

Revised Strategy for Video as an Outreach Tool

Note: For comments or questions about this strategy, or if you are interested in developing video ideas, please contact Rachel Gulbraa (rachel.gulbraa@noaa.gov)

I. Background

Video is a critical form of communication — [Cisco estimates](#) that video traffic now comprises over 80% of total web traffic. For NOAA Ocean Exploration specifically, the office’s online video gallery saw a 75% increase in traffic from 2021 to 2022. In 2022, the video playlist was the #10 the most-visited section of the website. While NOAA Ocean Exploration is increasingly investing more resources in the medium, video capacity is still limited and under development.

What’s involved in the video production process?

The video production process required to achieve a successful product, as outlined below in the guidance section of this document, is time and resource intensive. This strategy is intended to make sure that NOAA Ocean Exploration is making the right investments in video products in a way that is consistent and impactful. See “Guidance/Standards” section below for details.

II. Challenges, gaps, and opportunities

Current **challenges** to the efficient and productive use of raw video resources include limited internal resources, multiple levels and perspectives on video priorities, a tendency towards reactivity over proactivity, and the immense breadth of potential activity. Another challenge is the lack of clear communication, processes, and standards with our main video contractor, all of which have led to redundant or unusable products and confusion about usage rights in the past.

Gaps in our current approach include a mechanism to tell the stories of our work outside ROV expeditions, a system to prioritize and respond to needs and opportunities, and proactive distribution of our video data to entities that could amplify our content. This strategy is meant to address these concerns by centralizing efforts and includes the identification of a video POC for the office who will guide and oversee development and implementation of the strategy and maintain a bird’s-eye view of the office’s overall efforts and opportunities.

By establishing and following a strategy, NOAA Ocean Exploration can maximize efficiency and quality by being proactive, rather than reactive. In order to ensure the greatest mission impact possible, unexpected opportunities not identified during the planning process will be carefully considered on a case-by-case basis, and only pursued if they are within our capacity (which may

mean axing planned projects), and if they are supportive of overarching office goals and mission.

One challenge that will not be answered through this strategy is the out-dated video data formats that are the products of our ROV expedition. The industry standard, and most-requested format for video is 4K and beyond. Currently, our office is only able to provide ProRes footage. As such, our video is often overlooked in favor of higher-resolution footage, especially by larger companies and blue chip documentary companies focused on high-quality footage (Blue Planet, for example). Fortunately, this concern will likely be addressed when the new dedicated exploration vessel, *Discoverer*, comes online.

III. **Strategy**

Overall Goal

Maximize the reach and impact of NOAA Ocean Exploration video content as an outreach tool through the strategic use of limited resources, contracts, and partnerships.

Mechanisms

The O&E team at NOAA Ocean Exploration has identified four principle domains in which we can continue to build capacity to address our video needs, all of which require varying degrees of internal resources:

1) Direct Funding:

The office currently manages and provides directional input to contractors, grantees, and others to create established video products for the office or one-off requests from greater NOAA. These products fulfill our mandate to share our work with the public and are geared towards the general public and educators.

For example: GFOE, ISC, NOAA requests

2) Partnership development:

Through partnerships, we can collaborate with academia, private industry, media, and others to support meaningful, mutually beneficial projects that would not otherwise be possible and which will expand the impact of our products. These projects present the opportunity to take deeper dives into the importance of the office's work and its impacts.

For example: NMEA, documentaries

3) Increased video data discoverability and usage by external entities:

The office is fortunate to have a large and replenishing array of footage and photos of rarely seen animals and environments free for use in the public domain. We can amplify the reach of our existing video data by ensuring that it is easily and clearly accessible, searchable, and usable, and by being responsive to end-user needs, such as those of documentary filmmakers, television outlets, students, and others.

4) Development of in-house capacity:

By increasing our internal capacity for content creation, we will have more control over messaging, timelines, and our ability to respond to exceptional opportunities.

III. Guidance/Standards

The following checklist and standards should be considered for each video product as well as each collection of videos (series).

Video Guidance/Standards Checklist	
Pre-Production	Checklist
*Standards	<p>To ensure quality and consistency, office standards should be met. Be sure that the proposed product meets the following standards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Potential products should support the overall office mission in terms of subject and messaging. B. Potential products should have a defined use case/raison d'être. We should be able to answer the following before beginning work on the project: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Where will it be shown? b. How and where it will be used, distributed, and housed? c. Who is the intended audience? C. Products should have a defined outcome and associated timeline. D. Where possible, potential products or elements therein should follow the “create once, use many times” philosophy. E. Products should meet style/accessibility guidelines: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Style - include office emblem and URL b. Accessibility - include captions, consider descriptive captions, font size, contrast.
Purpose	<p>Consider the following in greater detail:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What is the purpose of the video? ● Is video the best tool to achieve that purpose? ● What is the “ask” or “take home message(s)” you want to convey to each specific audience? ● Is it timely? Why are we creating this now? <p>At this stage, relevancy should be top-of-mind. Each video must be relevant to the office’s work, align with office messaging, and be timely (meaning there is a reason for its creation at this specific time/the video is addressing a specific office need). Also ask if video is the most effective medium to achieve intended goals.</p> <p>Be sure that there is a real need and use for this product. If there is not a strong relevancy or need, production should not proceed.</p>
Creative development and research	<p>Brainstorm/research:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Define the intended audience ● Define key takeaways/messages/asks you want the audience to leave with ● Subject matter research - do background research to make sure you have a thorough understanding of the topic, its nuances, main players, etc.

Logistics	<p>Identify:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Internal and external resources needed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Equipment ○ Personnel ○ Locations <p>Create:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Timeline ● Budget ● Schedule
Production	Creative development: Storyboarding, defining takeaways, scriptwriting.
	*Check that you have worked through the “Standards” section above
Storyboarding and Writing	<p>Storyboard:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Define narrative, story arc, characters, and interviewees <p>Scriptwriting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Write script, fact check, assemble citations, solicit and respond to scientific review
Filming and Media Gathering	<p>Film:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Conduct interviews, record voiceover/narration, film b-roll, collect audio <p>Media gathering and archival research</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Identify and collect existing resources (imagery, video, animations, graphics) to help tell your story <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ NOAA Ocean Exploration media ○ Other NOAA media (Sanctuaries, etc.) ○ Partner media (SOI, OET, etc.): ● Determine copyright and use allowance of any external media
Post-Production	
Editing	<p>Video and sound editing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sort through and edit dialogue for content, tone, and clarity ● Create on-screen graphics and text, end credits, and animations ● Music selection, audio mixing ● Color correction
Review	<p>Science and messaging review:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Science review by a subject matter expert ● Communications/leadership review and approval as needed
Distribution?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Video distribution - external ● Video distribution - internal (website, social media, availability for presentations, etc.)

IV. Links to working documents

The following section moves away from evergreen background information, and into the current plan for the next calendar year.

The Video Strategy - Details spreadsheet linked at various points below outlines efforts and proposals in each of the four priority areas outlined in this document. This is a running list of office activities, potential opportunities, as well as a record of past video projects and requested video topics.

- [Regular Office Video Products](#)
All recurring video projects for the office
- [Partnership Development](#)
An ongoing list of opportunities for amplifying our video through work with partners
- [Improving Internal Systems](#)
An ongoing list of potential opportunities to increase video data discoverability and usage by outside entities through outreach and solicitation of user feedback. Also includes next steps for the development of in-house capacity.
- [Requested Video Topics](#)
Video requests come from many sources. These suggestions are tracked here for planning purposes.
- [Record of all annual video projects](#) and [past projects](#) for reference and archival purposes. Also see the annual video recap document for details.

The Video recap document will be created at the end of each calendar year, and detail video products made, lessons learned, and suggestions for improvement in the next year. See: [2023 Video Recap and Plans](#))