

WILSON CENTER'S "SAGE" PUBLIC DIPLOMACY INITIATIVE Backgrounder

Since 9/11, over a dozen major studies have recommended, in one form or another, the creation of an independent, nonpartisan support organization to help strengthen America's public diplomacy and strategic communication efforts. Advocates argue that such an organization can serve as a nexus between the public and private sectors and complement and enhance government public diplomacy.

In September 2010, the Woodrow Wilson Center convened a bipartisan working group of distinguished public diplomacy experts and practitioners from across the nation, business sectors and political ideologies to draft a business plan for such an organization and launched what has become known as the Wilson Center's "SAGE" (Strengthening America's Global Engagement) public diplomacy initiative. The working group grew to more than 80 members including business leaders, entrepreneurs, journalists, academics, NGO leaders, government officials and congressional staffers.

Former Cabinet Secretaries William Perry and Condoleezza Rice agreed to serve as honorary chairs of the initiative with funding provided by the MacArthur Foundation, Smith Richardson Foundation and the Rockefeller Brothers Fund.

Over the next several months, the working group met in plenary sessions and divided up into five subcommittees with each responsible for drafting one section of the plan. The plan was reviewed and finalized by an executive board in late 2011. The result of their work is the plan we are releasing on March 26th.

Search for Common Ground and chair of the development subcommittee), Cindy Williams from MIT (chair, budget subcommittee), Scott Carpenter (Google Ideas), Susan Gigli (COO, InterMedia, chair of targeting subcommittee), David Kramer, Tim Hassett from KIVA and Christy Carpenter (CEO of the Winthrop Rockefeller Institute and chair of the programs subcommittee.)

One of the key issues was whether the organization should be structured as a public-private partnership – meaning that it would pursue some funding support from Congress, or remain