted source is available for use.

c. An item's availability on the internet is not an indicator of its copyright status. Many copyrighted items can be found and downloaded using internet search engines but cannot be legally used.

2. Non-copyrighted imagery. Images, graphics, video and music that are not copyright protected are in the public domain and may be used in the creation of GSA VI products.

a. U.S. Government produced VI products are generally not subject to copyright in the U.S. Unless the work falls under an exception, anyone may, without restriction under U.S. copyright laws:

- (1) Reproduce the work in print and digital form;
- (2) Create derivative works;
- (3) Display the work; and
- (4) Distribute copies.

b. These works are not "public domain" in that the U.S. Government may assert copyright outside of the U.S. for U.S. Government works. For more information on U.S. Government Works visit this [site](#).

c. U.S. Government agencies may hold trademarks on seals and logos. GSA employees must obtain permission from agencies before using their official seal in GSA-produced VI products.

d. Offices may not use sites that advertise as containing creative commons or royalty-free images, graphics, video or music. Sites such as these offer no legal protections regarding the veracity of the license of visual assets offered and GSA employees, by downloading and using imagery from these sites, are legally binding the agency to a contract with the company - an authority that only select GSA staff have.

3. Stock imagery sources. OSC maintains subscriptions to stock imagery, graphics, and illustration sources. The material included in these subscriptions may be used by all GSA employees for creation of VI products as part of their official duties.

a. GSA employees in need of stock imagery, graphics, or illustrations should email [stockimagery@gsa.gov](mailto:stockimagery@gsa.gov).

b. GSA employees must adhere to all terms and service agreements included in the subscription.

c. GSA employees may use imagery, video, and music included in GSA procured graphic or video editing software for creation of VI products as part of their official duties.

d. GSA employees cannot use GSA-procured stock imagery, video and music for non-official reasons.

## CHAPTER 6. PROCUREMENT OF VI PRODUCTION EQUIPMENT AND SERVICES

1. General. As the program of record for the creation of VI materials for the agency, OSC is the mandatory first source for GSA organizations and employees to use for the creation of VI products. This mandate supports the agency's organizational goals to reduce duplication of support services, reduce costs, and consolidate support functions across GSA. Additionally, this mandate ensures that VI products created in support of GSA's mission are of the highest possible quality and enhance the agency's public image and reputation.

OSC recognizes there will be times they cannot support a requested VI project, due to staffing, workload, or technological capabilities. If, after consultation, OSC determines they cannot support the project, GSA organizations may request approval to procure commercial VI production equipment or services. OSC is the approving authority for these requests. GSA organizations should contact their designated Client Communications Team to discuss requests. GSA Organizations without a dedicated Client Communications Team should contact the Visual Communication PMO directly to discuss their request.

2. Procurement of VI production equipment. Per GSA Directive 5450.39D, GSA Delegations of Authority Manual, OSC must review and concur on all office requests to procure VI production equipment before it is purchased . Organizations seeking to procure VI production equipment must prepare a business case justification in support of their request.

a. Business case justification shall include:

(1) Detailed description of the program or project requiring VI production support:

(2) Statement of why OSC support does not meet project requirements;

(3) Communication plan for the program or project, including how the VI product will be used in support of the plan;

(4) Description of the VI product to be produced using the equipment;

(5) Target audience size for the product;

(6) Length of time the final VI product will be used to communicate the message;

and

(7) Description of the experience level of personnel who will use the VI equipment.

b. OSC's approval or rejection of requests will take into account the following factors:

(1) Can OSC support the request with existing equipment?

(2) What is the organization's intended use of the equipment?

(3) What is the frequency of use of the equipment?

(4) What is the cost of the equipment?

(5) Does the requesting organization possess the appropriate skill level to use the equipment?

(6) Is it more appropriate for OSC to invest in the requested equipment?

(7) Do comparable solutions that meet the functional needs of the organization already exist?

c. OSC does not need to approve requests to purchase webcams or screen-capturing software already approved by GSA IT. Any software purchased for this purpose needs to go through the IT Standards process, described in GSA Order, CIO 2160.1F."

d. GSA organizations should do a cost comparison to determine if it is more cost effective to purchase equipment or if they should pay a third party vendor to perform the needed service.

3. Procurement of VI production services. Per GSA Directive 5450.39D, GSA Delegations of Authority Manual, GSA organizations may not procure VI production services as part of a contract without OSC review and concurrence.

a. Services are defined as any work performed by a commercial vendor to design, produce, or distribute VI material.

b. Contractors under existing contracts with GSA organizations may produce VI material if production of VI material is infrequent and is in support of duties they are contracted to perform.

c. GSA Organizations may procure printing and reproduction services of VI material in support of their mission without OSC's approval.

(1) Requests for printing and reproduction that fall under the micropurchase limit may be procured without further coordination.

(2) Requests for printing and reproduction that are above the micropurchase limit must be procured through the U.S. Government Printing Office (GPO).

(3) GSA organizations should coordinate printing and reproduction requests over the micropurchase threshold with their regional GPO coordinator.

(4) GSA organizations should consider GSA's sustainability and environmental impact goals before printing time-limited use publications or mass quantities of print/production materials.

d. GSA organizations seeking to procure VI production services must prepare a business case justification in support of their request.

(1) Business case justification shall include:

(a) Detailed description of the program or project requiring VI production support;

(b) Statement of why OSC support does not meet project requirements;

(c) Communication plan for the program or project, including how the VI product will be used in support of the plan;

(d) Description of VI product to be produced using services;

(e) Target audience size for the product; and

(f) Length of time the final VI product will be used to communicate the message.

(2) OSC's approval or rejection of requests will take into account the following factors:

(a) Can OSC support the request with existing services?

(b) What is the organization's intended use of the service?

(c) What is the return on investment to the agency/program?

(3) If approved, the requesting organization shall prepare and submit to OSC for review all contract documentation prior to submission to GSA's contracting office. OSC's review will include:

(a) Cost analysis. Ensures the government estimate is in-line with typical production costs;

(b) Technical analysis. Ensures the work product and final deliverables meet industry and GSA technical specifications;

(c) Milestones and in-progress review analysis. Ensures production milestones and opportunities for in-progress reviews are established, realistic, and protect GSA from receiving sub-standard product due to lack of oversight; and

(d) Final deliverables analysis. Ensures the contract contains language regarding GSA ownership of all produced materials, including supporting imagery and graphics used in final production, and obligation of the vendor to deliver all materials to GSA upon completion of the contract.

(4) VI products produced by a third party vendor in support of GSA must be reviewed and approved by OSC prior to being accepted by the contracting organization. OSC requested edits or alterations must be incorporated into the final product before acceptance or release.



## CHAPTER 7. LIVE VIDEO STREAMING TO EXTERNAL AUDIENCES

1. General. Technological advancements have made live video streaming of content and events an inexpensive, accessible, and effective way to reach an audience. Numerous social media sites offer easy-to-use live video streaming capabilities.

a. The guidance in this chapter applies to live video streams to external audiences using social media or video hosting platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, and X.

b. The guidance in this chapter does not apply to existing GSA virtual meeting platform solutions, such as: Zoom, or Google Meet. Guidance for hosting virtual meetings using these platforms is covered in Chapter 7, Virtual Communications.

d. OSC shall approve all GSA requests for external live video streams of events prior to execution. OSC staff can delegate this approval authority to certain GSA employees if, as a regular part of their duties, they plan and produce events for consumption by an external audience.

e. OSC will consider the following factors when reviewing external live video stream requests:

(1) Logistical factors. Does the event (lighting, staging, sound quality) lend itself to production of a quality, engaging live video stream?

(2) Content. Is the content engaging or is the majority of content to be streamed slides, graphics, or a talking head?

(3) Estimated audience size. Is the event of significance to a large or niche audience? Using GSA's YouTube channel to stream events tailored to a small group of people is generally not appropriate.

(4) Live stream value. Does the event need to be live or will an on-demand video posted after the event meet requirements? In general, streaming an event live is valuable when audience participation is needed, when announcing a new major program or initiative, for time sensitive information, or to allow members of the media to view or participate.

(5) Alignment with GSA strategic goals and messaging. Does the proposed event align with GSA's goals and messaging?

e. GSA live web streams may only be hosted on official GSA social media or video hosting sites. GSA employees may not create social media or video hosting accounts for the purpose of conducting official live video streams without OSC approval.

f. OSC can provide production support for GSA external live stream events involving the Administrator, Heads of Services or Staff Offices, and other senior leadership or public GSA officials. OSC's ability to support external live streams varies by Region.

g. Section 508 accessibility rules apply to live video streams.

h. GSA's YouTube channel is the preferred external live video streaming solution for the agency. Live streams from YouTube can incorporate live closed captioning.

(1) OSC will coordinate live closed captioning for OSC productions.

(2) GSA organizations producing their own live stream must coordinate live closed captioning support through [GSA IT's CART service](#).

i. GSA organizations should remember they are representing the entire agency when they conduct an external live stream of an event and should conduct themselves in a professional manner that represents the agency's highest standards.

(1) All U.S. Copyright Laws apply to content aired by GSA employees during a live external event. Copyrighted images, video, and audio may not be used without appropriate permission by the owner.

(2) Viewers of GSA-produced live video streams will associate all speaker's words and actions as endorsed by the agency. Event coordinators should be aware of all planned remarks and provide speakers with necessary guidance to avoid conflict with GSA-stated policies or views. Failure to do so could lead to embarrassment for GSA or potential violations of the Hatch Act. In situations where the purpose of the live video stream is to spur debate or discuss differing opinions, non-GSA presenters should state their views are theirs alone and do not represent the views of GSA.

## CHAPTER 8. VIRTUAL COMMUNICATIONS

1. General. Technological advancements in online meeting platforms such as Google Meet and Zoom have made live video streaming of training sessions, meetings, and events an inexpensive, accessible, and effective way to reach an audience. In the past GSA has used live video streams of events internally to keep our geographically dispersed staff connected and engaged in real-time with leadership or peers. Online meeting platforms and other live streaming technology also enables GSA staff to connect with our external audiences to keep them informed of our agency's programs, initiatives, or significant events. The use of online meeting platforms as a channel to speak to an external audience is known as virtual communications. Virtual communications, while effective at broadcasting GSA's message, must also reinforce GSA's brand through the appropriate use of the GSA Star Mark and other brand elements. Consistent use of agency branding will build our audience's trust that the information being provided is from an official source.

a. The guidance in this chapter applies to virtual communication events to external audiences.

b. GSA virtual communication events may only be hosted on official GSA online meeting platforms or on contracted vendor provided online meeting platforms. When using contracted vendor platforms the online meeting must still meet all GSA branding guidelines.

c. Section 508 accessibility rules apply to virtual communication events.

d. GSA organizations should remember they are representing the entire agency when they conduct an external live stream of an event and should conduct themselves in a professional manner that represents the agency's highest standards.

(1) All external virtual communications should be able to be clearly identified as coming from the agency. Offices producing external virtual communications should begin each event with a GSA branded slide that identifies the subject matter of the event and the office hosting the event. The host of the event should also state the title and subject matter of the event and identify which GSA office they represent.

(2) GSA produced virtual communications that include non-governmental or industry presenters should be mindful that these organizations' brands or marketing slogans do not appear on slides or other visual materials used during the event. Appearance of non-governmental organizations' brands or marketing materials could give the impression that GSA endorses this group over other similar organizations.

(3) All U.S. Copyright Laws apply to content aired by GSA employees during a virtual meeting or event. Copyrighted images, video, and audio may not be used without appropriate permission by the owner.

(4) Viewers of GSA-produced virtual events will associate all speaker's words and actions as endorsed by the agency. Event coordinators should be aware of all planned remarks and provide speakers with necessary guidance to avoid conflict with GSA-stated policies or views. Failure to do so could lead to embarrassment for GSA or potential violations of the Hatch Act. In situations where the purpose of the virtual communication is to spur debate or discuss differing opinions, non-GSA presenters should state their views are theirs alone and that do not represent the views of GSA.

## APPENDIX A. DEFINITION OF TERMS

1. **Audio description:** An additional audio track in a video or multimedia production that describes and gives context for essential visual information, making the product accessible to people who have “low vision”, or who are blind.
2. **Automatic captioning:** Method of creating closed caption files using automatic speech to text technology. Does not provide 100% accurate closed captions.
3. **Brand Architecture:** The structure of a brand, often illustrated with a diagram, that helps to explain the relationships between an organization’s master brand, sub-brands, products, and service lines.
3. **Closed captions:** Process of displaying text on a video screen to provide additional or interpretive information. Typically used as a transcription of the audio portion of a program as it occurs, making the program accessible to people who are hard of hearing or deaf.
4. **Copyright:** The exclusive legal right, given to an originator or an assignee to print, publish, perform, or record literary, artistic, or musical material, and to authorize others to do the same.
5. **Embed:** Process of inserting a video or multimedia production onto a webpage using a specific code associated with that video. The video remains on its original host site, but can be played from a webpage.
6. **GSA Seal:** The official agency seal, comprised of an eagle and pyramid, ringed by 13 stars. Use of the GSA Seal is reserved for legal or ceremonial purposes.
7. **GSA Star Mark:** The sole visual identifier for the agency for all print and electronic communications. The GSA Star Mark is comprised of the letters “GSA” upon a blue square.
8. **Multimedia production:** Audiovisual production in which more than 50% of the content consists of imagery or graphics.
9. **Photo-illustration:** A photo-image that has been enhanced beyond what the camera captured to create something new, rather than represent something in the real world. Often used to tell a story or illustrate a concept.
10. **Public domain:** Designation for content that is not protected by any copyright law or other restriction and may be freely copied, shared, altered, or republished by anyone.
11. **Releases, types of:**

a. **Internal:** When a communication product is distributed to only GSA staff through InSite or GSA's email system, or to any other select audience through password protected websites.

b. **External:** When a communication product is distributed through posting to a public-facing web or social media site. Externally released material is accessible and viewable by the general public.

12. **Reviews, types of:**

a. **Content review:** A review in which the message of the communication product is evaluated for appropriateness, accuracy, and style of delivery.

b. **Technical review:** A review in which the technical aspects of a communication product are evaluated. Technical reviews do not evaluate the content, message, or information contained in the communication product.

13. **Script:** Written work by a writer used for a video or multimedia production. A script contains all dialogue that will be spoken in the production.

14. **Stock imagery:** Professional photographs, graphics, or video of common places, landmarks, nature, events, or people that are bought and sold on a royalty-free basis and can be used for commercial design purposes.

15. **Story board:** A sequence of drawings, typically with some directions and dialogue, representing the shots planned for a video or multimedia production.

16. **Sub-brand:** A product or service affiliated with a parent brand, but with its own brand name. A sub-brand uses the same visual imagery as the parent brand.

17. **Trademark:** A symbol, word, or words legally registered or established by use as representing a company or product.

18. **Video on demand:** Delivery of video or multimedia content that allows viewers to consume on their schedule, as opposed to having to watch live.

19. **Video production:** Audiovisual production in which more than 50% of the content consists of recorded video.

20. **Virtual Communication:** The use of online meeting platforms to conduct real-time meetings, information sessions, or webinars.

20. **Visual system:** Design rules that govern logo use, layout, typography, color, imagery, and other defining characteristics of a brand.