



ADS Chapter 501

The Automated Directives System (ADS)

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Functional Series 500 – Management Services
ADS 501 – The Automated Directives System (ADS)

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ADS 501 – The Automated Directives System (ADS)

501.1 OVERVIEW

Effective Date – 08/21/2006

Every U.S. Government agency is required to have and maintain a [directives](#) program. The [regulations](#) within this system must be current and written in [plain language](#).

USAID’s directives program

“should strive to...(c) provide agency managers with the means to convey written instructions to users and document agency policies and [procedures](#) through effective directives management, (d) provide agency personnel with the information needed in the right place, at the right time, and in a useful format...” (41 CFR 102-193.25).

The ADS ([Automated Directives System](#)) is USAID’s directives program. Both the USAID ADS Internet pages and the USAID ADS intranet site constitute the “official” ADS. If there is a conflict between the CFR and an ADS directive, the USAID lawyers resolve it.

“The head of each Federal agency shall make and preserve records containing adequate and proper documentation of the organization, function, policies, decisions, procedures, and essential transactions of the agency and designed to furnish the information necessary to protect the legal and financial rights of the government and of persons directly affected by the Agency’s activities.” (44 USC Section 3101)

This chapter and its [mandatory references](#) cover the following:

- Structure and contents of the ADS,
- Bureaus/Independent Offices responsible for ADS chapters,
- Guidelines for writing ADS material,
- Guidelines for clearing ADS material and resolving disagreements in the clearance process,
- Processes for issuing new ADS material, and
- Processes for revising, and issuing revised, ADS material.

Throughout this chapter there are [hyperlinks](#) to other ADS chapters and mandatory (external and internal) references, which provide further information on many of the topics covered here. Internal mandatory references carry the same weight as ADS chapters.

*An asterisk indicates that the adjacent information is new or substantively revised.

The following new internal references are written specifically for their audience:

- **Users:** The [ADS Users Guide](#) explains the ADS from a user's perspective.
- **Authors and clearing officials:** The [ADS Process](#) covers how to write ADS material and get it cleared and issued; the [ADS Style and Format Guide](#) contains writing style and format tips.

501.2 PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITIES

Effective Date – 07/01/2004

The following Bureaus/Independent Offices have [primary responsibilities](#) for specific [policy directives](#) and [required procedures](#) within this chapter.

- a. **The Bureau for Management, Office of Administrative Services (M/AS)** approves all ADS [guidance](#) and administers the USAID directives program.
- b. **The Bureau for Management, Office of Administrative Services, Information and Records Division (M/AS/IRD)**
 - (1) Manages, implements, and maintains the ADS in accordance with this chapter and its references; and
 - (2) Oversees the distribution of all Agency directives (including ADS material on the Internet and intranet, and Notices).
- c. **Author** Bureaus/Independent Offices, **authors, management officials,** and **clearing officials** have responsibilities relating to specific material as described in this chapter and its associated mandatory references.
- d. **Employees** are responsible for knowing and complying with the policy directives and required procedures identified in the ADS.

*An asterisk indicates that the adjacent information is new or substantively revised.

501.3 POLICY DIRECTIVES AND REQUIRED PROCEDURES

Effective Date – 06/01/2007

501.3.1 About the ADS

Effective Date – 06/01/2007

The ADS is USAID's directives program, which is intended to help Agency employees understand their responsibilities and achieve the Agency's development goals, consistent with applicable rules, sound [policy](#) principles, and management practices. The ADS provides the framework for drafting, clearing, and issuing Agency-wide internal regulations (**policy directives**) and required operating procedures. The ADS also includes **optional material within chapters and additional help documents** intended to help readers interpret and apply those policy directives and required procedures.

The ADS contains USAID's internal regulations as well as links to relevant Federal statutes, Executive Orders (**EOs**), and externally created regulations, which are usually incorporated into ADS chapters as external mandatory references. The ADS therefore encompasses the totality of USAID's regulatory body. Additionally, it includes suggested but not mandatory procedures and links to examples of best practices.

All Agency-level internally created policy directives and required procedures must be codified in the ADS. Agency-created policy directives and required procedures that apply to the public are codified in the Code of Federal Regulations (**CFR**). The ADS does not codify internal Bureau/Independent Office procedures (unless the procedures affect those outside of that Bureau/Independent Office).

The ADS Web site is the official Web site for current ADS material. If a Bureau/Independent Office would like to post ADS material to their Web site, the Bureau/Independent Office must hyperlink the reader to the official document housed on the ADS Web site versus posting the actual document to their Web site. When 'hyperlinking' is not used, major version control issues occur. Bureaus/Independent Offices and Missions may not post DRAFT ADS material without first contacting M/AS/IRD. ALL DRAFT ADS material must carry the DRAFT watermark on each page of the document.

A Bureau/Independent Office must not independently distribute and post USAID policy directives and required procedures on their Web site. All other Web sites that reference USAID policy directives and required procedures must link to the ADS Web site. The ADS Web site houses the most recent versions of ADS chapters and internally created references, [Interim Updates](#), and links to external references. [**Note:** At this time, due to their sensitive material, some Series 500 Interim Updates are only available to USAID intranet users.]

Agency employees must adhere to the policy directives and required procedures identified in this chapter and the rest of the ADS.

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M/AS/IRD offers the Agency an ADS Overview class every other month. The class is held in the Ronald Reagan Building. Additionally, M/AS/IRD offers ADS authors and clearing officials a refresher course on the ADS. M/AS/IRD also offers one-on-one training upon request.

501.3.1.1 **Mandatory and Non-Mandatory Guidance in the ADS**

Effective Date – 03/31/2000

Throughout the ADS (in chapters and references) you will find both mandatory and non-mandatory guidance.

The **mandatory** guidance contained in the ADS encompasses two broad categories:

- a. Policy directives, which comprise clear and concise rules and regulations that the Agency has identified as necessary for the proper conduct of its business; and
- b. Required procedures, which identify more detailed courses of action that must be followed.

Every employee is held accountable for complying with mandatory guidance, unless an exception is made in accordance with established procedures.

In the ADS, the Agency seeks (1) to keep mandatory guidance to a minimum, preserving operational flexibility to the extent consistent with law and regulation, sound policy principles, and management practices; and (2) to be clear about which guidance is mandatory and which is non-mandatory so that expectations are clear. (See [ADS 200.3.2.4](#) for a description of how this fits into the Agency's core value of Empowerment and Accountability.)

Non-mandatory guidance is intended to help employees carry out their duties. While strongly encouraged to review and consider such guidance, employees are not required to follow it and cannot be disciplined for not adhering to it.

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501.3.1.2 What Kind of Documents Make Up the ADS?

Effective Date – 06/01/2007

The ADS includes the following:

a. Six Functional Series. Part of the ADS consists of chapters grouped according to the Agency's functions. These groups of chapters are called the **functional series**. A list of the functional series follows:

Series 100: Agency Organization and Legal Affairs

Series 200: Programming Policy

Series 300: Acquisition and Assistance

Series 400: Personnel

Series 500: Management Services

Series 600: Budget and Finance

Each functional series contains the following:

(1) ADS Chapters. Each ADS chapter includes policy directives and required procedures as well as explanatory information on specific topics. The ADS chapter structure contains six sections: [Overview](#), Primary Responsibilities, Policy Directives and Required Procedures, Mandatory References, [Additional Help](#), and Definitions. (See [The ADS Process, Part I, Section B.2](#) for more details on these sections.)

(2) Interim Updates. Temporary, mandatory policy directives or required procedures that are issued through the Agency Notice distribution system includes [Policy Notices](#), Policy cables, and Administrator Memorandums. After issuance, it is converted to the Interim Update (IU) format and becomes part of the ADS, until it is either canceled or incorporated into ADS material. IUs carry the same weight as an ADS chapter or mandatory reference.

In order to cancel an IU, the [author](#) of it needs to send an e-mail to ads@usaid.gov, requesting that it be canceled. The author also needs to complete a 3-252 for signature. Usually, however, IUs do not get canceled outright; rather, the policy directives and required procedures in them are absorbed into an ADS chapter. If an IU is rolled into an ADS chapter, then the author still needs to complete a 3-252 for signature.

Since IUs are temporary, with rare exception, within one year of issuance the author must either convert or incorporate the policy into the applicable ADS chapter or reference or have it expire on a specified date. (See [The ADS Process, Part III, Section 6](#))

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Each year [management officials](#) must certify that their IUs are still valid (see **501.3.6**, Annual ADS Certification).

b. Old AID Handbooks. The ADS also includes old AID Handbook chapters that are still valid. For a list of the Handbook chapters that are still valid and the ADS chapters that superseded those that are no longer valid, see the ADS CD and click on the Handbook category button or visit the USAID Handbook Web page at <http://www.usaid.gov/policy/ads/handbooks/>.

501.3.1.3 What Is Not in the ADS?

Effective Date – 03/31/2000

The ADS does not contain the following:

- Bureau/Independent Office -specific administrative policies and procedures (unless the policies affect those outside that Bureau/Independent Office).
- Non-Policy Notices (that is, Information, Training, and Personnel Notices; schedules and acting appointments; non-Policy cables; and other issuances that do not address new and continuing Agency policy or procedural matters).
- Annual Agency guidance, such as the Bureau Program and Budget Submission (BPBS) and Annual Report Guidance, which is issued to guide the Agency's annual programmatic and budgetary decisions.

501.3.2 Writing ADS Material

Effective Date – 01/29/2002

As stated in [Executive Order 12866, as amended](#), each agency must “draft its regulations to be simple and easy to understand, with the goal of minimizing the potential for uncertainty and litigation arising from such uncertainty.”

501.3.2.1 Who Writes ADS Material?

Effective Date – 06/01/2007

Management officials must designate qualified authors in their Bureau/Independent Office to develop ADS material. A qualified author is a subject matter expert (SME) or someone with good writing skills who can interview the SME and write in plain language. M/AS/IRD assists with identifying Agency Bureaus/Independent Offices responsible for developing ADS material.

USAID Bureaus/Independent Offices are assigned certain chapters. However, if a Bureau/Independent Office no longer wants to have responsibility for a certain chapter and wants to assign it to a different Bureau/Independent Office, both Bureaus/Independent Offices must agree to this change and they must present proof of their acceptance of the change to M/AS/IRD via an e-mail to ads@usaid.gov. Once

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M/AS/IRD receives this confirmation, the ADS Chapters and Authors List will be updated accordingly.

Authors must develop their ADS material in accordance with this chapter and its mandatory references and update material, as necessary, to reflect changes in law, regulations, or policy. Before issuing ADS material, the [primary author](#) must obtain the required clearances. For a quick look at the drafting and clearing process, see the [Timeline: Four-Step Process and Issuing ADS Material](#).

Authors must follow the policy directives and required procedures specified in [The ADS Process, Part I, ADS Authors Manual](#) and the [ADS Style and Format Guide](#) when writing ADS material.

In response to [Executive Orders 12866, Regulatory Planning and Review, as amended](#), and [12861, Elimination of One-Half of Executive Branch Internal Regulations](#), USAID must draft its regulations in an easy-to-follow format and writing style so that they are readily accessible. In response to this mandate, and in acknowledgement of the [Memorandum on Plain Language](#) and the companion reference [How to Comply with the President's Memo on Plain Language](#), USAID directives must be written in plain language.

For more information on plain language, please visit these Web sites:

<http://www.plainlanguage.gov>, and

<http://www.centerforplainlanguage.org>.

501.3.2.2 Executive Summary of the ADS Authors Manual

Effective Date – 08/21/2006

Authors must communicate clearly to Agency employees using plain language. They must state what Agency employees need to know about the subject in order to do their jobs. When writing, authors must

- a. Know the extent of their authority.
- b. Promote the Agency's core values (see [ADS 200](#)).
- c. Think about the readers.
- d. Think about organization.
- e. Think about content.
- f. Know the requirements.

*An asterisk indicates that the adjacent information is new or substantively revised.

- g. Use plain language.
- h. Choose words carefully.
- i. Be concise and accurate.
- j. Select a user-friendly design.
- k. Use the ADS standard format.
- l. Comply with the accessibility requirements of Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act. See <http://www.section508.gov> and [The ADS Process, Part I, Section C.2](#) for more information.
- m. Get help when they need it.

See [The ADS Process, Part I](#), [ADS Style and Format Guide](#), and [EO 12861](#) for more information.

501.3.3 Executive Summary of the Clearance Process Effective Date – 06/01/2007

The following is an executive summary of the ADS clearance process. For detailed procedural information on the clearance process, authors and [clearing officials](#) must adhere to the mandatory reference, [The ADS Process, Part II](#).

A. What authors need to know:

Authors must obtain ADS clearance for all new, substantively revised, or canceled material before issuance. [Editorial changes](#) do not require clearance.

- ADS material includes chapters, terms and definitions, USAID-created mandatory references, AID Forms, Acquisition and Assistance Policy Directives (AAPDs), Policy Notices, Policy cables, and AID Handbook changes.
- Authors must also obtain clearance for documents created by another Bureau/Independent Office or by a contractor, if they want these documents included in the ADS.
- Only direct hires may send ADS material out for clearance. Please remember that [conforming amendments](#) are exempt from the clearance process.
- Authors must give clearing officials ten (10) business days to respond. If you, the author, do not receive a read receipt or response from a clearing official at the end of three (3) full working days, contact the clearing official and ask them to

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answer your e-mail. Resend your e-mail if they did not receive it the first time. (Please see [The ADS Process, Part II, Section C](#)).

- Additional help documents do not require ADS clearance, but authors must send them to M/AS/IRD for review before issuance and complete AID Form 3-252, USAID Directives System – Issuance Request.

Please refer to [The ADS Process, Part II](#), for more information.

B. What clearing officials need to know:

During the ADS clearance process, authors may only accept official clearance from the authorized clearing official for a Bureau/Independent Office (see [Clearance List for ADS Material](#)), unless the official delegates in writing a different individual to clear that document on their behalf.

There is only one clearing official per Bureau/Independent Office. If, however, due to time constraints or leave, an ADS clearing official may nominate, in writing, another USAID employee to act as his or her Bureau/Independent Office's clearing official. Please note that when you, as a designated clearing official, do go on leave, you must nominate a USAID employee to be your designated clearing official. However, the nomination must be in writing and sent to ads@usaid.gov. Please see [Part II, Section b\(1\)](#) of the mandatory internal reference, The ADS Process, for more information.

When a Bureau/Independent Office selects a new clearing official, an editor from the ADS Directives Shop will contact him or her to field any questions or concerns about their new role and its responsibilities.

When a primary clearing official asks another USAID employee to review ADS material out for clearance, the employee may send their findings to the primary clearing official, who will review it and send it back to the author. That same USAID employee may also send it directly to the ADS author. In this case, the primary clearing official must send an e-mail to ads@usaid.gov, notifying M/AS/IRD that this employee will be the primary clearing official for the ADS material (for this instance only) for their Bureau/Independent Office.

Clearing officials, note that, when you are away from the office for three days or more, designate an alternate clearing official for your Bureau/Independent Office. Use the "Out-of-Office Assistant" feature in Microsoft Outlook (Please see [The ADS Process, Part II, page 27](#) for more information on using this feature.).

The primary clearing official is ultimately responsible for providing a clearance response and so must communicate with the designated clearing official. See **501.3.3.2** for exceptions to the clearance process.

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C. Steps in the Clearance Process:

1. Creating an ADS Clearance E-mail

Authors, you need to create a clearance e-mail for your material. Please refer to [The ADS Process, Appendix A](#), for a sample e-mail.

2. E-Mailing Your ADS Material

Authors must e-mail their clearance request to the current list of clearing officials (for the current list, see the mandatory reference, [Clearance List for ADS Material](#)). Authors must provide in their e-mail a short explanation of the changes in their material.

Those Bureaus/Independent Offices listed in the first section (“Always Required”) of the [Clearance List for ADS Material](#) must be given an opportunity to review, comment, and clear on all ADS material. Bureaus/Independent Offices listed in the second section (“Sometimes Required”) of the same mandatory reference review and clear only material that relates to specific topics. Authors must review the second section and send their material to the appropriate Bureaus/Independent Offices.

Since many clearing officials take annual leave during the holiday season (starting with the Thanksgiving holiday and through the end of the calendar year), authors are strongly discouraged from sending material out for ADS clearance during this time. If you do send material out for clearance during this period, then you must give the clearing officials more time than usual (approximately three weeks) to review the material.

3. The Clearance Timeframe

Clearing officials have 10 business days to respond (15 business days for a large volume of material). Remember, clearing officials still have the option of asking for more time, not to exceed five additional business days, but it is at the *author’s discretion* to grant this request. Clearing officials are asked to provide a brief reason for needing more time, if they request it. **If a clearing official or designated back-up does not respond within the clearance deadline, their Bureau/Independent Office forfeits its right to clear and comment on that material.** Please see the mandatory reference, [The ADS Process, Part II, Section B](#) for more information.

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4. Clearing Officials' Options

Clearing officials review ADS material for Agency compliance/conformity with policies and practices that have broad applicability to the entire Agency and provide comments and suggestions primarily to substantive issues rather than routine editing. Clearing officials have the following five options:

- Advise that they clear the material;
- Advise that they cannot clear until their **substantive** comments are resolved (they must include their comments and clearly indicate that they are substantive);
- Advise that they clear the material and are including **non-substantive** comments or suggestions for the author's consideration;
- Advise that clearance by that Bureau/Independent Office is not required or is not applicable; or
- Request additional time.

Note: Please note the difference between "not required" and "not applicable":

- "Not required" means that a particular Bureau/Independent Office has no mandate or duties associated with the subject matter; and
- "Not applicable" means that, while a particular Bureau/Independent Office sometimes has mandates or duties associated with the subject matter, in this instance they do not.

5. Substantive Comments

Authors must incorporate substantive comments from clearing officials into their material, if appropriate. Authors must contact the clearing official for written agreement if they do not wish to incorporate substantive comments. (For example, sometimes they may agree to wait to incorporate comments until the next revision of the document.)

6. Reclearance

ADS chapters or references that are substantively revised as a result of clearance comments must be re-circulated to ALL of the clearing officials for ADS clearance, together with an explanation or notation of the changes. Authors must allow clearing officials five business days to respond. Clearing officials can review the rest of the chapter (and make substantive changes), but only as it applies to the new material. Purely editorial revisions do not require another clearance.

Here are two scenarios of what can happen when ADS material is substantively revised during the initial ADS clearance process:

*An asterisk indicates that the adjacent information is new or substantively revised.

- a. An ADS chapter is sent out for clearance. Text in the chapter is **substantively modified** as a result of this first clearance. Therefore, the chapter will need to be sent out for re-clearance. The author must note in the re-clearance e-mail that text has changed and that the change may or may not affect other parts of the chapter.
- b. An ADS chapter is sent out for clearance. Some text in the chapter is **deleted** as a result of this clearance. Therefore, the chapter needs to be sent out for re-clearance. The author must note in the re-clearance e-mail that text has been removed and that this change may or may not affect other parts of the chapter.

7. Vetting Your Material

Many substantive issues regarding the material may arise during the clearance process. Therefore, M/AS/IRD encourages authors to vet their material prior to releasing it for clearance. Due to substantive issues, one or more clearing officials may not clear. Here are two scenarios

- a. The ADS material is out for clearance, and, due to a clearing official raising a substantive, critical issue or issues (procedural or policy), the author decides to pull the ADS material back from the clearance process and resolve the issues with the appropriate Bureaus/Independent Offices. Once the issue is resolved, the author sends the material out for clearance and gives the clearing official a full 10 days to respond. M/AS/IRD does not advocate this scenario, except in rare cases.
- b. The ADS material is out for clearance, substantive issues are raised, and clearance is not granted. The author and clearance official must resolve their issues, and, if **substantive changes** are made as a result of this resolution, the author must send out their material for clearance again, and give only five days for review.

In order to avoid these situations, M/AS/IRD again encourages you to vet your material before you send it out for clearance.

8. Resolving Differences

While author Bureaus/Independent Offices and clearing officials must attempt to resolve substantive and jurisdictional issues raised in the clearance process, this is not always possible. Depending on the circumstances, involved Bureaus/Independent Offices must raise the issue to an appropriate level to reach resolution. M/AS/IRD will not proceed to publication without resolution on all clearance comments.

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9. Documentation

Authors must include documentation (e-mail or memo) from all parties proving that final resolution has occurred. (See [The ADS Process, Part II, Section 1](#))

The author must maintain documentation showing all responses and clearances received from clearing officials. These documents then are sent as a package to M/AS/IRD. This package includes the AID Form 3-252, which the management official must sign. (See [The ADS Process, Part II](#))

If a problem does arise during the clearance process, please contact the ADS Editors at ads@usaid.gov or refer to section 501.3.3.1.

501.3.3.1 Resolving Clearance Issues

Effective Date: 01/01/2005

The following adjudication process for clearance issues is effective January 1, 2005:

Authors and clearing officials must make every effort to resolve all substantive issues raised during the ADS clearance process within 30 calendar days after a clearing official returns a “non-clearance with substantive comments” response to the author. If the author and clearing official are unable to reach resolution on all issues themselves, they must immediately elevate the issues within the Bureaus/Independent Offices concerned to the level necessary to reach resolution within this 30-day timeframe.

The author and clearing official must first elevate the issues to their Bureau/Independent Office heads. If no resolution is reached, the issues must be raised to the next level. The final effort prior to contacting the Agency Counselor is resolution at the DAA level.

If an issue remains unresolved after 30 calendar days, together the authoring Bureau/Independent Office and clearing Bureau/Independent Office must schedule an appointment with the Agency Counselor within a reasonable timeframe and present the issue to her for arbitration. Both the authoring Bureau/Independent Office and clearing Bureau/Independent Office may request that their Director, DAA, or AA represent them at arbitration. The Agency Counselor will use all resources necessary to make a decision, including consultation with the Administrator and Deputy Administrator as needed.

The Agency Counselor will reach a decision within 15 business days of hearing the case. The Agency Counselor’s decision is final.

EXCEPTION: Exceptions to the 30-day timeframe may be granted on a case-by-case basis by the Division Chief of M/AS/IRD. The authoring Bureau/Independent Office and clearing Bureau/Independent Office must e-mail their request for additional time to the Division Chief, M/AS/IRD.

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501.3.3.2 Are There Exceptions to the ADS Clearance and Issuance Process?
Effective Date – 08/21/2006

Yes. A list of the 14 exceptions is provided in this table:

Exceptions to the ADS Clearance and Issuance Process	
a.	<p>Current Exceptions</p> <p>(1) Administrator: Administrator-issued policy: The Administrator or Deputy Administrator may issue guidance, which is incorporated into the ADS as a conforming amendment.</p> <p>When the Administrator issues a policy that supersedes a specific ADS chapter in whole or in part, the new policy immediately becomes Agency policy and belongs in the Agency’s directives system. The author of the applicable chapter or reference is responsible for incorporating it into the ADS via a conforming amendment.</p> <p>A Policy Notice or “Administrator” Notice issued by the Administrator remains as is and valid until it is incorporated into the appropriate ADS chapter or reference or is canceled. M/AS/IRD is the Bureau/Independent Office responsible for converting these types of Notices into Interim Updates and posting them to the ADS Web site. It is an ADS author’s responsibility to update ADS material to reflect the new policy released from the Administrator. Once this has been completed, the Interim Update is removed from the system and the new/revised ADS material is posted to the ADS Web site.</p>
	(2) Business Transformation Executive Committee (BTEC) policy decisions
	(3) ADS 101, Agency Programs and Functions
	(4) ADS 103, Delegations of Authority
	(5) Changes to Bureau/Independent Office symbols or acronyms (The author simply needs to complete the first page of an AID Form 3-252 and submit it to M/AS/IRD for signature.)

*An asterisk indicates that the adjacent information is new or substantively revised.

(6) AID Forms
(7) CIBs/AAPDs that do not issue new or revised Agency-wide policy or procedure (To the maximum extent practical, author Bureaus/Independent Offices should place Agency-wide policy and procedure in the body of the applicable ADS chapter and not in an AAPD or other reference.)
(8) Bureau for Management, Office of Human Resources (M/HR) ADS material
(9) USAID's CFRs (AID Regs)
(10) Foreign Affairs Manual and Foreign Affairs Handbook (FAM/FAH) (At this time, FAMs and FAHs are not processed through the ADS.)
(11) ADS 501 reference, titled ADS Chapters and Authors List
(12) ADS 501 reference, titled Clearance List for ADS Material
(13) ADS 504 reference, titled Authorized Senders for Agency Notices
<p>(14) Conforming Amendment: This is policy that does not require ADS clearance because it alters ADS material in one of the following four ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Includes new or revised external regulations. This does not include the creation of new or revised USAID procedures to implement the regulation; ● Complies with policy already contained in other ADS chapters or internal mandatory references; ● Incorporates written policy issued by the Administrator; or ● Amends or adds one Bureau/Independent Office's procedures that do not have a substantial impact on any other Agency Bureau/Independent Office. Authors must send M/AS/IRD an e-mail explaining how the change does not substantively impact another Bureau/Independent Office. (Chapter 501)

*An asterisk indicates that the adjacent information is new or substantively revised.

These exceptions are documented in [The ADS Process, Part II, Section F\(1\)](#). If the Director of an author Bureau/Independent Office needs to deviate from the existing ADS clearance or issuance process, he or she must submit a memorandum and completed AID Form 3-252, requesting an exception, to the Division Chief of M/AS/IRD for approval.

The exceptions to the clearance and issuance process listed above are documented in the internal mandatory reference, [The ADS Process, Part II, Section F](#).

501.3.4 What Is M/AS/IRD's Role in the ADS Clearance Process?

Effective Date – 08/21/2006

The M/AS/IRD Division Chief, or delegate, must review and approve all cleared, final ADS material before issuance. Please alert the M/AS/IRD ADS Editor if any substantive issues arise during the clearance process.

501.3.4.1 How Does an Author Respond to M/AS/IRD's Comments?

Effective Date – 07/01/2004

M/AS/IRD Editors review ADS material for grammar, punctuation, ADS format, and plain language. If an edit inadvertently changes the intent of a sentence, M/AS/IRD is available to assist the author with creating a grammatically correct sentence that accurately reflects the policy and procedure. In all other situations, authors are responsible for incorporating M/AS/IRD's grammar, punctuation, format, and plain language edits. Finally, authors must give M/AS/IRD's other queries and comments the same consideration as any other clearing official in the clearance process.

501.3.4.2 Submitting ADS Material to M/AS/IRD for Issuance

Effective Date – 03/31/2000

Once the author has received all required ADS clearances and resolved any differences with clearing officials, they must submit hardcopy and electronic versions of the ADS material and clearance documentation to M/AS/IRD, along with a completed AID Form 3-252, Issuance Request. Authors must follow the procedures detailed in the internal mandatory reference, [The ADS Process, Part III](#).

*An asterisk indicates that the adjacent information is new or substantively revised.

501.3.5 What Happens After Authors Submit Material?

Effective Date – 08/21/2006

The following steps occur **after** the author submits the required documentation:

- a. M/AS/IRD reviews the final chapter or reference for ADS style, ADS format, punctuation, and grammar. M/AS/IRD sends the material back to the author with any corrections and final suggestions.
- b. The author makes the appropriate changes, if any, and sends the material back to M/AS/IRD for publication.
- c. M/AS/IRD prepares the final version for issuance.
- d. The author must issue a Policy Notice. See **section 501.3.4.3, Issuing ADS Material**.

M/AS/IRD e-mails the author a copy of the final version for their records. M/AS/IRD checks the entire 3-252 package for required clearances, and retains all master copies of documentation submitted by authors.

Please see [The ADS Process, Part III](#) for complete details, and [Timeline: Four-Step Process and Issuing ADS Material](#).

501.3.6 Issuing ADS Material

Effective Date – 08/21/2006

The way to issue your ADS material is to create a USAID/General Policy Notice announcing its release, with the ADS chapter, mandatory reference, or additional help document attached. M/AS/IRD may issue the Policy Notices any time after you submit a final, cleared version of your ADS material to M/AS/IRD for final review and publication.

M/AS/IRD distributes Policy Notices on a nightly basis to every employee in USAID/W and to specific mailboxes within Missions. M/AS/IRD sends Policy Notices to Missions and they are distributed within the Mission to Agency personnel.

Within 12 days of issuance as a Policy Notice, M/AS/IRD will post your material to the ADS Web site (<http://www.usaid.gov/policy/ads>).

In those rare circumstances when the policy is issued through the Administrator's Office, the point of contact must adhere to the following process: send the policy to M/AS/IRD for review, write the notice in plain language, complete the first page of a 3-252, attach any clearance comments, attach the Memorandum signed by the Administrator, and include a copy of the notice and any attachments.

*An asterisk indicates that the adjacent information is new or substantively revised.

501.3.6.1 Withholding ADS Material

Effective Date – 06/01/2007

M/AS/IRD has a procedure for addressing those times when ADS material is revised but not released. The following table shows the steps that M/AS/IRD, at the behest of the Agency Counselor, will take to ensure that the ADS is kept current.

Title 36 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Sec. 1222.44, says that

“Agency recordkeeping requirements shall prescribe that the **programs, policies, and procedures** of the agency shall be adequately documented in appropriate directives. A record copy of each such directive (including those superseded) shall be maintained by the appropriate agency directives management officer(s) as part of the official files.”

As an Executive Agency, USAID is required by law to develop, disseminate, and maintain official Agency records. All USAID employees look to the ADS to find the latest Agency regulations. The bottom line is – the ADS must remain current.

Please note that if the ADS material becomes obsolete prior to publication, a signed 3-252 is needed and then M/AS/IRD will cancel the material.

There are three main Scenarios (A-C) that may happen, and the remedy steps 1-4 apply to each of them:

Scenario A

When an ADS chapter/reference is sent through the clearance process, but the author does not finalize the material.

Scenario B

When an ADS chapter/reference goes out for clearance, comes to the Directives Shop for processing, the Directives Shop sends it back to the author for final approval, and the author never responds.

Scenario C

When an ADS chapter/reference is cleared and processed by M/AS/IRD, but is never released as a Policy Notice because the author does not give M/AS/IRD authorization to publish it.

*An asterisk indicates that the adjacent information is new or substantively revised.

What follows are the different steps the Agency takes to remedy Scenarios A, B, and C.

Remedy Step 1: M/AS/IRD

Two weeks after the clearance deadline, the Division Chief of M/AS/IRD sends an e-mail to the author's supervisor, requesting a status update.

After five days, if there is no response or the author says that he or she will not issue the policy directives and required procedures, the M/AS/IRD Division Chief elevates the issue to the M/AS Director for action.

The M/AS/IRD Division Chief also copies the Division Chief or Director of the author, as appropriate.

Remedy Step 2: M/AS/OD

If the M/AS Director receives no response from the non-compliant Bureau/Independent Office within five days, he elevates it to the AA/M.

Remedy Step 3: AA/M

The AA/M contacts the appropriate AA for that Bureau/Independent Office, who has five days to respond to the AA/M.

If the AA/M does not receive a response, or if a release date for the material cannot be established, the matter is sent to the Agency Counselor for resolution.

Final Remedy Step: Agency Counselor

The Agency Counselor gives the delinquent AA 10 days to respond. If there is no response after 10 days, the Agency Counselor will take measures to resolve the matter. The Agency Counselor's measures may include:

(a) Notifying the author Bureau/Independent Office that they must work with M/AS/IRD to get their material issued within seven business days.

(b) Taking three days after a non-response or non-agreement between the AAs to consult with the A/AID regarding the author Bureau/Independent Office's non-responsiveness, and request for immediate issuance by M/AS/IRD. **The author must comply with the ruling and work with M/AS/IRD to publish the new or revised policy directives and required procedures immediately.**

*An asterisk indicates that the adjacent information is new or substantively revised.

501.3.7 Maintaining ADS Material

Effective Date – 03/31/2000

ADS authors must regularly review ADS material (chapters and references – internal and external) and modify it to ensure that it is up-to-date and consistent with law and regulation, sound policy, and management practices. This includes determining when material is no longer relevant or necessary and can be eliminated. See [The ADS Process, Part I, Section A.3](#) for suggestions.

501.3.8 Annual ADS Certification

Effective Date – 03/31/2000

M/AS/IRD conducts an annual review of ADS material by sending a request for certification e-mail to the appropriate management officials. ADS material includes chapters and all references (forms, internal and external documents, mandatory and optional), Interim Updates, and any AID Handbook chapters that are still valid.

In September of each year, each author Bureau/Independent Office management official or their designee must conduct a review of all of the ADS material for which they are responsible. Then, they must notify M/AS/IRD as to whether or not their Bureau/Independent Office 's ADS policy directives and required procedures are still current and effective and provide a timeline outlining revision plans for all material that is not current. The head of an ADS author Bureau/Independent Office must also ensure that a designated person is fulfilling the role of author, even after the ADS chapter in question is published.

501.3.8.1 Response to Delinquent Annual Certification Tables

Effective Date – 06/01/2007

M/AS/IRD has a procedure in place for addressing those instances when a Bureau/Independent Office does not submit their annual certification tables. Remember, Title 36 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Sec. 1222.44, says that

“Agency recordkeeping requirements shall prescribe that the programs, policies, and procedures of the agency shall be adequately documented in appropriate directives. A record copy of each such directive (including those superseded) shall be maintained by the appropriate agency directives management officer(s) as part of the official files.”

As an Executive Agency, USAID is required by law to develop, disseminate, and maintain official Agency records. All USAID employees look to the ADS to find the latest Agency regulations.

*An asterisk indicates that the adjacent information is new or substantively revised.

Penalty

If a Bureau/Independent Office does not complete their annual certification table, then M/AS/IRD elevates the issue through the Agency Counselor to the USAID Administrator.

The bottom line is – the ADS must remain current and contain all cleared regulations. The steps that M/AS/IRD follows with regard to delinquent annual certification tables are detailed here.

Procedure for Addressing Delinquent Annual Certification Tables

1. Once the deadline for sending the completed certification table back to M/AS/IRD has passed, M/AS/OD will contact the Director of the delinquent Bureau/Independent Office via e-mail, requesting resolution. They will have five business days to respond to M/AS/OD's e-mail.
2. A response may be one of the following:
 - “I am working on it and need a few more days.” – The certifying management official must supply a deadline for returning the completed certification table.
 - The official does not respond, or
 - The official responds and attaches the completed certification tables.
3. If the Director or designee does not return the certification table by the deadline, M/AS/OD will elevate the matter to the AA/M for action.
4. If the AA/M does not receive a response from the appropriate AA within five business days, the AA/M will elevate it to the Administrator or his designee for action.

Note: Please keep in mind that the certifying management officials are usually Directors and AAs.

501.4 MANDATORY REFERENCES

Effective Date – 06/01/2007

501.4.1 External Mandatory References

Effective Date – 08/21/2006

- a. [36 CFR 1194, Electronic and Information Technology Accessibility Standards](#)
- b. [36 CFR 1222.44, Directives documenting agency programs, policies, and procedures](#) (This is an authority for the chapter.)
- c. [44 U.S.C. 3101, Records management by agency heads, general duties](#) (This is an authority for the chapter.)
- d. [Executive Order 12861, Elimination of One-Half of Executive Branch Internal Regulations](#)
- e. [Executive Order 12866, Regulatory Planning and Review, as amended](#)
- f. **Guidance on Implementing Plain Language, July 29, 1998**
- g. Official plain language Web site, <http://www.plainlanguage.gov/>
- h. [Presidential Memorandum on Plain Language, June 1, 1998](#)

501.4.2 Internal Mandatory References

Effective Date – 06/01/2007

- a. [ADS 102, Agency Organization](#)
- b. [ADS 200, Introduction to Managing for Results](#)
- c. [ADS 504, Agency Notices](#)
- d. [ADS 505, Forms Management Program](#)
- e. [ADS 549, Telecommunications Management](#)
- f. [ADS Chapters and Authors List](#)
- g. [ADS Style and Format Guide](#)
- h. [Clearance List for ADS Material](#)
- i. [The ADS Process](#)

*An asterisk indicates that the adjacent information is new or substantively revised.

j. [USAID-Federal Regulations for Web Accessibility](#)

501.4.3 Mandatory Forms
Effective Date – 08/21/2006

a. [AID Form 3-252, USAID Directives System - Issuance Request](#)

501.5 ADDITIONAL HELP
Effective Date – 08/21/2006

The documents listed below contain optional information for you to consider. The author is citing these documents because they would like you to know more about the subject matter or provide helpful, non-mandatory guidance.

- a. [ADS Users Guide](#)
- b. [Sample Interim Update \(IU\)](#)
- c. [Sample Policy Notice Issuing a New or Revised ADS Chapter](#)
- d. [Sample E-mail Requesting ADS Clearance](#)
- e. [Timeline: Four-Step Process and Issuing ADS Material](#)

501.5.1 Optional Forms
Effective Date – 08/21/2006

501.6 DEFINITIONS
Effective Date – 08/21/2006

The terms and definitions listed below have been incorporated into the ADS Glossary. See the [ADS Glossary](#) for all ADS terms and definitions.

additional help

An additional help document provides non-mandatory guidance intended to clarify Agency policy and its application contained in the Automated Directives System (ADS). For example, these may include "how-to" guidelines and non-mandatory reference material created internally or externally. These documents may repeat policy, but do not contain new policy. Additional help documents are optional reading. (Chapter 501)

author

A qualified Automated Directives System (ADS) author is a subject matter expert (SME) or someone with good writing skills who can interview the SME and write ADS material in plain language. (Chapter 501)

*An asterisk indicates that the adjacent information is new or substantively revised.

authority

An authority is the legally binding instrument that authorizes or constrains the policy directives and required procedures issued as USAID direction. These instruments include laws, regulations, Executive Orders, court decisions, and rulings by Federal authorities. "Authority" refers to the legal ability or power to give commands, enforce compliance, or make decisions. (Chapter 501)

Automated Directives System (ADS)

The ADS is a standardized system comprising (1) USAID internal policy directives and required procedures; (2) external regulations applicable to USAID; and (3) non-mandatory guidance to help employees interpret and properly apply internal and external mandatory guidance. (Chapter 501)

clearing official

A clearing official is a designated person in a specific Bureau/Independent Office obligated to review and clear Automated Directives System (ADS) material. (Chapter 501)

conforming amendment

Policy that does not require Automated Directives System (ADS) clearance because it alters ADS material in one of the following four ways:

- Includes new or revised external regulations only. This does not include the creation of new or revised USAID procedures to implement the regulation;
- Complies with policy already contained in other Automated Directives System (ADS) chapters or internal mandatory references;
- Incorporates written policy issued by the Administrator; or
- Amends or adds one Bureau/Independent Office's procedures that do not have a substantial impact on any other Agency Bureau/Independent Office. Authors must send M/AS/IRD an e-mail explaining how the change does not substantively impact any other Bureau/Independent Office. (Chapter 501)

directive

A written instruction communicating policy directives and/or required procedures. These instructions may be in the form of orders, regulations, bulletins, circulars, handbooks, manuals, notices, numbered memoranda, and similar issuances. (Chapter 501)

directives management program

The directives management program provides Agency personnel with the means to document and convey Agency policy directives and required procedures to users through written instructions. (Chapter 501)

*An asterisk indicates that the adjacent information is new or substantively revised.

editorial changes

Editorial changes are simple clarifications that **do not** alter the substantive meaning of the Automated Directives System (ADS) material. Editorial changes include punctuation changes, grammar corrections, reordering existing material and adding headers for ease of use, updates to Bureau/Independent Office symbols, address and name changes, and hyperlink additions. (Chapter 501)

effective dates

Effective dates are inserted when specific policy directives or required procedures within an Automated Directives System (ADS) chapter or internally created reference become effective. Effective dates only change when substantive modifications are made within the document. (Chapter 501)

functional series

Automated Directives System (ADS) chapters and Interim Updates are grouped according to the Agency's functions. These groups of chapters are called functional series. (Chapter 501)

guidance

Guidance is a general term that includes policy directives and required procedures, rules, regulations, advice, and other information relevant to the conduct of USAID business. The critical distinction is between mandatory and non-mandatory guidance, as defined below. A particular document may contain both mandatory and non-mandatory guidance.

a. mandatory guidance

Guidance specifying *required* actions and behavior on the part of Agency employees and operating units, signified by phrases like "must," "must not," "is required," or the equivalent. Employees are held accountable for adherence to mandatory guidance, and must comply with it unless an exception is made in accordance with established procedures. Policy directives – mandatory guidance contained in documents prepared according to Automated Directives System (ADS) procedures – are clearly identified as mandatory. A document written before the initiation of the ADS may also contain mandatory guidance that remains in force, in which case it is classified as an internal mandatory reference.

b. non-mandatory guidance

Guidance intended to assist employees in carrying out their duties, but does not specify required actions and behavior. Employees are strongly encouraged to review and consider such guidance. (Chapter 501)

*An asterisk indicates that the adjacent information is new or substantively revised.

hyperlink

A hyperlink is specially marked underlined and blue-colored text that you click on to move from one place in a document to another file, another location in the same document, or a Web page. (Chapter 501)

Interim Updates (IUs)

An Interim Update is temporary, mandatory guidance that was issued as a Policy Notice, Policy cable, or Administrator Memorandum. This guidance is codified in the Automated Directives System (ADS) as an Interim Update. IUs are either (1) incorporated into the appropriate Automated Directives System (ADS) chapter or reference or (2) expire on a specified date. Policy Notices are cleared through the ADS clearance process and distributed Agency-wide via the Agency Notice system. After a Policy Notice is released, it is converted to an IU. IUs are posted to the ADS Web site. (Chapter 501 and 504)

management official

For the purposes of ADS Chapter 501, a management official is a Supervisor, Division Chief, Director, AA, or someone delegated by the Division Chief, Director, or AA to sign the USAID Directives Issuance Request Form (AID 3-252) and who has oversight authority for the Automated Directives System (ADS) material. (Chapter 501)

mandatory references

Mandatory references comprise relevant U.S. Government regulations created and published outside USAID, as well as documents containing mandatory guidance that have been created within USAID. These references are cited and hyperlinked in Automated Directives System (ADS) chapters.

a. External Mandatory Reference

External mandatory references are relevant Federal statutes, Executive Orders, and other externally published regulations. They may also contain USAID-specific regulations.

b. Internal Mandatory Reference

An internal mandatory reference is a document created and published within the Agency that contains mandatory guidance (often accompanied by additional, non-mandatory guidance), but which does not have to be created in ADS chapter format. Adherence to all mandatory guidance contained in internal mandatory references is required by those to whom the reference is applicable. (Chapter 501)

origination date

The origination date is the date that the requesting official signed the AID Form 3-252 for the original Automated Directives System (ADS) chapter or reference. This is not necessarily the first effective date for the chapter or reference. (Chapter 501)

*An asterisk indicates that the adjacent information is new or substantively revised.

Overview

The Overview is the first section of an Automated Directives System (ADS) chapter. It introduces the chapter and may include a brief purpose, overview, objective, and applicability. (Chapter 501)

plain language

As defined by the Plain Language Action and Information Network (PLAIN), plain language is writing that your reader can understand the first time he or she reads it. It doesn't mean writing for a certain grade level – it means organizing and writing for your reader. Writing in plain language saves time and money for writers and readers. Writing in plain language includes using common, everyday words, short sentences, active voice, and, when appropriate, addressing the reader directly by using the pronoun "you." (Chapter 501)

policy

USAID policy includes both mandatory guidance (policy directives and required procedures and internal mandatory references) as well as broader official statements of Agency goals, guiding principles, and views on development challenges and best practices in addressing those challenges. (Chapter 501)

policy directive

A clear, concise statement of mandatory guidance that the Agency has adopted to guide the conduct of its business. Policy directives statements are found in documents prepared according to Automated Directives System (ADS) procedures. (Chapter 501)

policy notice

A notice, issued as part of the nightly notices to all USAID employees, that includes both mandatory guidance and required procedures, and may include broader official statements of Agency goals, guiding principles, and views on development challenges and best practices in addressing those challenges. USAID turns all policy notices into interim updates (IUs) and includes them in the Automated Directives System (ADS). (Chapter 501)

Primary author

This indicates the author who has sole responsibility for maintaining and clearing certain Automated Directives System (ADS) material. (Chapter 501)

Primary Responsibilities

The Primary Responsibilities section of an Automated Directives System (ADS) chapter is a list of the Bureaus/Independent Offices /officials (titles, not names) with the key responsibilities for acting upon the policy directives and required procedures in the chapter. This section does not include (1) all Bureaus/Independent Offices that are affected by the chapter, (2) position descriptions, or (3) policy directives and required procedures. (Chapter 501)

*An asterisk indicates that the adjacent information is new or substantively revised.

procedure

A document that defines a mandatory course of action or steps that must be followed in order to complete a specific task. (Chapter 501)

regulation

An agency statement of general applicability and future effect, which the agency intends to have the force and effect of law, that is designed to implement, interpret, or prescribe law or policy or to describe the procedure or practice requirements of an agency. (Chapter 501)

required procedures

Required procedures are detailed courses of action that the Agency must follow to comply with policy directives (both external and internal). (Chapter 501)

revision date

The date that Automated Directives System (ADS) chapters, internal mandatory references, or additional help documents are finalized for distribution. This is not an effective date. The date appears in the lower right corner of the cover page in an ADS chapter or internal reference. (Chapter 501)

substantive changes

Substantive changes alter the meaning or intent of the policy directive or required procedure. If you change what people are required to do or how they are required to do it, you are making a substantive change. (Chapter 501)

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