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ADS Users Guide

***This is a new reference.**

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ADS Users Guide

This guide covers information about the ADS (Automated Directives System) from a user's perspective.

1. What Is the ADS?

Effective Date: 03/31/2000

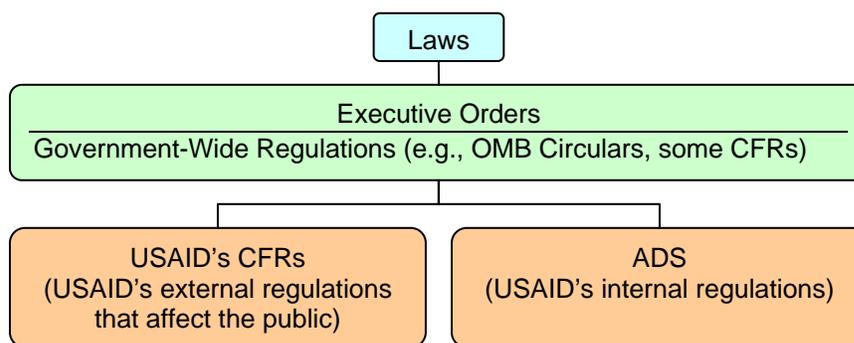
Definition

Every U.S. Government agency is required to have a directives program; the ADS is USAID's directives program. This program is intended to help Agency employees understand their responsibilities and achieve the Agency's development goals, consistent with applicable rules, sound policy principles, and management practices. The ADS provides the structure for managing USAID's internal regulations, which include policy directives and required procedures. Agency employees must adhere to the policy directives and required procedures identified in the ADS.

The ADS is distributed via CD four times a year and posted to the ADS web site on a real-time basis. See [Section 6](#) of this guide for complete details.

All Agency-level internally created policy directives and required procedures must be codified in the ADS. Agency-created policy directives and required procedures that apply to the public are codified in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR).

Outlined below is a simplified illustration of how the ADS fits into the *hierarchy* of laws, regulations, and policy:



The ADS contains USAID's internal regulations and links to relevant Federal statutes, Executive Orders (EOs), and externally created regulations, which are usually incorporated into ADS chapters as external mandatory references. The ADS links to these external references to reduce the need for ADS authors to write duplicative policy directives and required procedures. (See [EO 12861](#), Elimination of One-Half of Executive Branch Internal Regulations)

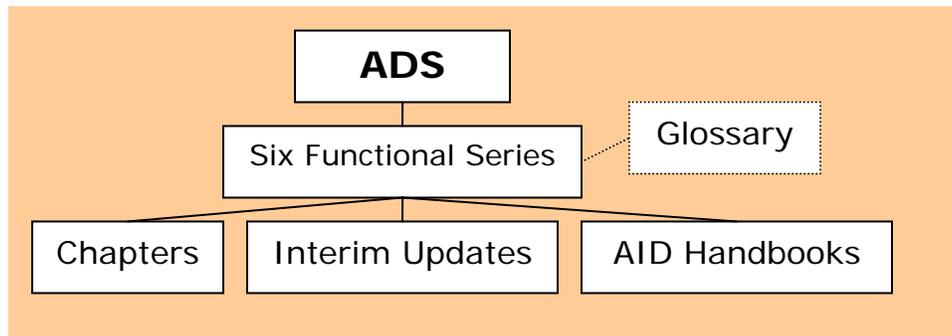
The ADS therefore encompasses the totality of USAID's regulatory body. Additionally, it includes suggested but not mandatory procedures and links to examples of best practices. The ADS does not generally include internal office procedures.

USAID must keep its directives system current. Therefore, if you notice that pertinent material is missing from the ADS or that existing material is outdated or incorrect, or if you notice a broken or incorrect hyperlink, contact the author of the ADS material listed in [the ADS Chapters and Authors List](#) or M/AS/IRD via e-mail at ads@usaid.gov.

2. Structure of the ADS

Effective Date: 03/31/2000

The *organizational structure* of the ADS is delineated in the graphic below:



The ADS is divided into six **series** organized by function.

- 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

Within each series you will find ADS chapters and the Interim Updates associated with the series.

An ADS **chapter** usually addresses a single policy area. It contains policy directives and required procedures as well as explanatory information on specific topics, and links to references.

Interim Updates are temporary policy directives and required procedures issued as Policy Notices.

Still relevant **AID Handbook chapters** contain policy directives and required procedures in the old Handbook format.

The **ADS Glossary** is an alphabetical list of every term defined in the Definitions (xxx.6) section of each ADS chapter. Hyperlinks to the chapter (or chapters) containing each term are provided after each definition.

3. Content of the ADS

Effective Date: 03/31/2000

A. ADS Chapters

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.

(We refer to chapters by their ADS chapter number, for example, Chapter 510 is referred to as “ADS 510”.)

Chapters are constructed in a simple, standardized format:

- xxx.1 Overview**
- xxx.2 Primary Responsibilities**
- xxx.3 Policy Directives and Required Procedures**
- xxx.4 Mandatory References**
- xxx.5 Additional Help**
- xxx.6 Definitions**

(1) xxx.1 Overview

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

(2) xxx.2 Primary Responsibilities

The Primary Responsibilities section includes brief, broad statements about the 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/Offices affected by the chapter, (2) position descriptions, or (3) policy directives and required procedures.

(3) xxx.3 Policy Directives and Required Procedures

Policy directives are clear, concise rules and regulations that USAID has identified as necessary to conduct its business. Required procedures identify more detailed courses of

action that employees must follow. These policy directives and required procedures are intended to help you understand and carry out your responsibilities and achieve the Agency's goals. You are held accountable for knowing and complying with this mandatory guidance.

Optional, helpful information and examples of best practices may also be included in this section to clarify USAID policy and help you carry out your 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 mandatory reference, [The ADS Process, Part I, ADS Authors Manual](#).

(4) **xxx.4 Mandatory References**

There are three lists of references in this section of the chapter:

- **External Mandatory References** – governing external statutes, Executive Orders, regulations, and authorities.
- **Internal Mandatory References** – mandatory guidance created and published by the Agency. Internal mandatory references carry the same weight as ADS chapters.
- **Mandatory Forms** – forms that are required by the policy or procedure in the chapter.

To access the documents in these lists, click on the [blue bold underlined hyperlinks](#).

(5) **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 Preobligation Requirements.
- The second list links to **optional forms**.

The external mandatory references and additional help documents appear in either alphabetical or hierarchical order.

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.

(6) **xxx.6 Definitions**

This final section contains the chapter's terms and their definitions. M/AS/IRD includes each chapter's terms in the ADS Glossary, which contains an alphabetical list of every term defined in the Definitions section of each ADS chapter.

When possible, the ADS uses the definition in the external authoritative or regulatory source and identifies the source.

Note: Some chapters are still in the old format, which is different from that described above. In the old format, policy was separated from "essential procedure" (indicated by the "E" subheader). The old format contains seven different sections, as opposed to the now standard six.

TIP: The Table of Contents links directly to each section in the chapter. On the web, click on the blue bold underlined link in the Table of Contents to go directly to the information you're looking for. On the ADS CD, click on the bookmarks to the left of the screen.

B. Interim Updates

Interim Updates (IUs) are temporary, mandatory guidance issued as Policy Notices. They are issued with the nightly Agency Notices (sent via e-mail to all employees). Once Policy Notices, Policy cables, or Administrator Memoranda that contain policy directives and required procedures are issued, M/AS/IRD converts them to IUs and posts them to the ADS web site (<http://www.usaid.gov/policy/ads/>) and the ADS CD.

Since IUs provide temporary guidance, they will either be incorporated into an ADS chapter or expire on a specified date. (See [ADS 504](#) for Notices and [ADS 549](#) for information on cables.)

C. AID Handbooks

Some old AID Handbook chapters are still valid. For information on which Handbook chapters are valid and a detailed list of which ADS chapters superseded those Handbooks that are no longer valid, click on the USAID Handbook Series button on the ADS web site (<http://www.usaid.gov/policy/ads/handbooks/>) or the ADS CD.

4. Mandatory and Non-Mandatory Guidance in the ADS

Effective Date: 03/31/2000

ADS chapters and references contain both mandatory and non-mandatory guidance. In the ADS, the Agency seeks

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

The **mandatory** guidance contained in the ADS encompasses two broad categories: (1) policy directives, which comprise clear and concise rules and regulations that the Agency has identified as necessary for the proper conduct of its business; and (2) required procedures, which identify more detailed courses of action that you must follow. You are held accountable for complying with mandatory guidance unless an exception is made in accordance with established procedures.

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

5. What Is Not in the ADS?

Effective Date: 03/31/2000

The ADS does not contain the following:

- Bureau/Office-specific policies and procedures (unless they affect those outside the office).
- Non-Policy Notices (that is, Information, Training, and Personnel Notices; schedules and acting appointments; non-policy cables; and other issuances that do not address new and continuing Agency policy or procedural matters).

- Annual Agency guidance, such as the Bureau Program and Budget Submission (BPBS) and Annual Report Guidance, which is issued to guide the Agency's annual programmatic and budgetary decisions.

Procedures for issuing Agency Notices and cables are described in separate chapters. See [ADS 504](#), Notices, for Notice information and [ADS 549](#), Telecommunications Management, for cables.

6. Where Can I Find the ADS?

Effective Date: 03/31/2000

You can find the ADS in two places:

- The ADS web site
- The ADS CD

A. The ADS web site

<http://www.usaid.gov/policy/ads>

The ADS web site is the online portal to the most current ADS information and news. Updated on a real-time basis, it is reachable via the Internet or Agency intranet.

Internet: From the USAID Internet home page (www.usaid.gov), click on **Policies & Procedures (ADS)** under **POLICY**.

Intranet: From the intranet home page (inside.usaid.gov), click on **ADS** in the **TOOLS** box.

The ADS web site houses the most recent versions of ADS chapters and internally created references, Interim Updates*, and links to external references. [***Note:** At this time, due to their sensitive material, some Series 500 Interim Updates are only available to USAID intranet users.]

From the ADS home page you can click on any of the six series buttons. Some series contain chapters grouped by subject matter.

For example, in Series 600 the chapters are grouped into two subject areas:

- *Budget (601-610)*
- *Financial Management (620-637)*

To view PDF files on the web or CD you must have Adobe Acrobat Reader version 5.0 or higher, available free from Adobe at <http://www.adobe.com>. When you download the reader, be sure to download the full version. This allows you to search PDF files.

Throughout each chapter there are hyperlinks, indicated in **blue bold underline**. Click on these links and you will be taken to the designated document or web page. To return to the chapter, click the back arrow on your browser.

When viewing a chapter or reference in PDF format, there are two ways to navigate: (1) Click on the blue bold underlined hyperlinks or (2) click on the bookmarks to the left of the screen if you want to go directly to a certain section within the document. Bookmarks function as a linked table of contents to the open document. Click on the + sign to expand a section to show its subsections. Use this feature to reach the subsections you're looking for. Click on the – sign to collapse the subsections back.

Links on the ADS Internet home page**<http://www.usaid.gov/policy/ads>**

The ADS Internet home page was recently redesigned to include links to the following key areas:

Red INFO box**[located at the top of the right-side navigation bar]**

- **What's New in the ADS:** Links to the “What’s New in the ADS” summary page, organized by functional series. This page is updated as new material is posted to the web. Previous months’ summary charts are also catalogued here. This page also highlights new initiatives and developments in the directives program.
- **About the ADS:** Links to a description of the ADS and its structure, with links to the ADS Times newsletter (intranet only), ADS training information (intranet only), and how to order the ADS CD.
- **The ADS Booklet:** A Guide to USAID’s Automated Directives System.
- **External Reference Links:** Links to external resources that are referenced in the ADS. These links will take you to the external home page of the agency responsible for the resource. *For example, the FAM [State Department Foreign Affairs Manual] link takes you to the official web site of the U.S. Department of State.*
- **Who To Contact:** Who to contact for specific types of ADS queries.

You can also find the above information on the intranet home page:

<http://inside.usaid.gov/ADS/>. Additionally, the intranet home page includes information about ADS training, the ADS Times, and Tips for ADS Authors.

Gray SEARCH box**[located on the right-side navigation bar]**

The Search function allows you to search either the entire USAID external web site or the ADS web site only. The “**Advanced Search**” link allows you to limit your search to an individual series within the ADS. The “Help” link at the end of the “Advanced Search” page leads to a search guide with tips and examples.

Blue buttons**[located in the center of the home page]**

- **ADS Functional Series:** Each series button links to a list of the chapters in the respective series.
- **USAID Handbook Series:** A detailed status list of the active AID Handbooks, with links to PDF versions of the documents.
- **ADS Glossary:** The entire glossary of ADS terms.

B. The ADS CD

The ADS CD is updated and issued quarterly, in January, April, July, and October. One copy is sent to all the Missions. In USAID/W, a copy is loaded to the CD tower for all USAID/W personnel to use.

If you need to receive a copy of the ADS CD each time it is updated, contact Tanya Broadnax, M/AS/IRD, tbroadnax@usaid.gov.

a. Instructions to access the CD

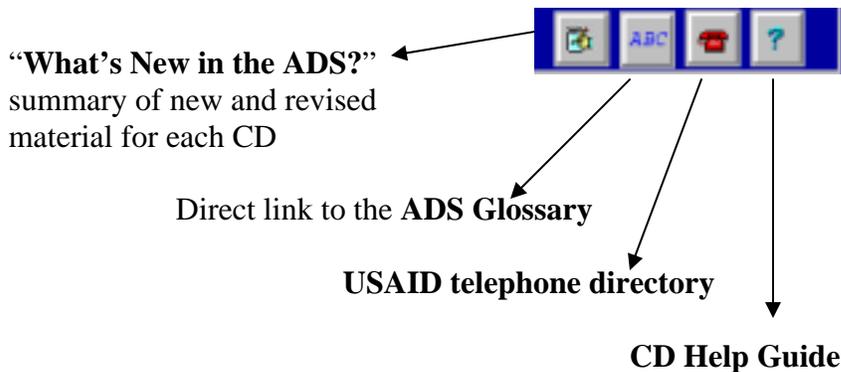
USAID/W: Contact the IRM Help Desk.

Missions: Contact your Systems Administrator.

b. CD Table of Contents

From the ADS CD Table of Contents you have direct access buttons to each series, Interim Updates, AID Handbooks, and the Resource Library.

The strip of buttons at top right of the Table of Contents screen (depicted below) connect to



7. Web vs CD

Effective Date: 03/31/2000

Is there a difference?

Yes. The web is updated real time, while the CD is updated quarterly. Therefore, you must use the CD in conjunction with any Policy Notices that are issued after the CD release.

The ADS CD is mostly used by Missions that lack reliable Internet access, and also by those who find the CD easier to search than the web. The CD uses the PDF *Find* and *Search* functions, while the web site uses the Infoseek© engine to search for material.

8. Finding Documents That Are Referenced in the ADS

Effective Date: 03/31/2000

There are three ways to access mandatory references and additional help documents on the ADS web site and three ways on the ADS CD.

a. On the web

1. To access externally published references that are associated with more than one series, click on the **External References** link in the red box on the ADS home page. Most references have two links –

- The first hyperlink takes you to an external home page of the issuing agency.
- The second hyperlink takes you to the particular sections that are referenced in the ADS. *For example: The FAR link takes you to the FAR home page at <http://www.arnet.gov/far/>. The FAR referenced in the ADS link takes you to a linked list of the specific parts and subparts referenced in the ADS.*

2. To access references that relate to a single series, click on the Series button and then select the **References** link in the blue box. Here you'll find an alphabetical list of those references (indicated as either MR [for mandatory reference] or AH [for additional help]) mentioned in the ADS.

3. To access individual references, click on the blue bold underlined links **within a chapter or reference**.

b. On the CD

1. To access externally published references that are associated with more than one series, click on the **Resource Library** button in the table of contents. Here you'll find an alphabetical list of these references.

2. To access references that relate to a single series, click on the series button in the table of contents and select **Series XXX References**.
3. To access individual references, click on the blue bold underlined links **within a chapter or reference**.

9. What's New in the ADS?

Effective Date: 03/31/2000

How do you find out about new policies and procedures in the ADS and keep up with changes in ADS material? There are two ways:

1. Check out the “**What’s New**” page on the ADS web site. This page is updated on a real-time basis as new information is posted to the ADS web site. Each month, M/AS/IRD lists the chapters, references, and IUs that were updated and released that month, along with a brief description of the new or revised material. If you use the ADS CD, click on the “What’s New” button. This chart contains all the updates for that CD.
2. USAID employees, monitor your nightly Notice e-mails for Policy Notices. New Policy Notices are converted to IUs and posted to the web. If you are looking for a Policy Notice that has not yet been converted, search the Notice database on the USAID intranet (located by clicking on Notices in the TOOLS box).

In a revised chapter or internal mandatory reference, an asterisk (*) in the left margin indicates which sections and paragraphs are new or substantively revised. If the entire chapter or reference is new or revised, a notation to this effect appears above the table of contents as opposed to asterisks throughout the document.

When a chapter or internal reference is revised, all old asterisks are removed and new ones inserted. On the ADS CD, asterisks are removed when a chapter or internal reference is updated, not each time the CD is released.

10. Other Useful References

Effective Date: 07/01/2004

If you are an ADS author, please see the following reference documents:

- [The ADS Process](#)
- [ADS Style and Format Guide](#)
- [Timeline: Four-Step Process and Issuing ADS Material](#)

If you are the head of an author office, please see [ADS 501](#) for an executive overview of the directives program, including information on the clearance process, issuance process, maintaining ADS material, and annual ADS certification.

11. Definitions

Effective Date: 07/01/2004

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

***additional help**

An additional help document provides non-mandatory guidance intended to clarify Agency policy and its application contained in the 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 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 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)

Automated Directives System Compact Disk (ADS CD)

The name of the compact disk (CD) containing the Automated Directives System (ADS). The ADS CD is one method of distributing USAID directives. (Chapter 501)

clearing official

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

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 (this means precisely that change specified in the external regulation; 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 office's procedures that do not have a substantial impact on any other Agency office. Authors must send M/AS/IRD an e-mail explaining how the change does not substantively impact another office. (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 office symbols, address and name changes, and hyperlink additions. (Chapter 501)

effective date

The date that specific policy directives or required procedures within an 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 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 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 and ADS CD. (Chapter 501 and 504)

***management official**

For the purposes of ADS Chapter 501, a management official is a Supervisor, Division Chief, Director, AA, or someone delegated by the Division Chief, Director, or AA to sign the USAID Directives Issuance Request Form (AID 3-252) and who has oversight authority for the 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 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 and concise statement of mandatory guidance that the Agency has adopted to guide the conduct of its business. Contained in documents prepared according to ADS procedures. (Chapter 501)

Primary Responsibilities

The Primary Responsibilities section of an Automated Directives System (ADS) chapter is a list of the offices/officials (titles, not names) with the key responsibilities for acting upon the policy directives and required procedures in the chapter. This section does not include (1) all Bureaus/Offices that are affected by the chapter, (2) position descriptions, or (3) policies and procedures. (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 upper right corner of each page in an ADS chapter. A revision date will appear at the top of the first page in an 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)