



The ADS Process

A Mandatory Reference for ADS Chapter 501

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The ADS Process

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Introduction

This document contains four parts:

- **Part I: ADS Authors Manual** describes how authors develop, write, and maintain ADS material and technical do's and don'ts.
- **Part II: ADS Clearance Process** addresses the ADS clearance process for authors and clearing officials.
- **Part III: ADS Issuance Process** explains how to issue ADS material.
- **Part IV: Definitions.**

The ADS is USAID's directives program, which 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.

Please see [ADS 501.3.1.2](#) and [501.3.1.3](#) for precise information on what the ADS includes and does not include.

Part I: ADS Authors Manual

Section A. Writing ADS Material

A.1 Writing ADS Material

Effective Date – 01/29/2002

As stated in [Executive Order \(EO\) 12866](#), 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.”

A.2 Who Writes ADS Material?

Effective Date – 01/29/2002

Management officials (as defined in ADS 501; see Part IV, Definitions, of this document) 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.

A representative from a Bureau/Independent Office must contact M/AS/IRD when he or she sees the need for a new ADS chapter. M/AS/IRD then

- Advises the Bureau/Independent Office on available chapter numbers and in which functional series the new chapter belongs, and
- Updates the [ADS Chapters and Authors List](#) reference.

Any disagreements over transfers of ADS chapter ownership are elevated to the appropriate management level.

A.3 Developing, Maintaining, Updating, and Certifying ADS Material

Effective Date – 08/21/2006

Authors must develop ADS material in accordance with ADS 501 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 ADS process, see [Timeline: Four-Step Process and Issuing ADS Material](#).

An author may ask an individual in another Bureau/Independent Office, or teams of individuals from other Bureau/Independent Office, to draft ADS material or participate in drafting. In these

instances, the primary author remains responsible for clearing material and ensuring it is updated when necessary.

When creating or revising ADS material, authors are encouraged to consult with Bureaus/Independent Offices and Missions that may be affected by their ADS material. M/AS/IRD has created a Global Address List in Microsoft Outlook (“M.AS.IRD DW List”) for authors who wish to communicate with the entire ADS community. The list contains the names of all authors and clearing officials. Authors, don't forget to review the [Clearance List for ADS Material](#) for potential consulting Bureaus/Independent Offices.

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.

a. External references

Check your external references regularly for updates and changes that affect your ADS material. Remember to check the ADS Web site to make sure it links to the most current version of every reference you cite. Updates to ADS material due to changes in external references are conforming amendments and don't require ADS clearance (see [Part II, Section E](#) of this document).

b. Internal policy changes

Update your ADS material whenever Agency policy changes. If you need to update your material to comply with policy that is already stated in another part of the ADS, this is a conforming amendment and does not require ADS clearance. See [Part II, Section E](#) of this document.

c. Eliminating material

If material is no longer relevant or necessary, contact M/AS/IRD to determine if clearance is required to eliminate the material from the ADS. Policy changes require clearance unless they are conforming amendments. Fill out an AID Form 3-252, USAID Directives System Issuance Request, to complete the process.

d. Certifying material

Remember: ADS author Bureaus/Independent Offices must certify their ADS material, including external references, every year. See [ADS 501.3.6](#) for information on the Annual Certification.

e. ADS authors working together

Authors need to work with the primary author of ADS material if they want to make changes to the primary author's material. There are two common scenarios when this occurs:

1. Author A has created, revised, or canceled an ADS document, chapter A, and needs to include it in the ADS and link it to chapter B. To make this linkage happen, author A must always contact the author of chapter B, author B. Here are two things to keep in mind:
 - Author B must give his permission for the material to be linked to chapter B.
 - If the reference is mandatory and contains new or revised ADS procedures, it must be sent out for ADS clearance.
 - Once ADS clearance is obtained, author A must obtain author B's approval, which must always be in writing (such as an e-mail). Author A must then provide this e-mail approval, the newly modified chapter B, and the front page of a signed AID Form 3-252 to M/AS/IRD for signature approval.
2. Over time, author A (who may be an ADS author or simply a USAID employee) may want to make a modification to an existing chapter. She spots something that is incorrect or inaccurate. In this case, author A must always contact author B, the primary author of the ADS material, to communicate her finding.
 - Author B is responsible for making the change to his material. He can refuse to make the change or he can make it.
 - If he makes the change, and it is substantive and is not a conforming amendment, his material will need to go out for clearance, and the steps of the clearance cycle apply.
 - If his material does not need to go out for clearance, then he needs to provide the newly modified chapter, and the front page of a signed AID Form 3-252 to M/AS/IRD for signature approval.

A.4 Using Asterisks to Show Revisions, Additions, and Deletions Within an ADS Chapter and Agency-Created Mandatory Reference

Effective Date – 06/01/2007

An asterisk in the left margin of a chapter or internal mandatory reference indicates that the adjacent material is new or substantively revised. When you revise ADS material, first remove all asterisks from the previous revision using the Search and Replace feature in MS Word.

The following table provides more detail on when and where to place an asterisk in your ADS material:

<u>If</u> you make the following type of change to your ADS material...	<u>Then</u> you must insert an asterisk as follows...
Substantive change to an existing paragraph	In the left margin at the beginning of the paragraph and also in the left margin next to the header.
Substantive change to an existing list	At the beginning of each revised item on the list.
Substantively new or revised subsection header	In the left margin next to the header.
Entire new subsection	In the left margin at the beginning of each paragraph in the subsection and also in the left margin next to the header.
Remove entire subsection or policy statement from the chapter	Insert the following illustration phrase: [Removed former section 501.3.3.4, How to Hyperlink References]

<u>If</u> you make the following type of change to your ADS material...	<u>Then</u> do not insert an asterisk ...
Substantively rewrite entire chapter	Do not insert asterisks throughout the text. Insert the following phrase before the Table of Contents: This chapter has been substantively revised in its entirety. M/AS/IRD will also place this phrase in a footer at the bottom of every page.
Editorial change to a paragraph	Do not insert an asterisk.
Rewriting a chapter in plain language (this usually accompanies reformatting)	Do not insert asterisks. Insert the following phrase before the Table of Contents: This chapter has been editorially revised in its entirety and reformatted.
Renumbering existing headers	Do not insert an asterisk.

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

Part I-8

A.5 Is There a Required Writing Style?

Effective Date – 01/29/2002

Yes. You, the author, must communicate clearly to Agency employees using plain language. As you write, keep in mind all of the following:

- a. Know the extent of your authority.** What is your authority for establishing a given policy directive or required procedure? In many instances, you can refer directly to the applicable legislation, Executive Order, or regulation through a hyperlink. Avoid rewriting the governing language.
- b. Promote the Agency's core values.**
 - Retain operational flexibility when it is consistent with law and regulation, sound policy, and management practices. (See [ADS 200.3.2.4](#))
 - In the spirit of the core value “teamwork and participation,” as you work on your material, consult with Bureaus/Independent Offices and Missions affected by your ADS chapter. (See [ADS 200.3.2.3](#))
- c. Think about the readers.** What do they need to know? What are the minimum procedures they need to follow in order to comply with legislation? Organize your material to serve their needs.
- d. Think about organization.** What is the simplest, most coherent organization of the information? Put information in a logical order.
- e. Think about content.** You must state the core policies in the Policy Directives and Required Procedures section of your ADS chapter. Think about what information is best included in a mandatory reference or additional help document. An internal mandatory reference carries the same weight as an ADS chapter.
- f. Know the requirements.** Have you kept your policy directives and required procedures to a minimum and are they consistent with law and regulation, sound policy, and appropriate management practices?
- g. Use 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. Use common, everyday words, short sentences, active voice, and, when appropriate, address the reader directly by using the pronoun "you." Avoid jargon.

See the following references for more information on plain language:

- **Guidance on Implementing Plain Language**,
- Official plain language Web site (<http://www.plainlanguage.gov>), and
- [ADS Style and Format Guide, Section 1](#).

When you update any ADS material, you must write in plain language.

h. Choose words carefully. Make it clear to the reader what guidance is mandatory and what is not. Use words such as "must" and "is required" to signify mandatory guidance. Do not use "should" when you mean "must." Use words and phrases such as "might" and "encourages" to signify non-mandatory guidance. (See [ADS Style and Format Guide, Section II](#) for more information on word usage in the ADS.)

i. Be concise and accurate. Avoid addressing the same point in several places. Do not unnecessarily restate information from other ADS chapters, mandatory references, and external regulations. Instead, reference the existing policy or procedure. The exception to this general rule is that if you are creating separate reference documents for different audiences, you may repeat vital and relevant policy.

When proposing changes in existing policy directives or required procedures, the author must investigate the effect on previous cross-references, reports, other ADS material, form numbers, and publications.

In the spirit of [EO 12861](#), Elimination of One-Half of Executive Branch Internal Regulations, keep non-mandatory information to a minimum in your ADS chapter. If you need to expand on this type of information, please create an additional help document for your chapter.

j. Select a user-friendly design. Incorporate user-friendly design features like lists, tables, "white space," and short sections broken up by headers to improve readability. Consider placing acronyms in bold the first time they appear, and using bold to highlight **key points**. Use question/answer format if appropriate.

k. Use the ADS standard format. Follow the standard structure and format for ADS chapters described in [Part I, Section B.2](#) of this document. An ADS chapter contains six mandatory sections:

- xxx.1 Overview
- xxx.2 Primary Responsibilities
- xxx.3 Policy Directives and Required Procedures
- xxx.4 Mandatory References (including mandatory forms)
- xxx.5 Additional Help (including optional forms)
- xxx.6 Definitions

l. Section 508. Comply with the accessibility requirements of Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act, as stated in [Part I, Section C.2](#) of this document.

m. Get help. Get help when you need it and write away! Contact M/AS/IRD any time during the process for editorial help with your material. M/AS/IRD requests that authors send completed drafts to ads@usaid.gov for editorial review *before* releasing drafts for clearance.

Section B. ADS Structure

B.1 ADS Chapter Numbers

Effective Date – 01/29/2002

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

M/AS/IRD assigns every ADS chapter a unique number. The first digit signifies its functional series association. The remaining digits denote its placement within that series.

Example: ADS Chapter 510

- The “5” represents Functional Series 500, Management Services.
- The “10” represents its placement within Functional Series 500.

Authors must create a descriptive chapter title and a Table of Contents for each chapter.

B.2 ADS Chapter Structure

Effective Date – 07/01/2004

You must write ADS chapters in the simplified, standardized format and structure as described here and in the [ADS Style and Format Guide](#).

An ADS chapter contains the six mandatory sections described below:

a. Overview (xxx.1).

This first section introduces the chapter and may include a brief purpose, overview, objective, or statement on applicability. Overviews are brief.

b. Primary Responsibilities (xxx.2).

This section includes brief, broad statements about the Bureaus/Independent Offices and officials (titles, not names) with key responsibilities for acting upon the policies and procedures in the chapter. This section does not include (1) all Bureaus/Independent

Offices affected by the chapter, (2) position descriptions, or (3) policy directives and required procedures.

Place the responsible Bureaus/Independent Offices first in each part of this section. You may type the Bureaus/Independent Offices or officials' titles in bold to help them stand out for readers.

c. Policy Directives and Required Procedures (xxx.3).

This section contains the Agency policy directives and required procedures applicable to the chapter.

- Policy directives comprise clear and concise rules and regulations that the Agency has identified as necessary for the proper conduct of its business.
- Required procedures identify more detailed courses of action that must be followed.
- You may incorporate non-mandatory information, optional, helpful information, and examples of best practices into this section to clarify USAID policy and help employees carry out their duties. The distinction between mandatory and non-mandatory guidance is made through the use of plain language and standard directives terminology, as explained in the [ADS Style and Format Guide](#).

The ADS format allows you to combine policy directives and required procedures in this section. Alternatively, you may separate policy directives from required procedure in this section.

This section does not include (1) internal Bureau/Independent Office procedures (unless they affect those outside that Bureau/Independent Office) or (2) text from external regulations or other ADS chapters. In keeping with [EO 12861](#), we hyperlink to the appropriate external or internal reference document. List these documents in the Mandatory Reference section – see section **d** (also see [Part I, Section A.5, paragraph i](#) of this document).

Numerically coded subsections

Only the Policy Directives and Required Procedures section (xxx.3) of an ADS chapter may include optional numerically coded subsections with subheaders that authors create. You may include up to three levels of codified text, as in the following example:

501.3	Introductory policy directive or required procedure statement
501.3.1	Second level of policy directive/required procedure statements
501.3.1.1	Third level of policy directive/required procedure statements

You may also create a, b, c, or 1, 2, 3 lists within these levels. These lists are not reflected in the chapter's Table of Contents.

The specifics for the structure and numeric codification of an ADS chapter are located in the [ADS Style and Format Guide, Part 2](#).

d. Mandatory References (xxx.4).

This section consists of three reference lists:

- The first list contains **external mandatory references**. Some examples are relevant Federal statutes, Executive Orders, Government-wide regulations (such as OMB Circulars), and other documents published by a source external to USAID (such as the CFR). You may list these documents in numeric-alphabetical order.

For each chapter, this list must include the Authority or legally binding instrument that authorizes or constrains the policy directives and required procedures in the chapter. Designate an Authority by inserting the notation “(Authority)” after the reference title.

- The second list contains **internal mandatory references**, which are documents created and published internally by the Agency. Examples are AAPDs, Policy Papers, and other ADS chapters. List these documents in numeric-alphabetical order.
- The third list contains **mandatory forms**, for example, AID forms and Standard Forms (SF). (See [ADS 505](#), Forms Management Program) List forms in numeric-alphabetical order.

The author must provide M/AS/IRD with electronic copies of all references. These electronic documents will be hyperlinked. The reader will be able to hyperlink from a chapter to these documents. List both the full citation (if any) and the title. If your list of references is long, you may include a table with subsections. For an example of this reference list style, see [ADS 200.4](#). See [ADS Style and Format Guide](#) for a visual representation of the chapter sections.

e. Additional Help (xxx.5).

This section consists of non-mandatory guidance intended to assist employees in carrying out their duties. Employees are strongly encouraged but not required to read this material. This section contains two lists of hyperlinks:

- The first list links to **optional, helpful documents**. Examples are Guidance on Preparing Mission Orders and Model Checklist for Pre-obligation Requirements.

- The second list links to **optional forms (OF)**.

The additional help documents must appear in numeric-alphabetical order. List both the full citation (if any) and the title. If your list is long, you may include a table with subsections. For an example of this reference list style, see [ADS 200.4](#).

Additional help documents do not require ADS clearance, but you must send them to M/AS/IRD for review before issuance and complete an AID Form 3-252 (see [Part III](#) of this document, **ADS Issuance Process**).

Important considerations:

- An additional help document may contain mandatory policy but **may not contain new policy**. Some additional help documents (such as Policy Determinations and Policy Papers) used to be Agency policy documents. They are now considered to be additional help documents because they are no longer mandatory, but some sections of the documents are regarded as relevant and helpful.
- As a rule, employees are not required to adhere to guidance contained only in an additional help document, but when guidance is stated in mandatory language and the document cites the chapter or mandatory reference where the existing policy is stated, employees need to adhere to that guidance.
- Additional help documents are optional reading. Nevertheless, in the interest of due diligence and adequate preparation you are encouraged to review and think through issues identified in additional help documents.
- A mandatory reference can be **cited as** an additional help document for another chapter, but an internally created additional help document cannot be cited as a mandatory reference.
- If an additional help document needs to become a mandatory reference, it must receive ADS clearance.

f. Definitions (xxx.6).

This final section contains the chapter's unique terms and their definitions.

- Place your terms, followed by their definitions, in alphabetical order. Do not capitalize terms unless you capitalize them in regular text.
- M/AS/IRD includes these terms in the ADS Glossary, which contains an alphabetical list of every term defined in the Definitions section of each ADS chapter.

- When possible, each term should have only one definition that is applicable for the Agency. Check the ADS Glossary for terms and definitions that apply to your subject, and reference existing definitions where possible.
- When possible, authors should use the definition in the external authoritative or regulatory source, if one exists, and identify the source in parentheses. Only create a different Agency definition if it is unique to USAID and no other generally accepted Federal definition exists. This practice facilitates understanding when Agency personnel communicate with Federal colleagues.

B.3 ADS Glossary and Definitions

Effective Date – 07/01/2004

a. New Definitions

If you need to create a new definition for a term, follow these parameters:

- Only define terms that are *unique* to your subject matter and not universally understood. Do not define words that are defined the same way in the dictionary.
- Don't state new policy or procedure in a definition.
- Cite the appropriate governing external regulation if one exists.
 - If the external definition is short, include it as a service to the reader.
 - If the external definition is too long, you may simply cite the specific location of the definition in the external regulation.
 - If the existing external definition is too complex or is not written in plain language, you may paraphrase it, but do not change the content. Be sure to cite where in the regulation the definition can be found. If you need to change the content of a definition that is defined by a governing external regulation, contact the Office of the General Counsel (GC) for advice.

b. “Multiple Definitions”

Multiple definitions of the same term are possible only in one of the two following scenarios:

- If there are substantive differences in the context to which the term applies, or
- If different external regulations define the same term differently in different contexts.

c. **Revising Definitions**

ADS chapters must receive ADS clearance. But if you create, cancel, or make substantive changes only to your definitions, you only need to send the definitions to other Bureaus/Independent Offices that use the same definitions and M/AS/IRD for clearance, along with a completed AID Form 3-252, USAID Directives System – Issuance Request. If you are revising a definition to comply with an external regulation, this is considered a conforming amendment; it does not require clearance but does require an AID 3-252.

(See [Part II, Section E](#) of this document)

B.4 Hyperlinking From an ADS Chapter to Another Document

Effective Date – 07/01/2004

Hyperlinks from the Internet to the USAID intranet are prohibited. You may cite the intranet URL, but it cannot be a live link. However, those people with intranet access can copy and paste the URL into their browser to access the document. You are allowed to:

- Link from the USAID intranet to external sites.
- Link from the USAID intranet to the USAID Internet.
- Link from a document housed **only** on the USAID intranet to other USAID intranet sites.

You are not allowed to link from the Internet (outside) to the USAID intranet (inside). You may cite the intranet URL (Web address), but you may not create a live hyperlink to the intranet site from a document housed on the Internet.

If you would like to hyperlink to a mandatory reference, an additional help document, or another section within your chapter, you must indicate that hyperlink by typing the document title or section number in blue, bold, underlined text. For example,

Information on Agency Notices can be found in [ADS 504](#).

Section 508 accessibility standards, described in [36 CFR 1194](#), Electronic and Information Technology Accessibility Standards, apply to this chapter.

When you do this, M/AS/IRD will know where to insert the appropriate technical code to create a hyperlink. When your readers click on this hyperlink they will be taken to the appropriate document.

- On the ADS Web site, M/AS/IRD will link to an online version of the specific reference if provided. If not, we will link to the appropriate agency's home page for laws, statutes, and regulations (e.g., CFRs, EOs).

When you revise a chapter, work only with the most recent version. Contact the ADS staff at **ads@usaid.gov** to obtain the most recent version.

You may choose to insert additional hyperlinks when revising a chapter. Please use the Agency standard hyperlink blue, bold, underlined font for links.

Section C. Technical Format Requirements

C.1 Required Technical Format for ADS Chapters and References

Effective Date – 07/01/2004

The lists below are based on the technical requirements that the Agency has adopted. (See the [ADS Style and Format Guide](#) for more details.)

- a. Required technical format for ADS chapters:
 - MS Word document
 - Arial 12 pt. font
 - One-inch margins on all sides
 - Left justified text
 - Page numbering (bottom of page, right)

- b. Optional technical format for ADS chapters:
 - Bold text
 - Underlined text
 - Italicized text
 - Tables and charts
(Keep in mind that your document will often be printed in black and white. When transformed into shades of gray, different colors may look the same. Do not make reference to colors without a legend.)
 - Hyperlinks
 - Automatic numbering of lists
 - Bulleted lists
 - Endnotes and footnotes
 - Common graphic files such as JPEG, GIF, and Bitmap (BMP) files. To comply with Section 508 accessibility standards, if you include an image file, you must create a text description to accompany each image. (TIFF files are not allowed.)

- c. Do **not** use the following MS Word features when creating ADS chapters:
 - Headers
 - Footers except for page numbering
 - Automatically inserted dates
 - Bookmarks
 - Color (text)
 - Moving text/animation

d. Do **not** use the following features when creating ADS references:

- Automatically inserted dates
- Moving text/animation

e. Do **not** use the following features when creating the **final version** of ADS chapters or references:

- Track changes
- Comments

If you use either of these MS Word features during the drafting/revision process, delete them all before sending the final version to M/AS/IRD. They are a security risk because anyone can view them in your document.

f. Font size:

As a general rule, don't use a font size any smaller than Arial 10 in ADS references. Forms and tables within a chapter that require smaller fonts in order to fit the screen may be exceptions to this rule.

g. Styles:

If you use the Styles feature in Word, keep the styles as simple and minimal as possible. M/AS/IRD will insert ADS header styles and an automatic table of contents in ADS chapters.

Before creating an ADS reference with a product (or software package) not included in the Microsoft Office Suite, please contact M/AS/IRD. (See [Part I, Section C.3](#) for Agency form requirements.)

In addition to the requirements in this section, you must comply with user accessibility standards as defined by Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act (see [Part I, Section C.2](#)).

C.2 Section 508 Format Requirements

Effective Date – 10/15/2002

Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act requires that

- “Federal employees with disabilities have access to and use of information that is comparable to the access and use by Federal employees who are not individuals with disabilities, unless an undue burden would be imposed on the agency; and
- Members of the public with disabilities seeking information or services from an agency have access to and use of information and data that is comparable to the access and use

by members of the public who are not individuals with disabilities, unless an undue burden would be imposed on the agency.”

In order to provide documents that are accessible to individuals with disabilities and to meet the requirements of Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act, authors must adhere to the following guidelines:

a. ADS Chapters and Internally Created References

(1) Tables: Use the Insert Table command on your toolbar in Word to format material in Word table structure. Word tables create cells in gridlines that are navigable using the Tab key. Do not create tab tables. Tab tables are created by using the Tab key to line up the columns. Tab tables are not a true table structure and are not accessible to users with disabilities.

(2) Charts/graphics: Use charts and graphics only when necessary and provide a text description before or immediately following the chart or graphic.

b. Externally Created References

If you are unable to supply the ADS Editor with a URL, you must send a Word or text file so that M/AS/IRD can scan it in. Obtain Word or text versions of all external references and send them to M/AS/IRD. If you submit a PDF version, it must be Section 508 compliant. If the document is not compliant and you are unable to locate a Word or text version, you must supply M/AS/IRD with an e-mail address for readers to contact if they cannot access the document.

See mandatory reference, [36 CFR 1194](#), Electronic and Information Technology Accessibility Standards.

Consult the following Web sites for more information on Section 508:

- <http://inside.usaid.gov/M/accessibility/> [This Web site is available only to those with access to USAID’s intranet.]
- <http://www.section508.gov/>

C.3 Forms

Effective Date – 01/29/2002

In accordance with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act, when electronic forms are used, the form must allow people using assistive technology to access the information, field elements, and functionality required for completion and submission of the form, including all directions and cues. (See mandatory reference, [36 CFR 1194](#)) If your ADS material refers to a form, you must obtain a Section 508-compliant version of the form.

Submit new and revised AID forms to M/AS/IRD for clearance. (See [ADS 505](#), Forms Management Program, and Part II of this document, [ADS Clearance Process](#))

C.4 Exceptions to the Format Requirements

Effective Date – 01/29/2002

There are three exceptions to the ADS format requirements:

a. Prior Guidance. Some old AID Handbook sections included in the ADS have not been converted to the standard format required by the Agency. Handbook authors must format these old sections and incorporate them into the applicable functional series as time and resources permit.

Similarly, authors of ADS chapters issued or in process before March 31, 2000, must convert the chapters to plain language and the standard format as time and resources permit. (See mandatory reference, [Presidential Memorandum on Plain Language](#)) Additionally, when revising mandatory references and additional help documents, you must write them in plain language.

b. Interim Updates. Interim Updates issued as Policy Notices and Policy Cables have a required format. Policy Notices and Policy Cables must include the effective date of the new or revised material, a statement about what the material replaces, if applicable, and which ADS chapter it will be incorporated into. (See [ADS 504](#) for Notice information and [ADS 549](#), Telecommunications Management, for cables.)

c. Mandatory References and Additional Help. You may format internally created references to best meet your needs. However, you must adhere to the technical formatting and Section 508 requirements in Section C above and write them in plain language.

Part II: ADS Clearance Process

Part II provides a step-by-step guide to the ADS clearance process and addresses the roles of both authors and clearing officials.

Section A. Authors

A.1 Required Clearance Process for ADS Material

Effective Date: 06/01/2007

Authors must obtain clearance for all new, substantively revised, or canceled material before issuance. ADS material includes chapters, terms and definitions, USAID-created mandatory references, AID Forms, Acquisition & Assistance Policy Directives (AAPDs), Policy Notices, Policy Cables, and AID Handbook changes. You must also obtain clearance for documents created by another Bureau/Independent Office or by a contractor if you want to include them in the ADS. Only direct hires may send ADS material out for clearance.

Additional help documents do not require ADS clearance, but you must send them to M/AS/IRD for review before issuance. However, if an additional help document needs to become a mandatory reference, it must receive ADS clearance.

Note: The Office of Inspector General (OIG) “reviews and comments but does not clear” on ADS material relating to the specific topics listed in the mandatory reference, [Clearance List for ADS Material](#).

Please note that the Office of Equal Opportunity Programs (EOP) does NOT provide its ADS material to the unions for review and comment before sending it out for ADS clearance.

Are there exceptions to the ADS clearance process? Yes, see [Part II, Section F.1](#) of this document.

There is only one clearing official per Bureau/Independent Office. If, however, due to time constraints or leave, an ADS clearing official must nominate, in writing, another USAID employee to act as his or her Bureau’s/Independent Office’s clearing official and send it to ads@usaid.gov. Please see Part II, Section B(1) of this document for more information.

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 this instance) for the ADS material for her Bureau/Independent Office.

The primary clearing official is ultimately responsible for providing a clearance response and so must communicate with the designated clearing official.

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

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A.2 How Do I Obtain Required Clearances?

Effective Date: 06/01/2007

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 nominates, in writing, a different individual to clear that document on their behalf.

As an author, you must

- a. Check the clearance list.** Before distributing material for clearance, contact M/AS/IRD for the most recent [Clearance List for ADS Material](#). Those Bureaus/Independent Offices listed in the first section (“Always Required”) of this mandatory reference must be given an opportunity to review, comment, and clear the 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. The author must review the second section and send material to the appropriate Bureau/Independent Office.
- b. E-mail your clearance request.** Provide draft ADS material to clearing officials and solicit clearances by electronic means. If appropriate, also attach new and revised external references for clearing officials. (See [Sample E-Mail Requesting ADS Clearance](#))

 - **Global address list** - You may use the global address list called “ADS Clearance Mail List” to capture all of the “always required” clearance points. If you use this global address list, you *must also* remember to check the “sometimes required” section of the mandatory reference, [Clearance List for ADS Material](#), for additional clearing officials.
 - **Read receipts** - You *must* obtain a “read receipt” or an e-mail response from each clearing official (see also [Section C.1](#)). You must print and keep these read receipts for your ADS clearance package.

Read Receipts

Here's how:

When you are composing your e-mail message in Outlook,

- Click on the Options button at the top of the message.
- Under "Voting and Tracking Options" check the box next to "Request a read receipt for this message."
- When the recipient of your e-mail opens the message, you'll get an e-mail that tells you what day and time they've opened it.
- *Print this out.*
- Include this with the clearance package that you send to M/AS/IRD.

- **Subject line** - Type "*ADS Clearance Requested*" at the beginning of your e-mail subject line. This information helps the clearing officials know what you're sending. (See [Sample E-Mail Requesting ADS Clearance](#))
- **Time frame** - Counting from the day *after* you send out the draft with a request for clearance, allow clearing officials a **full 10 working days** to clear. State the response deadline in your e-mail.

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.

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.

- **Clear direction** - Indicate in your request for clearance that clearing officials have the option to do one of the following in writing by the clearance deadline:
 - Advise that they clear the material;
 - Advise that they cannot clear until their **substantive** comments are resolved (they must include their comments and clearly state that they are substantive);

- Advise that they clear the material and are including **non-substantive** comments or suggestions for your consideration;
 - Advise that clearance by that Bureau/Independent Office is not required or is not applicable; or
 - Request additional time.
-
- **Description of New Policy** - Include a brief description (for example, bullet points) of the new or revised policy/procedure that you're asking them to clear. You may also use the **strikeout**, **highlighting**, and **underlining** commands to show proposed changes in your document.

Section B. Clearing Officials

B.1 Clearing Officials' Responsibilities

Effective Date – 06/01/2007

Clearing Bureaus/Independent Offices must designate and inform M/AS/IRD of a single contact person to respond to requests for clearance. (Send the contact person's name to the ADS mailbox at ads@usaid.gov.) If a clearing official changes, the Division Chief or Director of that Bureau/Independent Office must notify M/AS/IRD of the change in writing via e-mail at ads@usaid.gov. This person, the clearing official, must ensure that the appropriate personnel analyze clearance drafts. This consists of consulting with all appropriate Bureau/Independent Office, *and* Mission staff.

Clearance documents constitute the official record. It is therefore imperative that all clearances be provided in writing. M/AS/IRD retains these official records and may be asked to provide them to Agency officials at a later date. As a clearing official, you must be prepared to be an active participant in the process detailed below.

As a clearing official, you must not delete e-mails requesting clearance before reading them. If you delete clearance requests before reading, M/AS/IRD will require that a different individual in that Bureau/Independent Office be given clearance responsibility.

As a clearing official you must

- a. **Review** ADS material for Agency compliance/conformity with policies and practices that have broad applicability to the entire Agency.
- b. **Provide comments and suggestions** primarily to substantive issues, rather than routine editing. You may recommend editorial changes if important for clarity. (ADS 101 is an exception to this part of the clearance process; see [Part II, Section F.1](#) of this document for details.)
- c. **Deliver one of the following responses** to the author by the clearance deadline:
 - Advise that you clear the material;
 - Advise that you cannot clear until your **substantive** comments are resolved (you must include your comments and clearly state that they are substantive);
 - Advise that you clear the material and are including **non-substantive** comments or suggestions for the author's consideration;
 - Advise that clearance by your Bureau/Independent Office is not required or is not applicable; or
 - Request additional time.

Do not send comments without stating whether you clear or not. Authors may not proceed unless they have your clearly stated clearance.

d. **If the material is sent out again, deliver** one of the responses specified in paragraph c above to the author within five business days. Your review is limited to the part that has changed.

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

- 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.
- 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.

e. **Designate an alternate clearing official** if you will be away from the office for three days or longer. Please use the Out of Office Assistant feature. This Outlook feature will let ADS authors know that you are out of the office and direct them to your Bureau/Independent Office's backup for the ADS clearance process.

Out of Office Assistant	
Here's how:	
1. Before you leave the office	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Click on the Tools menu at the top of your Outlook screen.• Click on Out of Office Assistant.• Click on the button that says "I am currently Out of the Office."• Add text to the Auto Reply box, e.g., "I will be out of the office until April 23, 2008. In my absence, please contact John Doe for ADS inquiries and Jane Doe for all other matters."
2. When you return to the office	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Click on the Tools menu at the top of your Outlook screen.• Click on Out of Office Assistant.• Click on the button that says "I am currently In the Office."
	or
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• If a pop-up box appears in Outlook when you return to the office, click "yes" to turn off the Out of Office Assistant.

If you neglect to indicate your ADS back-up in your Out of Office e-mail, and if you don't respond by the clearance deadline, your Bureau/Independent Office will forfeit its right to clear on that material. Clearing officials must indicate either who to contact for *all* issues (*including ADS issues*) or who to contact for specifically ADS issues.

Additional obligations of clearing officials:

If you have set your Outlook e-mail system to "Never send a response" to requests for read receipts, the author is left without a read receipt and does not know if you've read the clearance request. In this case **it is your responsibility to send the ADS author an e-mail letting them know that you have read their e-mail.**

If you nominate someone else in your Bureau/Independent Office to clear a particular document on your behalf, provide written confirmation of this during the clearance process to M/AS/IRD at ads@usaid.gov.

Section C. Authors and Clearing Officials

C.1 What If a Clearing Official Does Not Respond?

Effective Date – 07/01/2004

When sending material out for clearance or re-clearance, if you, the author, do not receive a read receipt or a response from a clearing official at the end of three full working days, contact the clearing official and ask them to answer your e-mail. Resend your e-mail if they did not receive it the first time.

Once you have all your read receipts and any responses, including your documented follow-up with any non-responders after three business days, you may proceed with preparing your material for issuance. You must include a read receipt, documented follow-up, or response from each clearing official as part of the AID Form 3-252 (Directives System - Issuance Request) package.

C.2 How Do Authors Respond to a Clearing Official's Comments?

Effective Date – 06/01/2007

a. If you receive substantive comments from clearing officials

You must respond to *all* substantive comments. You must either

- Incorporate comments into your material, if appropriate. You must then re-circulate substantively revised material to all 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' review is limited to that part which has changed. (Please refer to the scenarios on page II_28 for more information on this point.)
 - Purely editorial revisions do not require another clearance.

or

- Contact the clearing official for written agreement if you are not going to incorporate all comments. (For example, sometimes you may agree to wait to incorporate comments until the next revision of the document.)

b. If you receive non-substantive comments from clearing officials

If comments are purely editorial in nature, or if they are included as suggestions only, you may choose whether to incorporate them. Editorial changes do not require further clearance.

C.3 How Are Differences and Disputes Between Authors and Clearing Officials Resolved?

Effective Date – 01/01/2005

Differences

While authoring 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. Include documentation (e-mail or memo) from all parties proving that final resolution has occurred.

Disputes

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 or him 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 for M/AS/IRD.

Section D. M/AS/IRD and Authors

D.1 What Is M/AS/IRD's Role in the ADS Clearance Process?

Effective Date – 07/01/2004

The M/AS/IRD Division Chief, or delegate, must review and approve all cleared, final ADS material before issuance. In addition to its role as the approving Bureau/Independent Office, M/AS/IRD

- Ensures that all appropriate clearing officials are contacted;
- Informs the author of any omitted clearing official;
- Reviews the document (**this includes additional help documents and documents created by contractors**) for grammatical errors and adherence to ADS style and format and makes constructive suggestions in the interest of improving the document;
- May identify duplicative or conflicting policy; and
- Maintains the official list of required clearances containing the name of a contact person for each clearing Bureau/Independent Office, and circulates changes to the list for informational purposes. (See [Clearance List for ADS Material](#))

D.2 How Do I 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.

D.3 Do I Have to Document Clearances?

Effective Date – 07/01/2004

Yes. You, the author, must maintain documentation showing all responses and clearances received from clearing officials. Documentation includes

- Your original request for clearance,
- Read receipts,

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

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- Documented follow-up with non-responders after three business days,
- Clearing official comments,
- Written explanation of actions taken, and
- All supporting documentation.

You must include these documents in the final issuance request package that you send to M/AS/IRD. (See Part III of this document, [ADS Issuance Process](#))

Section E. Editorial Changes, Conforming Amendments

E.1 Must Editorial Changes and Conforming Amendments Be Cleared?

Effective Date: 10/15/2002

No, editorial changes and conforming amendments do not require ADS clearance.

a. Editorial changes. Editorial changes are simple clarifications that DO NOT alter the substantive meaning of the 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 hyperlinking additions. The author must complete the first page of an AID Form 3-252, Issuance Request, and send it to M/AS/IRD.

b. Conforming Amendments. Conforming amendments are policy that does not require 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 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.

You must complete the first page of an AID Form 3-252 and send it to M/AS/IRD to have conforming amendments issued.

For issuance, the author must create a Policy Notice and submit it to M/AS/IRD for issuance. This Policy Notice does not require ADS clearance. (See [ADS 504](#) for information on Notices and [Sample Policy Notice Issuing New or Revised ADS Material](#).)

(Note: Substantive changes are changes that alter the meaning or intent of the policy or procedure.)

Section F. Exceptions

F.1 Are There Exceptions to the ADS Clearance and Issuance Process?

Effective Date – 08/21/2006

Yes. A description of current exceptions to the ADS clearance process and instructions on how to obtain an exception follow:

a. Current Exceptions

(1) Administrator: Administrator-issued policy: The Administrator or Deputy Administrator may issue guidance, which is incorporated into the ADS as a conforming amendment.

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.

The Administrator's Notice or Policy 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.

(2) BTEC: Business Transformation Executive Committee (BTEC) decisions that require changes to the ADS are subject to intensive and high-level Agency review, and therefore are granted an exception to the regular [ADS clearance process](#). The responsible Bureau/Independent Office must complete an AID Form 3-252, indicate that the changes were approved by the BTEC, and attach documentation of the BTEC approval. The Assistant Administrator, Bureau for Management, must sign the AID 3-252. Authors should send draft BTEC Notices and any related ADS material to ads@usaid.gov for review before issuance.

(3) ADS 101: Clearing officials may submit only editorial changes during the ADS clearance process for ADS 101, Agency Programs and Functions. You may not request substantive changes during this period. Substantive changes to ADS 101 can only be made in accordance with the procedures outlined in ADS 102, Agency Organization (see [ADS 102.3.10](#)).

(4) ADS 103: ADS 103, Delegations of Authority, is exempt from the ADS clearance process. The author of this chapter must submit changes and a completed AID Form 3-

252 to M/AS/IRD for review before M/AS/IRD will issue the revised chapter. (See Part III of this document, [ADS Issuance Process](#))

ADS 101, Agency Programs and Functions, and **ADS 103**, Delegations of Authority, are exceptions to the ADS issuance process. These chapters explain the functions and responsibilities for each Bureau/Independent Office and the Agency's delegations of authority. Since these chapters are updated frequently, there is no need for the authors to issue Agency Policy Notices every time they are updated. However, changes to these chapters will be posted to the ADS Web site within 6-11 days of completion of the final version. These authors are still required to submit the electronic documents to M/AS/IRD for final review and must submit the required hardcopy documentation as cited in Part III, Section 1 to M/AS/IRD.

(5) AID Forms: If a revision to an AID Form does not change any policy or procedure, send proposed changes to the M/AS/IRD Forms Manager (see [ADS 505](#), Forms Management Program). If the form creates or revises policy or procedure, you must also distribute it for ADS clearance.

(6) AAPDs: Acquisition and Assistance Policy Directives (**AAPDs**) that contain Agency-wide policy and procedure are issued as Policy Notices after going through the ADS clearance process. However, all AAPDs and Contract Information Bulletins (CIBs) are mandatory references for ADS 302, USAID Direct Contracting, ADS 303, Grants and Cooperative Agreements to Non-Governmental Organizations, and the AIDAR. M/OP posts all AAPDs and CIBs to the following Web site: http://www.usaid.gov/business/business_opportunities/cib/. If an AAPD does not issue new or revised Agency-wide policy or procedure, or if it is a conforming amendment, it does not need ADS clearance. To the maximum extent practical, author Bureaus/Independent Offices should place Agency-wide policy directives and required procedure in the body of the applicable ADS chapter and not in an AAPD or other reference. (See Part III of this document, **ADS Issuance Process**, for more information on AAPDs.)

(7) HR: The Bureau for Management, Office of Human Resources (M/HR) will use its judgment in deciding who will be involved in the development of its ADS policies and procedures (e.g., Administrative Management Staff (AMS)) and will document, in writing, such involvement for ADS records.

The entire list of ADS clearance officials does not clear on M/HR's ADS materials that require negotiation between USAID and the unions. However, the Office of General Counsel (GC), and, as appropriate, the Office of Equal Opportunity Programs (EOP), must clear M/HR's material **before** submission to the unions.

M/HR must also send material to M/AS/IRD **before** union clearance. (See [Part II, Section D.1](#), What is M/AS/IRD's Role in the ADS Clearance Process?) M/AS/IRD will return any comments to M/HR within 10 business days.

Once agreement is reached with the unions, M/HR will provide an advance copy of the materials to the designated ADS clearing official in LPA when the subject matter is within the scope of LPA responsibilities. The final materials will then be provided to M/AS/IRD for issuance.

M/HR must send the final material and clearance package, which includes the 3-252, to M/AS/IRD for issuance. (See Part III of this document, [ADS Issuance Process](#))

(8) USAID CFR's: All USAID Code of Federal Regulations (CFRs) published in the Federal Register are exempt from the regular ADS clearance process. However, GC and any other appropriate Bureau/Independent Office must clear the regulation. Externally issued mandatory references, such as statutes, regulations, and Executive Orders, are also exempt from the clearance process.

(9) FAM/FAH: [Reserved] At this time, the FAM and the FAH are not processed through the ADS.

(10) Acronyms/Bureau/Independent Office Symbols Update: If an ADS chapter or mandatory internal reference has an update to acronyms or office symbols (due to a reorganization), then the material does not need to go out for clearance (even though it is a substantive change) because it is considered a conforming amendment. The ADS Editor will work with the ADS author to effect the change. However, the authors still must complete the first page of the **Automated Directives System (ADS) Issuance Request Form – AID Form 3-252** where it requires signatures.

(11) Two **ADS 501** references (**ADS Chapters and Authors List** and **Clearance List for ADS Material**) and one **ADS 504** reference (**Authorized Senders for Agency Notices**) are updated frequently as conforming amendments. M/AS/IRD e-mails updated versions of these references to specific lists of users and posts them to the ADS Web site within 6-11 days of the change.

(12) Conforming amendment

Policy that does not require 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 ADS chapters or internal mandatory references;
- Incorporates written policy issued by the Administrator; or
- Amends or adds one Bureau's/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)

b. How to Obtain an Exception

If the Director of an author Bureau/Independent Office needs to deviate from the existing ADS issuance process, he or she must request an exception from the Division Chief of M/AS/IRD by submitting a memorandum and completing an AID Form 3-252.

Appendix A

Sample E-Mail Requesting ADS Clearance

Below is an actual e-mail requesting ADS clearance that was sent out in 2007. It is a strong example of a clearance e-mail because it contains the correct subject line information, it describes for the clearing officials the major changes to the material, and it provides the clearing officials with the proper choices for responding. The deadline for responding to the clearance request is also clearly stated more than once.

From: **Thomas Author**
Sent: **Tuesday, February 20, 2007, 8:16 AM**
To: **ADS CLEARANCE Mail List (M.AS.IRD) (USAID)**
Cc:
Subject: **ADS Clearance Requested by COB 03/06/2007 – ADS 501, The Automated Directives System**

ADS Chapter 501, The Automated Directives System, has been revised. This chapter provides the guidelines for USAID's directives program. (Please note: This revision does not change the ADS chapter format.)

Summary of changes:

- The chapter has been reduced to a summary of the essential points and highlights of key policies and procedures.
- Three internal mandatory references and two additional help guides have been separated out from the chapter. Each of these references is aimed at a specific audience; therefore, some information may be repeated in more than one place. Our goal was to make each manual a user-friendly guide to a specific topic.

Please review the attached revision and respond by COB **March 6, 2007**, with

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

I encourage you to ask ADS authors within your Bureau/Independent Office to also review and comment on the material. Please keep in mind that unless you have designated someone else, all comments and clearance must come from you, the clearing official.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Thank you.

Part III: ADS Issuance Process

This Part details the final steps that you, as an author, need to take to issue your ADS material.

1. Submitting Your ADS Material to M/AS/IRD for Issuance

Effective Date – 07/01/2004

Once you receive all required ADS clearances and resolve any differences with clearing officials, you must submit the following material to M/AS/IRD:

a. Hardcopy material

- A completed hardcopy of **AID Form 3-252**, USAID Directives System – Issuance Request. Include a detailed description of new material, changes, deletions, or additions on or attached to the form. Include clearance information on page 2 of the form. Attach the following to the form:
 - A hardcopy of the final, cleared ADS material, and
 - All hardcopy documentation related to ADS clearances, including all read receipts, documented follow-ups, clearing official comments, written explanation of actions taken, and any supporting documentation.

b. Electronic material through ads@usaid.gov

- An electronic copy of the cleared ADS material. (You should copy your Bureau's/Independent Office's ADS Directives Coordinator on this submittal e-mail.) Remove all strikeouts and highlights. For security reasons, also remove all MS Word track changes and comments before sending your final version to M/AS/IRD. Track changes and comments are a security risk because anyone can view them.
- External references:
 - **For the ADS Web site**, send the Web address or an electronic version of the document.

2. What Happens After You Submit Your Material?

Effective Date – 07/01/2004

The following steps occur *after* the author submits the required documentation detailed in Section 1 to M/AS/IRD:

- a. M/AS/IRD reviews the cleared 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 any appropriate changes and sends the material back to M/AS/IRD for publication.
- c. M/AS/IRD prepares the final version as follows:

For a chapter, M/AS/IRD

- Adds the Revision date or New Chapter date at the top right corner of each page (see [Part III, Section 3](#)).
- Adds or updates the Effective Date underneath each section or policy header.
- Sets page breaks.
- Creates an automatic table of contents with links to each section.

For a reference, M/AS/IRD

- Adds the Revision date or New Reference date in the header in the top left corner of the first page (see [Part III, Section 3](#)).
- Adds the Effective Date on the first page.
- Sets page breaks.

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.

3. Effective Dates, Revision Date, New Issuance Date, and Origination Date

Effective Date: 08/21/2006

- a. **Effective Dates** are the dates when specific sections within an ADS chapter *become effective*. The author provides these dates to M/AS/IRD on the AID Form 3-252. M/AS/IRD will insert the new Effective Date under each section or subsection header of a chapter that was substantively revised (that is, marked with an asterisk). See [Part I, Section A.4](#) of this document for a discussion of asterisks.

Additionally, each internal mandatory reference has an Effective Date. This date will appear in the lower right corner of the cover page of the document.

- b.** The **Revision date** appears in the upper right corner of each page in a revised ADS chapter and in the lower right corner of the cover page in a revised internal mandatory reference or additional help document. This is the date that M/AS/IRD *finalized the document for distribution*. This date is **not** an effective date for policy directives or required procedures in the document.
- c.** The **New Chapter/New Reference date** indicates the date M/AS/IRD finalizes a **new** chapter or internally created reference for issuance. The date appears in the lower right corner of the cover page and in the header on each page in a new ADS chapter, new internal mandatory reference or new additional help document.
- d.** The **origination date** is the date that the requesting official signed the AID Form 3-252 for the original chapter or reference. M/AS/IRD began to track origination dates in January 2002.

4. Two Ways to Issue Your Material

Effective Date – 07/01/2004

Here is the way to issue your ADS material:

Issue a **USAID/General Policy Notice** announcing its release, with the ADS chapter, mandatory reference, or additional help document attached. The following points apply to Policy Notices:

- Policy Notices may be issued any time after you receive the final, cleared version of your ADS material back from M/AS/IRD and you complete an AID Form 3-252.
- M/AS/IRD posts Policy Notices to the Notice database and distributes them on a *nightly basis* to every employee in USAID/W and to specific mailboxes within all Missions. All Notices sent to Missions are distributed separately within the Mission to Agency personnel.
- Within *6-11 days* of issuance as a Policy Notice, your material will be posted to the **ADS Web site**. See [Timeline: Four-Step Process and Issuing ADS Material](#) for the specific timeframes M/AS/IRD and LPA have allotted for linking and posting material to the Web.
- You may use the [Sample Policy Notice Issuing New or Revised ADS Material](#) as a template for writing your Policy Notice.
- Please state in the Subject line of your Policy Notice whether the issuance is a substantive revision, editorial change, conforming amendment, or reformatting and rewriting the chapter in plain language.

- See [ADS 504](#) for guidance on processing and sending Policy Notices to M/AS/IRD.

5. Issuing a Standalone Policy Notice (Interim Update)

Effective Date – 06/01/2007

If you have a short policy statement that is not yet in ADS format, you may issue it as a standalone Policy Notice. This vehicle is reserved for issuances that are particularly time-sensitive. You are still required to obtain ADS clearance (unless you request an exception in accordance with [Part II, Section F.1](#) of this document, or it is a conforming amendment) and submit a completed AID Form 3-252.

Once a Policy Notice is issued, M/AS/IRD converts it into an Interim Update (IU) to be placed on the ADS Web site. An IU is a temporary issuance. Within a year of issuance the author Bureau/Independent Office must either

- Convert the new policy to an ADS chapter or reference,
- Include it into an existing chapter or reference, or
- Have it expire on a specified date.

6. Issuing SBU Material

Effective Date: 07/01/2004

If the author believes his or her material is Sensitive But Unclassified (SBU), M/AS/IRD will post it to the intranet only (so that it is accessible only to USAID employees). It will not be posted to the ADS Internet site. For a definition of the type of information that falls into the category of SBU, see the [ADS Glossary](#).

Appendix A

Sample Policy Notice Issuing New or Revised ADS Material

Please note that this format must be adhered to when issuing Policy Notices. You must state if the ADS material is new, or what it supersedes, in the first part (first or second sentence) of your Policy Notice.

POLICY

USAID/General Notice
M/HR/PPIM/PP
mm/dd/yyyy

Subject: Issuance of new chapter, ADS 491, USAID Awards Program

This notice announces a newly created ADS chapter in the 400 Personnel Series. ADS 491, USAID Awards Program, supersedes Chapter 5 of Handbook 29 in its entirety. The new ADS chapter incorporates information on new awards approved since issuance of the handbook chapter, standardizes award amounts for annual awards, clarifies eligibility, and implements a new time off award.

Specific awards under the Agency's program are found in the mandatory reference, Descriptions of Incentive Awards, which is an attachment to this notice. This attachment contains a listing of individual awards with detailed information about their purpose, eligibility, approval steps, and type of recognition.

The new chapter and mandatory reference are attached.

Point of Contact: Inquiries regarding this notice may be directed to Joann Jones, M/HR/PPIM/PP, (202) 712-5048.

Part IV: Definitions

The terms and definitions listed below have been included into the Automated Directives System (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](#))

authority

An authority is the legally binding instrument that authorizes or constrains the policy and 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 Automated Directives System (ADS) is a standardized system comprising (1) USAID internal regulations, including 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; 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's/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. [\(Chapter 501\)](#)

directive

A written instruction communicating policy and/or procedure. 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. [\(Chapter 501\)](#)

editorial changes

Editorial changes are simple clarifications that **do not** alter the substantive meaning of the 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 date

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, 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 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](#))

hyperlink

A hyperlink is specially marked underlined and blue-colored bold 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. ([Chapters 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. [\(Chapter 501\)](#)

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 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 ADS. [\(Chapter 501\)](#)

Primary Responsibilities

The Primary Responsibilities section of an Automated Directives System (ADS) chapter is a list of the Bureau/Independent Office/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. [\(Chapter 501\)](#)

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 title page in an ADS chapter or internal mandatory reference or additional help document. ([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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