U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Office of Inspector General

Innovative Strategies for Communicating Audit and Evaluation Results

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Integrated approach to external and internal communications:

- Congress
- Website
- Podcasts
- Media
- Intranet
- Blog
- Publications
- Social media
- e-Newsletter
PODCASTS
Reasons to Produce Podcasts

• Amplify findings and recommendations for the general public.

• Frame and humanize dense material with context in a conversational format.

• Provide access to digestible summaries for mobile and multitasking listeners.

• Supply at-the-ready soundbites for radio, web-based (and print!) news media.
Fringe Benefits of Producing Podcasts

- Staff enjoy showcasing their hard work and sharing their expertise.
- Over time, everyone has an opportunity to participate.
What Topics are Best Suited to Podcasts?

- Is it newsworthy? Did a notification memo draw media interest? Will findings impact and resonate with a lot of people nationally or regionally? Might they provoke outrage?

- Is there a draw – such as a congressional request, alignment with a prominent news topic or person, an unusual finding, etc. – warranting special consideration?

- Do the OIG’s recommendations go beyond updating agency policies and/or guidance?

- Was a review initiated as a follow-on to an investigation or earlier audit/evaluation, or the latest installment following a common theme, of significant public interest?
What Topics are Best Suited to Podcasts?

• Would explaining a report’s scope, findings and recommendations through an audio format add value – from a Q&A-structured conversation and/or the inclusion of natural sound?

• Do we have web analytics from experience with past reports that support a “go”?

• Will a little known/understood investigative resource, practice or effort have broad appeal?
What Does an EPA OIG Podcast Sound Like?

Environmental Impacts of the Renewable Fuel Standard

Filing a Hotline Complaint
VISUALS IN REPORTS
Visuals in Reports

- Capabilities
  - Infographics & data graphics
  - Photography

- The public taxpayer is ALWAYS a stakeholder
  - Imagery makes info digestible

- A good image can go a long way in the social media, Web, digital communications world. Let us champion your work!

Source: EPA OIG graphic summarizing EPA Region 5 cooperative agreements.
Think outside the box. A simple cover photo would have been ok in this example, but how about illustrating the $105 billion in progressive funding? Taxpayers will care about that!

How about instead…

“My report topic is not visual. How can I have images of intangible concepts?”
- Talking to you, financial auditors 😊

- Answer: Consider ...
- Potential effects or impacts
- What could this mean to the public taxpayers?
- Are there mentions of specific places, concepts, data, significant dollar amounts (i.e., data visualization)?
Visuals in Reports - Example

EPA Should Timely Deobligate Unneeded Contract, Purchase and Miscellaneous Funds

Report No. 16-P-0135
April 11, 2016

Financial Management

$584k
No activity in last 18 months

$3 mil
Identified for potential deobligation

Deobligate
Tables, tables, tables. They’re ok, but what about instead …

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fiscal Year</th>
<th>Obligated Resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>$46.8 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>$49.4 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>$48.4 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>$27.8 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>$59.6 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>$232 million</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| TOTAL PLUS PRIOR YEARS’ FUNDING SINCE 1995 | $1 billion |

Source: EPA OIG.
Visuals in Reports - Example

- Data graphics!

Figure: Breakdown of STAR Grant Awards Obligated Resources by Year

Total since 1995: $1 billion

Source: EPA OIG.

REVISED
Visually in Reports - Examples

“What about sensitive topics?”
Visuals in Reports - Examples

- Telling a story through ...

INFOGRAPHICS & PHOTOGRAPHY

1.5 trillion gallons of water saved

EPA headquarters paid for unoccupied parking spaces. (EPA OIG photos)
Visuals in Reports – Best Practices

- Plan ahead
  - Identify photo opportunities in project (field research stage).
- Get approval from management on graphic concepts BEFORE doing the work to create them.
- Original content is always best. Customize!
The report also addresses EPA’s response to the crisis, including its use of oversight authority. The report is available at [epa.gov/oig](http://epa.gov/oig).
“COMING SOON” NOTICES
NOTICE OF SCHEDULED REPORT ISSUANCE

Audit of File Server Security

The OIG expects to issue a final report for this audit on August 28, 2018 (morning). To read the memorandum initiating the project, please click on the link above.

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MEDIA OUTREACH
Media Outreach

- Subject Matter Experts as Spokespersons
Media Outreach

- TV and Radio Interviews with Subject Matter Experts
# Media Outreach

## Newsroom Visits

### Network TV and Radio
- ABC News
- CBS News
- CNN
- National Public Radio
- NBC News

### Daily Newspapers
- New York Times
- Wall Street Journal
- Washington Post

### Trade Press
- Energy & Environment News
- Inside EPA

### Congressional and Political News Publications
- The Hill
- Politico

### Website-based Media
- Bloomberg BNA
- BuzzFeed News
- Government Executive
- Huffington Post
- Vox Media
- Yahoo News

### Not-for-profit Journalism Outlets
- Associated Press (wire service)
- Center for Public Integrity
- Daily Caller News Foundation
I look forward to addressing any questions at the end of this session.

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