



Media Asset Guidelines and FAQs

Media Management Team Description

Media Management, a sub-team within National Geographic Society's (NGS) Special Collections, collects, catalogs, and stewards NGS-funded grant media assets and mission-driven program assets to support the active work of the Society. Media Management promotes the distribution and publication of recently submitted media assets with NGS and its media partners, including National Geographic Partners at Disney and National Geographic Learning, in order to aid and cultivate new donor/partner relationships and provide features on the Society's website, social media channels, and other National Geographic outlets.

How To Work With Media Management

Please feel free to email our team anytime at specialcollections@ngs.org with any questions about the media asset submission process. If we cannot answer your question, we will gladly direct you to someone who can. While FAQs and required forms are listed and linked below, we understand that you may have additional questions or concerns, and our team is more than happy to assist!

General Media Asset FAQs

What am I required to submit as part of my media asset submission?

If your NGS project agreement stipulates that you fulfill a media asset requirement as part of your NGS funded-work, you must submit photos, videos, and/or audio recordings from your fieldwork to the Media Management team. If you did not create any media during your funding period, please email specialcollections@ngs.org and let us know so that we do not mark your project as *incomplete*. In addition to the media files, we require captions and photographer/videographer/audiographer information for all assets. If anyone else helped to create media assets, those individuals must sign a Project Member Agreement and Media Management must receive a copy of these signed forms. Signed personal releases are



required for any photos, videos, or recordings featuring minors, and are preferred for assets featuring adults.

Please see below for additional FAQs and detailed information regarding captions, Project Member Agreements, and Personal Release forms.

How many media files can I submit?

Our team will collect a maximum of 30 selected images with required metadata provided by the Explorer. Unless submitting a short film, the recommended guidance for videos and recordings is no more than 10 minutes of footage and/or audio. In certain cases, Media Management may collect more photo, video, or audio assets in accordance with the project agreement (ie: Storytelling grants) or other special exceptions.

All files must have unique captions and creator credit information either embedded in the metadata or written out in a Photo/Video/Audio Submission Form.

Are there specific file types and resolutions that NGS prefers?

NGS prefers the native file type of your camera or smartphone, at the highest resolution available.

How do I caption my photos, videos, and audio recordings?

Please caption your assets using the Photo, Video, and Audio Submission forms linked at the bottom of this guide. Preferably, you can also embed the metadata of your files with captions and credit information using Adobe Lightroom or Adobe Bridge. Explorers receive a free subscription to Adobe Creative Cloud. For more information and instructions on how to access the free subscription to Adobe Creative Cloud, please follow this [link](#) in NGS Explorer Home. Please also reference this [metadata template](#) form if you choose to embed metadata in your files.



How should I deliver my assets?

If your project agreement (ie: Storytelling grants) requires that you submit *all* media assets created during your project period OR if you are located somewhere with slow internet connection, a hard drive is often the best option. The Media Management team can provide a pre-paid shipping label to you via email. Otherwise please use the specified file-sharing platform provided by our team or linked in your Media Submission portal to submit your assets.

If I submit my assets via hard drive, will I get reimbursed and/or can I have the hard drive returned to me?

Yes! If you would like to be reimbursed for your hard drive, please keep the receipt for the cost of the drive and we will request that you fill out an invoice form once we receive the drive. If you'd like the hard drive mailed back to you, please let us know via email at specialcollections@ngs.org.

What do I do if there's an issue with the media submission link in my grants portal?

We apologize for any inconvenience or technical difficulties regarding uploading your media assets. Please send us an email at specialcollections@ngs.org if you notice that there are technical issues with your media submission method.

How does NGS determine if one of my photos, videos, or audio recordings will be published or used?

Determining if an asset has the potential to be published on a National Geographic platform is often subjective and depends on a variety of factors, including content, timeliness, submission of required release forms, and much more. While there is no definitive answer to this question, we can share the criteria that we keep in mind when reviewing media.

- *Aesthetic*—the work shows excellence in the treatment of the content being filmed, photographed, or recorded

- *Historical*—the work contributes significantly to the world’s history, or it has a significant value as a representation of social, cultural, or political events, trends, and phenomena
- *Impact*—the work is innovative and aligns with National Geographic’s mission; has a significant impact on craft, technology, or practice; or is widely regarded as a significant cultural reference point
- *Technical*—the work illustrates a significant development of a specific technique or exemplifies excellence of craftsmanship

Frequently requested assets for NG social media, the NG website, and other NG platforms include:

- *Explorers With Society Flags* - Images of Explorers holding the NGS flag, particularly in exciting locations or at their fieldwork site
- *Explorers in the Field or Lab* - Images or video of Explorers engaged in work, Explorers showing/explaining the work process or any work challenges, daily life in the field, or technology/gear used
- *Stories in an Image* - The essence of the project can be understood from a single image
- *Identity & Narrative Portraits* - Portraits that inform the identity or specialization of the person(s) being photographed
- *Group Images* - Images that show most or all of the project group
- *Landscapes & Scenery*- Striking images or aerial videos of landscapes and interesting locations (with or without humans or wildlife)
- *Animals* - Images and video of wildlife in their natural habitat and/or looking at the camera

Do you have any tips for creating media?

- Preferably film horizontally, not vertically (unless filming specifically for social media use)
- Hold your camera steady
- The light source should be directed on the person/animal or other main focus of your image/video
- If someone is talking while you are filming or recording, make sure you are in a quiet area with little wind
- Try photographing/filming from different angles...you never know what might look the best!
- Be yourself!

What if I am interested in using or referencing NGS historic materials in my media asset submission?

National Geographic Society's Special Collections chronicle more than 135 years of Society history through historical documents, maps, oral histories, audio and video recordings, photographs, and artifacts. Digital media assets from approximately 2015-present are managed by the Media Management sub-team within Special Collections.

If you are interested in conducting research on the history, heritage, publications, and/or accomplishments of NGS or if you would like to use NGS archival materials as part of your current NGS project work, please contact Special Collections by email:

specialcollections@ngs.org

Does NGS offer a camera loan program to active Explorers?

Yes! If you have an active NGS-funded project, you may be eligible to borrow a camera or other photography equipment through our camera loan program. For more information, please contact specialcollections@ngs.org.

Legal FAQs

What is a location release and personal release? What if I have 3rd party materials not covered by these releases?

A location release gives permission to photograph, film, or record in a place where there is an expectation of personal privacy, or on privately owned property. A location release can be used in lieu of a filming permit as they are equivalent.

A personal release and appearance release are the same, and allow editorial or commercial use of someone's image and likeness. Personal releases are not always required, especially if the individual featured in the photo or video is too far away to identify and/or not facing the camera, but they save NGS funding recipients from potential liability. Explorers should always obtain signed personal releases from the parents/guardians of minors.

In the rare occasion that you need to acquire rights to publish 3rd party materials as part of your NGS-funded project, please contact specialcollections@ngs.org.

What is a Public vs. Private space?

If you are in an area that is not privately owned and there is no expectation of privacy (ie: Times Square, NY), then there is no need for the people appearing in your image(s) or video(s) to sign any releases. Private spaces are those where you need a permit or permission to enter and film, such as homes, private museums, schools, and institutions. NGS advises that photographers do their due diligence to understand the rights to privacy in the places where they are working.

Some project funding agreements have exceptions to what can appear editorially, such as images taken in hospitals, bedrooms, and images of wildlife traffickers/investigations.

Who needs to sign a personal release? What if there are many people in a group?

Anyone appearing in a photograph or video in a private space should sign a personal release. Posed images of adults do not always need releases, but it is always helpful. Photos or videos of minors should always have signed releases from a parent/guardian. Generally images or videos without releases are cleared for NGS editorial use, but NOT commercial or promotional use.

If you are filming or photographing adults at a large event, such as a presentation or conference, and it is impossible to obtain signatures from all attendees who may be featured in a photo or video, a Crowd Notice will suffice. NGS has a Crowd Notice template (available [HERE](#)) that should be posted at the entrance/exit of the event. When sending in media assets from this event to National Geographic, a photo of the crowd notice hung up at the event should also be included in the submission. This serves as documentation that everyone in attendance at the event had awareness of media being created.

Under what circumstances can children be filmed or photographed?

In a school with students under 18 years of age, for example, personal releases with signatures from a parent/guardian are required. If a school has received signatures at the beginning of the year giving students permission for appearance in photo and video, you need to obtain copies of those documents.

In areas of the world where children may not have the direct permission from a parent, the permission can be signed by the equivalent guardian (ie: village elders, authority figures, etc.)

Children are a special class, and their appearance should be dealt with on a case by case basis with sensitivity.



What if the individuals I am photographing, filming, or recording do not speak English?

There are several foreign language releases available and they can be obtained by contacting specialcollections@ngs.org. However, an oral release is also possible with the individual stating clearly that they acknowledge that NGS is filming and can use their likeness and image.

What if there are other photographers/videographers besides myself? Do they need to sign any forms?

Yes! Any individual who has created a photo, video, or recording that is being submitted as part of your NGS-funded project must sign a Project Member Agreement. This signed form gives NGS the right to use these images/videos/recordings. Without a signed Project Member Agreement form, NGS cannot circulate or publish these assets as we do not have permission from the photographer/videographer/audiographer.

Who owns the copyright to the media assets?

The Principal Investigator (PI) holds the copyright of the media taken during the NGS funding period. NGS has only the right to use the media worldwide and in perpetuity.

What does NGS have the rights to?

NGS holds the right to use in perpetuity any image, illustration, map, video, or audio file that was taken or created during the project time period directly funded by NGS.

Communications FAQs

What should I do if I'm contacted by a media outlet about my National Geographic project?

If you are contacted by outside media (newspapers, magazines, TV, blogs, etc.), contact your Program Officer or main NGS point of contact before you give any interviews or provide any media assets.

What should I do if something newsworthy (like a major discovery) happens while I'm in the field?

Immediately contact your Program Officer. They will help you determine next steps.

Can I share photos or videos from the field/about my project on social media or my personal website while I am still conducting fieldwork?

Feel free to share your field experiences as long as you aren't sharing anything that will impact scientific publication or something that is truly groundbreaking. For example, if you have an amazing find or a once-in-a-lifetime photo, give your Program Officer a heads-up before you post it.

When you post on social media, please tag @InsideNatGeo on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram so NGS can be alerted to your post. This is also the easiest way to acknowledge that NGS is involved in your work.

How can my work be featured in the National Geographic magazine or on the National Geographic website?

The best way is to submit any results, news, or updates you have to your Program Officer or other NGS point of contact. We have a regular content pipeline that presents the best of our Explorers' work across the National Geographic spectrum. Final reports, published papers, and media assets also go through this pipeline, so completing your project requirements is essential.



What if National Geographic has already published a piece about my project? Can I speak to other media outlets about my project afterwards to get additional coverage?

First, before giving any interviews or sharing any media assets, immediately contact your Program Officer. Program Officers should be notified of any and all media conversations that are in process during the project period. They will connect you to staff who can advise on how to respond and interact with other media organizations. (The answer is typically, yes, after National Geographic publication, but please check first!)

I'm planning to publish a paper about my findings from my NGS-funded work. Do I need to notify National Geographic?

YES! You should notify your Program Officer as soon as you learn a paper has been accepted, if not sooner. This is a contractual obligation. The moment when your work is published can be an opportunity for coverage by National Geographic media.

Once your manuscript has been accepted, please notify your Program Officer and they will connect you with staff who will work with you to get the information they need in order to share your story.

Can my institution create a press release about my NGS funding?

If your institution is interested in creating a press release about your new NGS funding or the findings of your NGS-funded project, please contact your Program Officer FIRST. They can make sure that you and your institution receive the best guidance for creating this release appropriately.

Will National Geographic create a press release about my project?

No, not at this time.



Quick Links to Additional Resources

[Photo Submission Form](#)

[Video Submission Form](#)

[Audio Submission Form](#)

[Project Member Agreement](#)

[Personal Release for Adult and/or Minor](#)

[Location Release](#)

[Crowd Notice](#)

[How to Access Free Subscription to Adobe Creative Cloud](#)

[Template for Embedding Metadata](#)

If you need release forms translated in a specific language or need release forms for multiple signers, please contact specialcollections@ngs.org.