



IREX media exchange programs Frequently Asked Questions

IREX is seeking digital, print, broadcast and investigative media outlets to host small groups and travel on fully sponsored exchange programs to Georgia bit.ly/IREXMediaGE and Ukraine bit.ly/IREXMediaUA

What are some of the things you want to know before taking on a partnership?

For U.S. media organizations interested in IREX's media exchange programs:

❑ What is IREX?

Headquartered in Washington, D.C., a nonprofit organization committed to global development and education, IREX has focused on people and communities since 1968.

Today, IREX and our partners work in 120 countries to build a more just, prosperous, and inclusive world by empowering youth, cultivating leaders, strengthening institutions, and extending access to quality education and information. IREX has an annual portfolio of more than \$90 million. We work in 100+ countries with a team of 400 global staff. For more, visit [IREX](https://www.irex.org) website.

❑ What does a partnership entail?

A partnership is a two-way exchange between American and Georgian and/or Ukrainian online, print and broadcast media outlets. Its ultimate goal is to contribute to the sustainable development of independent media in Eastern European emerging democracies by sharing best practices, forging professional connections between media professionals of the two countries, and learning about each other's culture and societal values.

Within the span of 8 to 12 months, with a visit schedule tailored to suit everyone's calendars, the selected American media outlet's staff will host their Georgian or Ukrainian counterparts and also travel to Georgia/Ukraine on a reciprocal visit. Each visit is for one week and includes job shadowing, one-on-one mentoring, hands-on trainings, advising and technical support on small grant activities. Some online consultations take place between the visits.

❑ What is IREX's role in this?

Over the course of 17 years, IREX has organized partnership exchanges between 83 Georgian and Ukrainian media outlets and their 56 U.S. counterpart news organizations across 26 states, with 260 partnership visits involving 476 Georgian and Ukrainian and 237 American media professionals.

Experienced IREX staff based in D.C., Tbilisi/Georgia and Kyiv/Ukraine provide fully funded partnership management, programmatic and logistical support, translation and oversight of the visits in the U.S., Georgia and Ukraine.

❑ What are the requirements of a U.S. media outlet to participate in a partnership?

We seek media organizations with a robust online presence (website, social media), digital/mobile first approach, strong in-house multimedia production, investigative reporting component, streamlined management, commercial sales and/or alternative revenue generation sources. We welcome outlets which demonstrate willingness, enthusiasm, capacity, and expertise to host small groups of 4 to 6 people and send 1-2 staff members on weeklong visits.

❑ What is the level of effort on our part?

Staff time to host small groups of 4 to 6 participants and send 1-2 employees on a weeklong visit.

❑ What benefits do American media get out of the partnerships?

Watch videos with our U.S. participants' testimonials:

WTOL, WICU & WDRB: www.youtube.com/watch?v=HWfBh_ggJnk

WDBJ, Firefli & Wheeler Broadcasting: www.youtube.com/watch?v=KZpRIW3aS1M

❑ Can we split the partnership with another station/media outlet?

Yes. To provide program participants with a holistic experience and fill the week's schedule, IREX welcomes split partnerships with 1-2 different types of media outlets, ideally within driving distance (up to 3 hours). Host newsrooms do not have to be under the same ownership.

❑ Typically, what kind of expertise are the Georgian/Ukrainian stations looking for?

- | | |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| ✓ Targeted Multimedia Production | ✓ Journalism Ethics/Fact Checking |
| ✓ Multi-platform Promotion | ✓ Mobile App |
| ✓ Digital Content & New Media | ✓ Marketing & Branding |
| ✓ Building Audience & Social Media | ✓ Sales & Revenue Generation |
| ✓ Investigative Journalism | ✓ Business Management |
| ✓ Converged Newsroom Operations | ✓ Organizational Development |

❑ Is there any paperwork involved?

We ask each outlet to sign a non-binding commitment letter as an expression of good will to support the partnership. Each person traveling to Georgia/Ukraine fills out a short post-visit survey.

❑ Who covers the expenses?

IREX covers the costs of participants' domestic and international travel, lodging, translation, cultural activities and per diem.

❑ Will we have to shoulder any costs?

No.

❑ Who funds these programs?

The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs at the U.S. Department of State, through U.S. Embassies in Georgia and Ukraine.

❑ With which media outlet will we be paired up?

Every year, IREX conducts an open competition for media in Georgia and Ukraine. Local online, print, broadcast and investigative outlets which apply are chosen as finalists based – among other things – on their applications, in-house produced content, competitive market standing, editorial values, staff professionalism, organizational capacity, need for support, and motivation by a selection committee during evaluation panel meeting.

After the selection is complete, IREX will provide American participant outlets with an on-site needs assessment of the Georgian or Ukrainian media outlet they'll be paired with.

❑ Who does the matching and how is it done?

IREX matches and pairs up the outlets based on the identified needs of selected local outlets and the capacity and expertise of their potential U.S. host news organizations. We visit websites and social media pages, and talk to our contact persons at each outlet.

❑ Can American outlets choose a Georgian/Ukrainian media outlet to work with?

No.

❑ Can American outlets partner with media in other countries?

IREX implements media exchange programs only in Georgia and Ukraine.

❑ When do we start and how long does a partnership last?

Full partnerships with 3-4 visits go on for 8 to 12 months. Half-partnerships with 2 visits take up to 6 months.

We will do our best to fit your schedule, considering ratings months, election coverage, staff vacation time, major events, and so on. We will pre-agree with you the schedule of the visits.

❑ How much staff time does it take?

8-10 days of staff time when traveling overseas. A few hours of various staff's time over the course of one week when hosting a group.

❑ Which staff should we send over?

Georgian and Ukrainian outlet staff who visit your organization nominate several staff to choose from, based on their expertise and relevance of qualifications. We have had newsroom staff, sales/marketing account executives, and management travel on our programs.

❑ How many groups will American outlets host and how many people will be in each group?

You will host 1 or 2 groups under each partnership. Each group will have 3 to 6 persons including media professionals from Georgia or Ukraine and interpreters/IREX staff.

Some groups might be "split" for several parallel sessions, so that the participants can spend time with relevant counterparts based on their specialized area of expertise.

❑ Who will visit us?

Potential participants include journalists, reporters, editors, photogs, anchors, news directors, webpage administrators, social media managers, sales/marketing staff, outlet management team, and so on.

Before the visit, IREX will share with you short bios of each participant, together with a list of priority topics and activities to focus on during the visit.

❑ What are some of the activities we'll need to arrange/participate in?

Job shadowing, going out on news assignments, going out on sales calls, attending editorial and department meetings, small-group or individual consultations with experienced staff from various departments, one-on-one mentoring, watch newscasts, participate in talk-shows/public affairs shows, meet with journalism students, etc.

Watch videos illustrating partnership visits:

Visits to U.S.

WICU/Erie News Now: www.youtube.com/watch?v=AWbTS8iC7Lo&feature=emb_logo

WENY TV: www.weny.com/story/40096004/journalists-from-the-republic-of-georgia-visits-weny-news

Visits to Georgia & Ukraine

UMPP video about media partnership exchanges in Ukraine www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xn_rx1fBc4E

Visit to Marneuli TV: www.youtube.com/watch?v=ETofTCKR8Ec

❑ Who arranges logistics for the visits?

IREX/D.C. office handles international airfare and participants per diem, while IREX country office staff in Georgia and Ukraine take care of local lodging and ground transportation.

❑ Who will oversee the partnership visits?

Highly qualified IREX staff with a sizable experience of managing exchange programs overseas and facilitates all visits in the U.S. and in Georgia/Ukraine.

❑ Is translation provided?

Yes. Throughout the week, IREX will provide interpreter(s) who are familiar with media jargon and experienced in cross-cultural communication.

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What are some of the things you want to know before traveling to Georgia or Ukraine?

For staff of U.S. media outlet traveling on a partnership exchange visit:

❑ Where is Georgia/Ukraine?



Both countries are located in the Eastern Europe

❑ Is it safe to travel to Georgia/Ukraine?

Yes, both countries warmly welcome Americans, and travel to these countries is generally safe. It is advisable to exercise caution and common sense, just as you would when visiting other foreign countries. You can search for international travel advisories at:

<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories.html/>

While Eastern Europe is prone a certain degree of internal civil protests/unrest, or political and social turbulences in neighboring/bordering countries, IREX ensures that program participants are placed in safe locations, and that they are informed and taken care of should a potential or unanticipated security threat arise.

❑ Do I need a visa?

No. Georgia and Ukraine have a visa-free regime with the U.S. You will simply get a stamp in the passport at the border control when you arrive at the airport. However, you will need to get a passport if you don't have one.

❑ Is there a U.S. Embassy in Georgia/Ukraine?

Yes. The U.S. has Embassies in both Tbilisi: <https://ge.usembassy.gov/u-s-citizen-services/> and in Kyiv: <https://ua.usembassy.gov/u-s-citizen-services/>

❑ Will I get paid to travel to Georgia or Ukraine?

This is not a paid consultancy. Participation can be considered a charitable development for global corporate social responsibility.

IREX pays a modest per diem from each program budget to generously cover meals and incidental costs; 50% is paid as an advance, and the remaining 50% is paid after the visit to Georgia or Ukraine.

Will I have to pay for anything?

Only if you shop for personal items or buy souvenirs to bring home.

How long is the trip?

Each trip is about 8-10 days long: 5 workdays and 3-4 international/local travel days

How long is the partnership visit?

Each partnership visit spins 5 workdays.

With whom will I travel?

Most likely you will travel with one of your co-workers, or with a colleague from another media organization. On very rare occasions, with your prior knowledge and consent, you might travel solo domestically or internationally.

Who arranges travel?

IREX/D.C. office handles international airfare and participants per diem, while IREX country office staff in Georgia and Ukraine take care of local lodging and ground transportation.

Can I design my own itinerary?

Yes. You can request a layover in a European city and reimburse IREX for difference in cost (if any). You can also extend your stay in Georgia/Ukraine or travel elsewhere before or after the visit – at your own expense.

Can I use my accrued frequent flier miles?

Yes.

Who will meet me at the airport?

IREX driver or a hotel driver will meet you at the airport holding a sign with your name and/or IREX logo.

Where will I stay?

IREX will book you a hotel within the GSA price range: https://aoprals.state.gov/web920/per_diem.asp

Do I have to take personal leave to go on a visit?

Depends on your employer. Some of our U.S. participants have to take personal leave to travel on IREX's media exchange programs. Others treat it as a work duty trip. Some count it as volunteer work as part of the company's volunteer service hours arrangement.

What will be my job during a partnership visit?

To shadow and mentor your counterparts and to provide guidance, advice and technical assistance, review their work and provide feedback. You will also share your experience and best practices used by you and your colleagues at home and develop a set of recommendations to leave behind.

❑ With whom will I work?

You will work with your colleagues, staff, interns and management, at the host media outlet. You may also be asked to speak with local journalism students, appear in a news story, participate in a talk-show/public affairs show, or give a quote for an article.

❑ Do my counterparts speak English?

Some do, some don't. Most of them comprehend English on some level but are not able to effectively communicate verbally. Therefore, throughout the week, IREX will provide interpreters who are familiar with media jargon and experienced in cross-cultural communication.

❑ How do I prepare for the trip?

IREX will send you a Travel Checklist and a Country Briefing. You can also google Georgia and Ukraine, as well as specific towns where your host news organization is located. It is advisable to look up a weather forecast for the week of travel.

Additionally, you are encouraged to review the website and social media pages of your host media outlet, and visit [GMPP](#) and [UMPP](#) pages on Facebook.

Also, let us know in advance if you have any dietary restrictions, allergies or disabilities so that we can make your visit safe, productive and enjoyable.

❑ What materials should I bring?

You may be asked to bring useful industry-specific handouts, samples of your media outlet's best work, templates of various materials. It is best to send to IREX before the visit materials that need to be translated into Georgian or Ukrainian in time for your arrival.

❑ Will the visit have an agenda?

Yes. IREX will prepare a draft Agenda together with the host news organization and run it by you before you depart. Changes can be made in the pre-agreed Agenda in agreement with IREX and host organization.

❑ Will I be able to work on my own work assignments during the visit?

Yes, to a degree, and after working hours. Due to 7-9 hour time difference, you can connect with colleagues and family at home in the evenings. If you have a work assignment during working hours, let us know in advance and we will plan ahead to make room for it in the Agenda.

❑ Do I have any obligations after coming back?

You will be requested to fill out a one-page survey. As a follow up, you might also be asked to provide limited advising to colleagues overseas via e-mail or teleconference, on as need basis.

❑ Will we do any sightseeing?

Yes. Georgia and Ukraine are beautiful, historic countries with proud hosts renowned for their hospitality. After working hours and/or on a weekend you will have an opportunity to visit local attractions and landmarks and attend cultural events together with representatives of IREX Tbilisi or Kyiv field office and/or host news organization staff and interact with your colleagues in a more informal setting.

Attending after hour cultural activities are optional but highly encouraged.

Are there any cultural aspects I should know about beforehand?

IREX staff will prepare you ahead of the visit and help you navigate cultural aspects on the ground and guide you through cross-cultural communication and interaction. Georgians and Ukrainians are famous for their hospitality. In both countries people are friendly and outgoing. They take pride in their cultural heritage and rich history that spans centuries.

Should I bring any souvenirs?

Bringing few symbolic souvenirs or company-branded SWAG is recommended but not required.

Where can I get additional information?

- Review the U.S. media [recruitment page](#) on our website
- Visit [GMPP](#) and [UMPP](#) program pages
- Check out [GMPP](#) and [UMPP](#) pages on Facebook