

BRAND USA: RESPONDING TO CRITICISM

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS



The following Q&As were drafted to anticipate critical questions you may receive about Brand USA from the media or elected officials.

To the extent possible, you should marry the points below with real people and real stories collected by your organization from industry and business professionals that benefit from Brand USA, as well as local facts and figures that speak to the impact of international tourism in your community.

WHY IS GOVERNMENT FUNDING NEEDED? DOESN'T THE TRAVEL INDUSTRY ALREADY MARKET THE UNITED STATES TO FOREIGNERS?



Brand USA leverages private sector contributions to enhance its marketing programs by joining forces with more than 800 travel industry partners on various marketing initiatives. But there are two things the private sector can't do on its own:

1. Promote the entire United States as a destination. Brand USA—because of a federal statute—promotes every region, driving visitors and their spending dollars beyond getaway cities and communities to rural and less-traveled areas.
2. Level the playing field between the United States and countries around the world. Nearly all of our major competitor countries have their own national travel promotion programs that aggressively compete for international travelers.

WHY DOES BRAND USA NEED TO BE REAUTHORIZED NOW WHEN THE PROGRAM DOESN'T EXPIRE UNTIL 2020?



For the first time in a decade, we are seeing a real decline in the United States' share of international visitation. The U.S. share of the international travel market has been in decline for the past two years. While travel to the U.S. has been growing relatively slowly (around 2 percent) in 2017, global long-haul travel increased nearly 10 percent. Countries like Spain, United Kingdom and China are far outpacing us.

Without Brand USA, we would be facing an even worse decline. And that is why **we need Brand USA now more than ever.**

Unfortunately, a 2018 budget agreement approved by Congress in February diverted the traveler fees (non-taxpayer dollars) used to pay for Brand USA away from the program. This move sends an inadvertent but strong signal that the future of Brand USA may be in jeopardy.

The longer Congress waits to allocate funding for Brand USA beyond 2020, the more uncertainty will arise among Brand USA private sector partners. A public-private partnership needs buy-in from both groups to be successful and without Congress' assurance that the program will continue, the partnerships become endangered.

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ARE THERE MORE IMPORTANT USES FOR THE FOREIGN-VISITOR FEES THAT SUPPORT BRAND USA, LIKE SECURING OUR BORDERS?



The government investment comes from a \$14 fee collected from foreign visitors approved to enter the U.S. from countries that are part of the Visa Waiver Program, \$10 of which is used to fund Brand USA. This money powers a public-private partnership that drives billions of tourism dollars to America's heartland, small and large cities, and everywhere in between. Thus far, Brand USA has generated more than \$38 billion in total economic output, supported on average 51,000 American jobs per year and has generated \$5 billion in tax revenue over the past five years (fiscal year 2013 to fiscal year 2017).

All these economic gains in turn pay for federal programs such as law enforcement and border security.

Diverting the fees elsewhere in the federal budget would eliminate Brand USA and in turn kill the positive economic activity it generates.

What's more, Brand USA is already a key partner to our national security agencies because it helps the U.S. government effectively communicate our visa and entry policies to foreign visitors. Effective communication of entry policy is an important component of ensuring compliance with those policies, which is why it's part of Brand USA's congressionally mandated mission.

THE U.S. TRAVEL INDUSTRY CALLS ON CONGRESS TO REAUTHORIZE BRAND USA AND ENSURE ESTA FEES REMAIN ITS FUNDING SOURCE FOR YEARS TO COME.