



USAID
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Subject Outlines/Codes

A Mandatory Reference for ADS Chapter 502

New Reference: 12/20/2006
Responsible Office: M/AS/IRD
File Name: 502mae_122006_cd46

Subject Outlines/Codes

Subject files consist of general file materials of incoming originals and outgoing record copies of letters, memoranda, telegrams, reports and materials involving a wide variety of subjects. They bring together documents relating to the same subject so that information can be easily found. The subject categories chosen as filing guides for USAID reflect the organization, policies, programs, and functions of the Agency. USAID subject files are arranged according to the Subject Outlines shown below.

There are two broad types of subject files:

- 1. Administrative subject files** – relating to housekeeping, staffing, and managerial operations.
- 2. Program subject files** – relating to the program activities of the Agency.

Under each of these are specific subject categories and subcategories. Of the 24 primary subject headings, seven pertain to **administrative subject files**. These include the following:

- **Administrative Management** [ADM](#)
- **Budget** [BUD](#)
- **Fiscal Accounting and Audit** [FIS](#)
- **General Services** [GRS](#)
- **Personnel** [PER](#)
- **Procurement and Contracting** [PRC](#)
- **Travel** [TRV](#)

Seventeen of the primary subject headings pertain to USAID program activities. These are further broken down into two subgroups:

A. Program Background, Support, and Development:

- **Economic and Financial Affairs** [ECF](#)
- **Information and Mass Communications** [INF](#)
- **Legislative and Legal** [LEG](#)
- **Loans, Guaranties, and Private Enterprise** [LGP](#)
- **Organizations, Committees and Meetings** [OCM](#)
- **Program Development, Evaluation and Research** [PRM](#)

B. Program Files:

- **Agriculture** [AGR](#)
- **Democracy and Governance** [DEM](#)

- **Education** [EDU](#)
- **Food for Peace** [FPC](#)
- **Health and Sanitation** [HLS](#)
- **Industrial Development** [IND](#)
- **Public Administration** [PUB](#)
- **Science and Technology** [SCT](#)
- **Social and Institutional Development** [SOC](#)
- **Training (for participants)** [TRG](#)
- **Transportation (as a sector)** [TRP](#)

The Subject Outlines provide the information needed to organize and correctly label official subject files. Even though subject files comprise roughly only twenty percent of all Agency files, knowledge of the Subject Outlines is indispensable in establishing and maintaining these files. The Subject Outlines are made up of subject file codes (e.g. EDU 12, PRC 4, ADM 8) with file classification captions such as Health Education, Administrative Management, etc., followed by a narrative description for each code and classification. Together, these comprise a system that provides offices with an effective method for filing and retrieving information.

Each subject outline (i.e., ADM, AGR) has an alpha numeric file group code (i.e., ADM-1, ADM-2, AGR-1, AGR-2), which provides primary and secondary breakdowns for subject file materials. These codes are subdivided into secondary breakdowns for more precise identification of subject content. Individual offices may subdivide subject categories further into tertiary or third levels of breakdown. Additions of new Subject Outlines may be authorized by the Agency Records Officer. Send requests for changes in subject categories to the Information and Records Division (M/AS/IRD).

How then are the Subject Outlines used to select the proper subject codes and classifications? To illustrate, suppose the record to be filed is the minutes of a USAID meeting on weed control. Browse through the listing of Subject Outlines and select the major subject area most likely to contain the topic, in this case Agriculture. Reading through the narrative descriptions leads to the file code and classification that encompasses weed control, which is **AGR 4 Crop Production**.

Future papers dealing with the same subject will be filed together in that folder. The file code AGR 4 will distinguish it from papers dealing with other agricultural subjects (e.g., AGR 2, AGR 6), all of which are grouped under the parent classification "**AGR Agriculture**".

Together, the files in the AGR group constitute a separate entity from the files in the other major subject groups, such as BUD (Budget) or PER (Personnel), providing for an orderly division of subjects within the office filing system.

An alternate means of finding the subject file code is to use the Index to the Subject Outlines. In the example on weeds, looking under "Weed Control" would have led

directly to AGR 4. Even looking under the entry "Meetings" would have led eventually to AGR 4, since the entry advises to look under the appropriate subject.

Remember, your office can further break down the codes to tertiary levels to suit your particular needs. For example, if your office deals with energy programs, you could subdivide the category **SCT 20 Energy** (i.e., SCT 20.1, 20.2, etc.) to subdivide the following:

- a. **20.1 for Geothermal Energy**
- b. **20.2 for Solar Energy**

In general, offices will select a few major subject codes that pertain to the program functions of the office, such as Food for Peace (FPC), Loans, Guaranties and Private Enterprise (LGP), and Transportation (TRP). In addition to subject codes that reflect the program functions of the office, almost all offices will have codes and classifications for files dealing with general administrative office matters, such as Administrative Management (ADM), Personnel (PER), and Budget (BUD).

Index to the Subject Outlines/Codes

The Subject Codes Index is a listing of the most common documents created by USAID users and it is intended as a guide where a particular document may be filed. Consider record values such as Legal, Fiscal, Administrative, and Program (historical) whenever faced with a decision of where to file official records. For example, if you work in the Office of the Chief Financial Officer and create a financial document, you are required to preserve such document for the period stipulated by the disposition schedules and this will take care of the Legal and Fiscal values. If the document relates to an Agency Program (i.e. Strategic Objective or Project), then an additional copy must be filed with the program files. In all cases, you may decide, in addition to those copies already filed, to keep an administrative file copy for reference purposes and you may use the Administrative Subject Codes as listed above.

The first column of the Index ("Subject" column) lists in alphabetic order each of the topics contained in the subject outline, along with synonyms and other terms under which information might be sought. The second column opposite these terms lists for each subject entry the file code symbol under which papers on that subject will be filed.

[Subject Outlines/Codes Index](#) (PDF)

Setting up Subject File Codes

File Group Codes

Primary subject outlines are identified by a 3-letter file code, such as "Agriculture" being coded as "AGR". The secondary breakdown, known as files group codes

or subject codes, are identified by the primary subject outline, followed by a numeric code (i.e., AGR 4) which further breaks the subject outline into other related areas. For example, "Crop Production," a subdivision of "Agriculture," is identified by the file group code "AGR 4."

The Subject Outlines/Codes cover subdivisions to the secondary level only. Individual offices may create tertiary level divisions. An example of a tertiary level file group code is HLS 7.2 or AGR 4.1

Use only the chapters in the Subject Outlines that pertain to your office. Set up a folder with a primary subject file group code for papers that don't fit into any of the secondary subjects or that relate to two or more of the secondary subjects. This makes cross-referencing between subdivisions within a primary subject unnecessary. If a paper involves more than one secondary topic in a primary subject file group, file it at the next higher classification level. Use secondary and tertiary breakdowns only if the primary subject has been used and there is a need to file 10 or more documents.

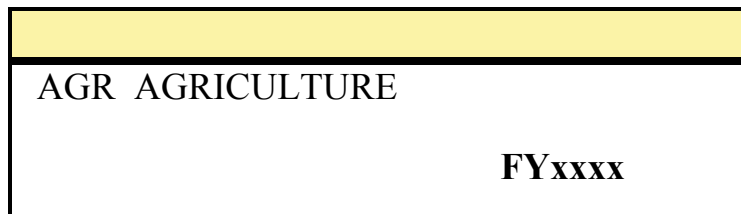
Folders

- a. Use the standard USAID Kraft file folders, square cut, scored to indicate label position.
- b. For rarely used subjects it may be necessary to prepare only a primary folder. All documents on the primary subject area will then be filed in this folder. The primary folder can be subdivided into secondary file group codes, as volume increases or user need dictates.

Labels

- a) Use pressure sensitive labels for subject files. Yellow-banded labels are required for official files. Working files, when kept, are labeled with green-banded labels.
- b) Type the file group code and title on the label directly below the colored band. Type them exactly as shown in the Subject Outlines in Appendix A. Subject files are cut off and started anew each fiscal year (type the fiscal year in the lower right corner) See the samples below:

Placement of Filing Codes on Label



<p>AGR 4 CROP PRODUCTION</p> <p style="text-align: center;">FYxxxx</p>

<p>AGR 4.1 Crop Production</p> <p>(WINTER WHEAT) FYxxxx</p>

Positions of Labels on Folders

The USAID filing system provides for standard placement of labels on folders. The primary label is placed in the left position, secondary label in the center position and tertiary label in the right position.

AGR AGRICULTURE FYxxxx	AGR 4 CROP PRODUCTION FYxxxx	AGR 4.1 CROP PRODUCTION (WINTER WHEAT) FYxxxx
<i>(FILES FOLDER)</i>		

Subject Expansion Files

Subject expansion files consist of all subject breakdowns given by individual offices beyond the categorizations taken from the Subject Outlines. These can include further subject breakdowns, such as the example "Winter Wheat" above. Expansion files may also include files broken down by country or numerical scheme, as well as by activities, organizations, or events. The Description of Records in the Subject Outlines may be used to provide guidelines for expanding classification. The basic requirements for subject expansion filing are:

- Show the file group code and title of the subject breakdown, on the top line of the file labels.
- Show the expanded heading, such as number, country, subject breakdown, or event, in parentheses on the second line. The expanded heading identifies a further subdivision of the main subject breakdown.

Cutting-off Subject Files

All subject files are cut off at the end of the fiscal year. Following this practice will create "blocks" of files by fiscal year, which facilitates research and later disposition. Subject files are generally kept for the current year, plus two prior fiscal years, although some subject files are kept longer. Consult the Records Disposition Schedule for specific retention periods.

Depending on available filing equipment, the cut-off file folders may be filed behind the current fiscal year subject files or moved to separate cabinets.

Classifying Documents to Be Placed in Subject Files

Marking

Mark papers for subject files in the upper right corner with the appropriate file codes from your office files plan. Chapter 3 of the Records Management Reference Manual provides guidance for the preparation of the files plan. When marking a category that has not yet been included in the files plan, consult the Subject Outlines.

Sorting

Separate official file documents from working file papers. Keep case file documents separate from materials for the subject files.

Assembling

Assemble all the papers to be filed within each primary file group code. Then, within each primary file group code, assemble all the papers to be filed within each secondary or expanded file group code. Then file the papers chronologically within each subject breakdown. Place the latest date on top. Related papers should be stapled or otherwise fastened together.

Disposition of Subject Files

When considering the disposition of Subject Files, see the USAID Disposition Schedules and look within the following chapters to find the best match for your particular record. Should you need further assistance, contact your assigned Records Management Client Analyst in the Information and Records Division (M/AS/IRD).

AID/Washington:

Chapter 1: [Records Common to Most Offices](#)

Chapter 2: [Records of the Administrator and Assistant Administrator](#)

USAID Missions:

Chapter 25: [General Records](#)

Chapter 26: [Project Assistance Records](#)

Note: The Records Management staff recognizes that this listing of Subject Outlines/Codes is a bit outdated and we welcome your input as to any recommended deletions, additions, or revisions. Please contact your [M/AS/IRD Client Analyst](#) with your comments, ideas, and recommendations.