

## INDIVIDUAL SUBMISSION ENTRY FORM

Please copy and complete this form for each entry.  
Create a separate document for answering the five questions below.

Check only ONE entry classification below:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1. AAPA Awareness Initiative Messaging _____ | 8. Overall Campaign _____               |
| 2. Advertisements – Single _____             | 9. Periodicals _____                    |
| 3. Advertisements – Series _____             | 10. Promotional/Advocacy Material _____ |
| 4. Annual Reports _____                      | 11. Social/Web-Based Media _____        |
| 5. Audio-Only Presentations _____            | 12. Special Events _____                |
| 6. Directories/Handbooks _____               | 13. Videos _____                        |
| 7. Miscellaneous _____                       | 14. Visual-Only Presentations _____     |
|  | 15. Websites _____ X                    |

Please check the appropriate box:

CATEGORY 1

CATEGORY 2

CATEGORY 3

Entry Title Trade Connect Website

Name of Port Port of Los Angeles

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On separate paper, **FIRST** write a short, descriptive summary of your entry, **THEN**, in as much detail as needed, specifically address each of the following five questions and number your answers. Your answers equal 50% of your score.

- What are/were the entry's specific communications challenges or opportunities?**
  - Describe in specific & measurable terms the situation leading up to creation of this entry.
  - Analyze the major internal and external factors needing to be addressed.
- How does the communication used in this entry complement the organization's overall mission?**
  - Explain the organization's overall mission and how it influenced creation of this entry.
- What were the communications planning and programming components for this entry?**
  - Describe your overall goals or desired results.
  - Describe your objectives and list specific, measurable milestones needed to reach your goals.
  - Identify your primary and secondary audiences in order of importance.
- What actions were taken and what communication outputs were used in this entry?**
  - Explain what strategies were developed to achieve success and why these strategies were chosen.
  - Specify the tactics used (i.e., actions used to carry out your strategies).
  - Detail the implementation plan by including timeline, staffing and outsourcing used.
- What were the communications outcomes from this entry and what evaluation methods were used to assess them?**
  - Describe any formal/ informal surveys used, or anecdotal audience feedback received, that helped in evaluating the success of this entry.
  - If possible, explain how this entry influenced target audience opinions, behaviors, attitudes or actions.

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## 2015 COMMUNICATIONS AWARDS PROGRAM

Project Name: Port of Los Angeles Trade Connect Website: [LATradeConnect.org](http://LATradeConnect.org)  
Port of Los Angeles

### Summary

The LATradeConnect.org website offers a one-stop resource center for small and midsize U.S. businesses looking to learn the nuts and bolts of exporting their made-in-America goods and services. The seminars, resources, contacts and success stories featured on the website offer useful information for beginning, intermediate as well as advanced export program participants.

### Communications Challenge/Opportunity

The Trade Connect program was founded in 2007 by the Director of Trade Development for the Port of Los Angeles, Jim MacLellan. Trade Connect offers Export Seminars which cover the fundamentals of exporting, including costs, risks and steps. In cooperation with other agencies and professional associations, this series presents a summary of services which also includes the basics of the commercial transaction, finding overseas markets, trade financing, documentation and logistics. Trade Connect also offers Regional Trade Forums which spotlight key countries and regions which are current or emerging trading partners. These forums focus on both export and import trade and are held throughout the year. Trade Commissioners and Consul Generals provide current information and data on international economies and opportunities for U.S. businesses. The need for a more robust website that delivered seminar, forum and the latest in trade news and resources was identified and the [LATradeConnect.org](http://LATradeConnect.org) website is the result. To date, Trade Connect workshops and seminars have drawn more than 32,500 attendees.

The Trade Connect team which designs, plans and implements these seminars and forums consists of three full-time staff from the Port of LA's Trade Development division. While the demand for Trade programs and the level of participants has grown dramatically over the past eight years since its inception, the Trade Connect staff size remains the same. Responding to phone calls, emails and inquiries, while also planning and putting on these trade seminars and forums became overwhelming.

The Trade Connect team required a user-friendly website that would provide easy-access to information for program participants in a self-service format. Prior to the design and implementation of the new site, Trade Connect was merely a webpage on the existing Port of Los Angeles' website, with very little space or capability of delivering comprehensive information to site visitors. Consequently, the need for a stand-alone site was determined and the [LATradeConnect.org](http://LATradeConnect.org) website was designed and built as a joint effort between in-house media relations staff, Trade Connect staff, and a contracted web design agency.

### Nexus to the Port's Overall Mission

Trade Connect offers a series of workshops (101, 201, 301, 401 and 501) which start with the basics involved in exporting, including procedures, research resources and professional support services and progress through advanced workshops which covers subjects in greater depth. These workshops are now all available online through the LATradeConnect.org website. The program works in cooperation with other agencies and professional associations, organizing presentations on services which are available, including finding overseas markets and distributors, trade finance and trade insurance, documentation. In addition to the introduction to expert services, practical techniques of risk mitigation are provided through the online videos. Businesses are connected with essential resources provided by government entities on a federal state and local level. Trade Connect supports President Obama's National Export Initiative at the local and regional level for small- to medium-size enterprises in the Greater Los Angeles region.

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## 2015 COMMUNICATIONS AWARDS PROGRAM

Growing demand for Trade Connect programs reflects the increased industry awareness of the role exports play in rebuilding the U.S. economy. Ninety-five percent of the world's consumers are overseas. Tapping in those markets creates jobs and prosperity at home.

### Planning and Programming

The main goals of the [LATradeConnect.org](http://LATradeConnect.org) website were to deliver information regarding upcoming seminars and forums, provide critical online trade information and resources, and to alleviate the amount of phone calls and emails between the Trade Connect staff and program participants.

The objective of the [LATradeConnect.org](http://LATradeConnect.org) website is to provide all visitors, regardless of their business experience, with the necessary resources and information to grow their business to the next level. The primary audience would be beginning exporters and importers who have a business plan and are looking to expand their business in to the international arena, as well as intermediate and advanced program participants who are currently exporting but wish to grow their business further still with the guidance and expertise of Trade Connect contacts and resources. The secondary audience would include those who are considering launching a business but do not yet have a business plan and have not conducted their market research, as well as students, professors or any visitor who is seeking trade information, numbers, contacts, etc. Measurable milestones would include a decrease in phone calls and emails to the Trade Connect staff as a result of the website providing the information directly to the interested party and would also include a growing list of registrants to the site which will ultimately allow Trade Connect to compile a database from the site visitors for future mailings etc. While attendance at seminars and interest in programs has increased, the phone calls and emails have decreased as a result of the launch of the website and since the registration feature is still in the beta phase, we do not have any reportable information on this yet.

### Actions Taken & Outputs

Once the need for a stand-alone website was determined, the Port of LA's Media Relations staff held several brainstorming sessions with the Trade Development staff and created a punch-list of items that would be needed for the site. The most popular items were included in the navigation tabs menu across the top of the homepage: Home, About, News, Photos, Publications, Resources, Seminars and Videos. Next, a basic description of Trade Connect's two main services, Seminars and Trade Forums were added just below the pull-down tab menu. Below this, quick-link buttons were added in the lower part of the homepage designed to look like app buttons on smartphones. These buttons each feature a photo or visual which helps the site visitor quickly locate the resource that he or she is searching for, even if English is not their native language. A total of fourteen quick-links provide current international trade statistics, information on existing and pending free trade agreements, the Los Angeles Regional Export Plan and access to the International Trade Compliance Institute's extensive database. It also links visitors to the Inland SoCal Link iHub, a multiagency partnership established to promote manufacturing and logistics innovation and job creation in Los Angeles, Riverside and San Bernardino counties and encourage foreign investment to further economic development in the Inland Empire trade corridor that connects the Port to the rest of the nation.

There is room for another row of buttons as the need arises down the line. Between the navigation tabs across the top and the fourteen quick link buttons below, the majority of program participant needs are met without ever having to dial the phone or send an email requesting information from the Trade Connect team. In addition, the [LATradeConnect.org](http://LATradeConnect.org) website hosts pre-recorded online video seminars for those who do not have the time to attend the seminars in person. This is a valuable resource for all levels of program participants which allows them to "attend" these seminars at their convenience.

6018

## 2015 COMMUNICATIONS AWARDS PROGRAM

The main tactic or strategic approach used in the development of the website was to anticipate the needs of Trade Connect Program participants and provide the information and resources needed on the LATradeConnect.org website. This meant that a comprehensive understanding of what trade resource information was available was necessary, which came from the Trade Connect team. In addition, a clean and clear form of communicating this information to the audience was needed, which came from the Media Relations staff and then an implementation of this communication in the form of a user-friendly website design was executed by the web design firm.

The need for a more robust webpage which then was upgraded to a stand-alone website was determined in October of 2013. Throughout 2014 the site was designed, created, revised and a soft-launch of the site took place in late 2014. The need for a registration feature which allows the Trade Connect team to collect information on those visitors interested was subsequently determined and this feature was added in front of the Trade Connect 301 Video Seminar series. This feature will allow the Trade Connect team to build a database of interested program participants and keep them informed of future seminars and forums as well as resources and pertinent trade legislation. A formal announcement and launch will be made in May 2015 at the Board of Harbor Commissioners meeting.

### Outcome and Evaluation

The Trade Connect team receives frequent and numerous compliments on the new website, mainly from seminar and forum participants as well as advanced Trade Connect exporters who have become successful in their entrepreneurial endeavors and are very grateful to the Trade Connect program. The main comments are focused on the user-friendliness of the site and the comprehensive pool of resources and contacts available on the site, including success stories.

Trade Connect partners with other agencies, institutions and professional associations. Speakers include government, international trade, legal and financial experts, and successful Trade Connect graduates and entrepreneurs. The main influence to the target audience would be immediate and direct flow of information from the website to the participants. Delays which occur when emails and phone calls are awaiting a response have been eliminated. Information is available 24 hours a day, not just during business hours at the Port of LA. With questions answered promptly and immediate access to comprehensive information regarding Trade, many current and future business entrepreneurs find confidence and encouragement to pursue their business goals where they may have been discouraged by delays and the time-consuming act of conducting research on their own.

In 2013, the program received the President's "E Star" Award for Export Service, the nation's highest honor for promoting American export trade. That same year, Trade Connect earned the City of Los Angeles Quality & Productivity Award, the City's highest honor for superior public services and programs.

In 2014, Trade Connect earned separate awards for program excellence and advancing international trade from NASBITE International (National Association of Small Business International Trade Educators).