



# Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS) Development and Approval Process

A Mandatory Reference for ADS Chapter 201

Partial Revision Date: 08/02/2022  
Responsible Office: PPL/SPP  
File Name: 201mag\_080222

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## I. OVERVIEW

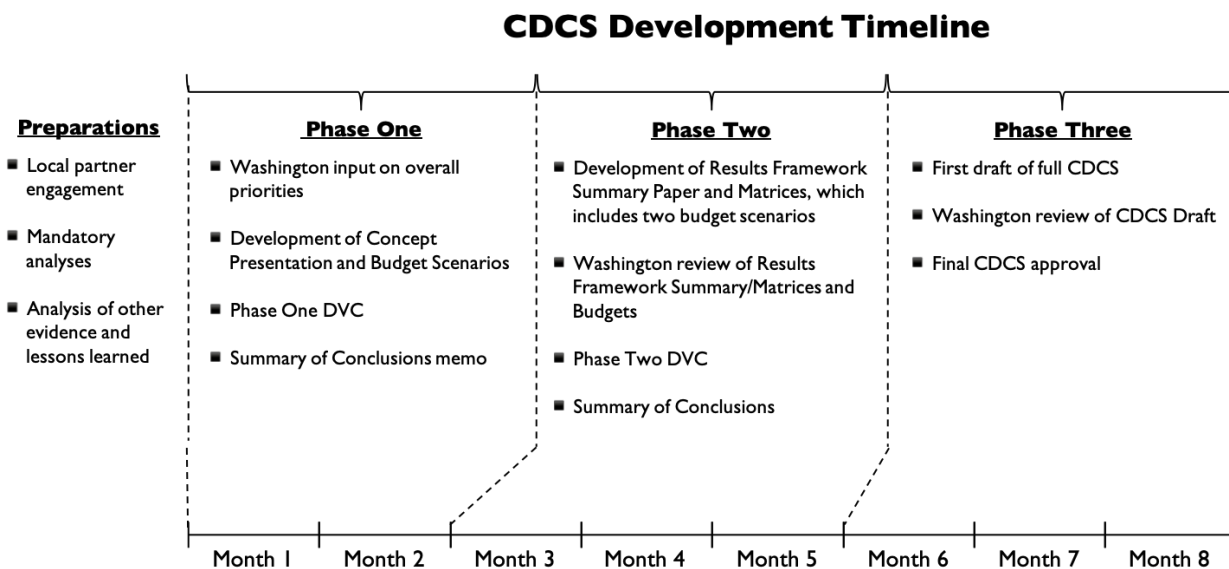
This mandatory reference to Automated Directive System (ADS) Chapter [ADS 201.3.2](#) describes the process for preparing for, developing, and approving a Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS). This process is designed to facilitate an iterative dialogue between each Mission of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and USAID/Washington that results in clear decisions and Agency endorsement of a Mission’s CDCS within a total time frame of eight months. To achieve this timeline, this process includes a series of time-bound milestones for Missions, as well as time-bound review periods for USAID/Washington. It also places emphasis on early collaboration and proactive dialogue so that when a Mission submits each deliverable for review, the substantive issues are limited to those around which the interested parties have not been able to reach agreement.

The CDCS process consists of three phases:

- Phase One – Initial Consultations and Parameter Setting (see **Section III**);
- Phase Two – Development of the Results Framework (see **Section IV**); and
- Phase Three – CDCS Preparation and Approval (see **Section V**).

In addition, Missions should initiate preparations prior to launching Phase One. (See **Section II** for additional guidance.)

The graphic below illustrates the major milestones and time frames associated with each phase of the CDCS process:



As described in **ADS 201.3.2.3**, this guidance articulates principles and requirements

that can be customized to all country contexts, including those with factors that contribute to a non-permissive environment. However, certain variations are appropriate, particularly for designated Missions that are operating in countries that will undertake a “strategic transition” during the strategy period (see [ADS 201.3.2.8](#) and [ADS 201mak](#) on this subset of countries). This Mandatory Reference describes variations applicable to Missions that will undertake a strategic transition in **Section VIII**. The Bureau for Policy, Planning, and Learning (PPL) must consult with respective Regional Bureaus to identify and designate countries in which a strategic transition will take place.

## **II. PREPARATION FOR THE CDCS PROCESS**

As described in **Section I**, the official CDCS process takes place on a prescribed timeline that should last no more than eight months. To maximize this compact process, Missions should initiate preparations prior to its official launch. Ideally, Missions should start preparing for the CDCS planning process after they conduct the mid-course stocktaking and/or the last portfolio review under their current CDCS.

During the preparation phase, which is sometimes called “Phase Zero,” Missions should do the following:

### **A. Engage Local Actors and Partners**

A core tenet of **sustainable development** is building the capacity of local actors/partners to chart their own development paths and implement and fund their own development solutions. To this end, Missions should meaningfully collaborate with local actors/partners in preparation for, and throughout, the CDCS process to create a CDCS that reflects a shared commitment to change. This engagement should include dialogue with the partner country government, the private sector, civil society, faith-based organizations, and others. As part of this engagement process, Missions should also make efforts to look beyond their traditional group of local partners to new collaborators, especially those with deep roots in the communities they support.

### **B. Begin Conducting the Three Mandatory Analyses**

Missions should begin to conduct the following mandatory analyses before the launch of the CDCS process to ensure their completion as early in the process as possible, but no later than during Phase Two:

- **Gender Analysis:** Missions must conduct a strategy-level gender analysis to provide insights about key gender gaps and identify entry points and opportunities for improving gender equality in their CDCS. Missions must later build upon this analysis during subsequent project and/or activity design processes. (See [ADS 201sam](#) and [ADS 201.3.4.4](#) on the project and activity-level gender analyses, respectively. For additional guidance on the strategy-level gender analysis [and other gender analyses in the Program Cycle], see [ADS](#)

## [205, Integrating Gender Equality and Female Empowerment in USAID's Program Cycle.](#))

- Tropical Forests and Biodiversity Analysis: Per Sections 118 and 119 of the [Foreign Assistance Act \(FAA\)](#), as amended, Missions must assess: (1) the actions necessary in their country to conserve tropical forests and biodiversity in their country/region, and (2) the extent to which the actions proposed in the CDCS meet the needs that were identified. For additional guidance on the tropical forests and biodiversity analysis, see [ADS 201mav, Foreign Assistance Act Sections 118 and 119 Tropical Forests and Biodiversity Analysis](#) and [Foreign Assistance Act Sections 118/119, Tropical Forests and Biodiversity Analysis Best Practices Guide](#).
- Climate Change: Per [Executive Order 13677](#), Missions must assess climate-related risks and vulnerabilities in all strategies and related funding decisions, and address them as appropriate. Missions must later build upon and/or update the strategy-level screening, as appropriate, during subsequent project and/or activity design processes. (See [ADS 201sam](#) and [ADS 201.3.4.4](#) regarding climate-related risk assessments during project and activity design, respectively.) At the strategy level, Missions must also assess opportunities to mitigate emissions of greenhouse gases and incorporate them as appropriate. Missions that receive funds attributable to Congressional directives for Adaptation, Clean/Renewable Energy, or Sustainable Landscapes have additional requirements. For supplemental guidance, see [ADS 201mat, Climate Change in USAID Country/Regional Strategies](#).

### **C. Assess Evidence and Lessons Learned**

Analyses play a significant role in ensuring that CDCSs are evidence-based and that Missions make strategic choices. Missions should be strategic when planning analyses, and set a clear analytic agenda for completing the mandatory analyses and other critical assessments to inform decision-making during the CDCS process. Because of the compact timeline associated with CDCS development and approval, Missions should identify and use available analyses and evaluations in lieu of new analyses wherever feasible. However, if Missions must conduct new analyses, they should identify the critical questions and information gaps that need answers to develop their CDCS. This agenda should include the following:

- Undertaking work to consolidate and synthesize evidence and lessons learned from a) the implementation of prior CDCSs (or other strategic plans, such as Integrated Country Strategies (ICS) and interagency strategic plans); b) available analyses and evaluations, including those commissioned by other donors or organizations; and c) past portfolio reviews, CDCS stocktaking exercises, and the monitoring and evaluation of existing projects and activities.

- Reviewing the latest reports from the U.S. Department of State on [Fiscal Transparency](#), [Trafficking in Persons \(TIP\)](#), and [International Religious Freedom](#), and the [Annual Report](#) of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) to determine their relevance for the new CDCS. Missions that are operating in countries listed on the Tier 2 Watchlist or Tier 3 in the [TIP Report](#) must address trafficking in persons in their CDCS. Missions that are operating in countries listed on Tier 1 (Countries of Particular Concern) and Tier 2 of USCIRF’s Annual Report and/or the Department of State’s Report on International Freedom must address religious freedom in their CDCS.
- Reviewing the President’s National Security Strategy (NSS); the Department of State-USAID Joint Strategic Plan (JSP); Administration-approved Regional and Sectoral Strategies; relevant Integrated Country Strategies; and Private Sector Engagement Policy, and Risk Appetite Statement (see [ADS 201.3.2.6](#) on Agency and inter-Agency strategies).
- Reviewing USAID’s Acquisition and Assistance Strategy to plan how to use co-creation and innovative procurement vehicles, and engage with local systems and new and underutilized partners, to advance sustainability under their CDCS.
- If considering the use of direct assistance to the partner government (G2G), conducting “Phase One” of the G2G risk assessment process, during which eligibility is confirmed and guiding parameters for the partnership with the partner government are established. (See [ADS 220, Strengthening the Capacity of Partner Governments through G2G Assistance](#) for additional guidance.)

### III. PHASE ONE: INITIAL CONSULTATIONS AND PARAMETER SETTING

#### A. Overview of Phase One

Phase One marks the official start of the CDCS process. Responsible Missions and Regional Bureaus should therefore initiate this process approximately eight months before they expect CDCS approval. The objective of Phase One is to enable a formal dialogue between Missions, relevant USAID Bureaus and Independent Offices in Washington (B/IOs), and interagency stakeholders, as relevant, that results in clear parameters for the CDCS process in Phase Two and Phase Three.

Guiding questions for this parameters setting phase are the following: 1) What does the Mission need to know to be able to most judiciously invest its time in preparing the CDCS?; and 2) What do Washington B/IOs need to know to support CDCS development? Phase One should take approximately two months.

Phase One has five major milestones:

- 1) Washington input on overall priorities (see **Section III.B**);

- 2) Development of a Concept Presentation, which includes two budget scenarios (see **Section III.C** on the Concept Presentation and **Section III.D** on the budget scenarios);
- 3) Washington review of the Concept Presentation (see **Section III.E**);
- 4) Delivery of the Concept Presentation via Digital Video Conference (hereinafter referred to as the Phase One DVC) (see **Section III.F**); and
- 5) A Summary of Conclusions (SOC) memo (see **Section III.G**).

During Phase One, the Mission -- through the responsible Regional Bureau -- should collaborate with designated Points of Contact (POCs) from all Pillar Bureaus, the Bureau for Management, the Office of Budget and Resource Management (BRM) and any other relevant B/IOs, in addition to the Bureau for Policy, Planning, and Learning (PPL). Designated POCs are responsible for coordinating input or feedback within their B/IO and ensuring that feedback submitted to the Regional Bureau reflects the B/IO's corporate position and not that of individual perspectives. PPL is responsible for maintaining the email list of POCs.

Phase One culminates in agreement between USAID/Washington and the Mission on resource parameters, priorities, and sectoral focus for the CDCS, and the Mission's plan for developing the CDCS, including expectations for Washington support. USAID/Washington's active engagement in Phase One is an essential part the CDCS process. In particular, it is important to note the following:

- Phase One presents the primary opportunity for Washington OUs, interagency stakeholders as relevant, and the Mission to engage and make decisions on issues of mutual interest.
- Concurrence reached in Phase One represents Agency endorsement of the Mission's parameters for CDCS development. The Regional Bureau documents this agreement in the Phase One SOC memo.
- While there will be an opportunity for further refinement during Phase Two, discussion of new sectors or priorities will not be possible absent significant changes in country context, policy, or funding levels.

## **B. Washington Input on Overall Priorities**

Phase One officially begins when the responsible Regional Bureau issues a [mandatory questionnaire](#) to relevant B/IOs (via the POC email list described in **Section III.A**) to solicit their priorities for developing a CDCS. B/IOs must respond to the questionnaire within five (5) business days. The launch date of the eight month CDCS process is the date that the Regional Bureau issues the questionnaire. The purpose of this



questionnaire is to gather input on USAID/Washington's priorities and expectations for Missions to take into consideration throughout CDCS development process. In some cases, the Regional Bureau may also convene a meeting to further discuss priorities with the Mission and relevant B/IOs.

### **C. Development of the Concept Presentation**

Based on the Mission's review of **contextual** data and analyses, evidence and learning from implementation, input from the partner government and local stakeholders about priorities, and USAID/Washington's input on overall priorities, Missions must prepare a Concept Presentation and submit the slide deck to the responsible Regional Bureau ten (10) business days in advance of the Phase One DVC.

The Concept Presentation slide deck must cover the following:

- A description of the most salient country context features that informed the Mission's strategic choices, including a donor snapshot, **an assessment of the country's development profile and needs**, a summary of the partner government's priorities, and other features critical to understanding the strategic operating environment;
- Priority choices or focus areas for the new CDCS **and how they will advance country-wide development**;
- The Mission's preliminary strategic approach and notional or illustrative programming that the Mission may undertake under each focus area;
- A description of how the vision and priorities for the new CDCS will advance overall foreign policy, economic, and development priorities of the U.S. Government (USG);
- A description of what is different about the new CDCS versus the current CDCS;
- A description of key lessons learned from implementation of the current CDCS (e.g., from evaluations, the mid-course stocktaking, learning activities, etc.), and how this evidence helped inform the Mission's vision for the new CDCS;
- A description of opportunities that exist for transition planning (see [ADS 201.3.2.8](#) and [ADS 201mak](#) for additional guidance) and what is broadly possible to achieve during CDCS implementation;
- The two budget scenarios (see **Section D** below), as well as staffing considerations for the CDCS;
- A short narrative regarding the two budget scenarios that is annexed to the presentation;

- Input from USAID/Washington and the Mission’s response;
- Any requests for support from USAID/Washington;
- The Mission’s timeline for preparing the CDCS; and
- The status of the mandatory analyses and plans for any supplementary analyses.

See the required [Phase One slide deck template](#) for additional guidance on the presentation. Also see **Section D** below for additional guidance on the two budget scenarios and associated narrative.

#### **D. Development of Budget Scenarios**

As described in **Section C**, Missions must develop two budget scenarios and an associated narrative for their Phase One Concept Presentation. Missions must develop these scenarios in alignment with Administration priorities and the Agency’s goals, and based on parameters provided by BRM. (Note: This collaboration between Missions, Regional Bureaus, and BRM on budget issues begins in this phase and continues throughout the CDCS process as budgetary issues or questions arise.)

BRM’s Parameters for Budget Scenarios: The Mission must contact BRM to request resource parameters for its two required budget scenarios. BRM must then provide historical funding levels for the Mission that include topline and sector allocations. BRM must base these historical numbers on a rolling average of budgets for three years calculated in one of two ways: either 1) Mission levels in the three most recent reports required by Section 653(a) of the [Foreign Assistance Act, as amended](#); or 2) Mission levels for two years under Section 653(a) and the most recent Congressional Budget Justification (CBJ). The second method is typically appropriate in cases in which the most recent CBJ significantly increased or decreased a Mission’s allocation. Once BRM, the Mission, and the responsible Regional Bureau reach agreement on which method to use, BRM must send the parameters to the Mission, with a copy to the Regional Bureau.

Budget Scenario One: Using the BRM-provided budget parameters, the Mission must then construct a “Scenario One” budget. This scenario should be consistent with BRM-provided historical levels and reflect Congressional Directives. In exceptional cases in which a Mission expects an extreme shift in budget resources during the lifetime of the CDCS, the Mission should work with BRM, PPL, and the responsible Regional Bureau to establish a budget scenario appropriate to its context.

Budget Scenario Two: Using the same BRM-provided parameters, the Mission must also develop a second budget scenario that reflects its optimal distribution of funding to address the strategic priorities of its CDCS. If the Mission is planning to transition out of one or more sectors, the Mission must reflect the resources associated with this

transition in its second budget scenario. This budget must embody the principles of a Zero-Based-Budgeting (ZBB) approach and therefore be irrespective of budget history, previous directives, mortgages, and pipelines. This scenario does not need to reflect current or anticipated Congressional Directives, as required for Scenario One.

Associated Budget Narrative: In addition to the two budget tables, the Mission must also develop a one-to-two paragraph narrative that describes the differences between the two scenarios, how each scenario reflects the Mission's objectives, and the trade-offs made in each. Missions must include this narrative as an annex to the Concept Presentation.

### **E. Washington Review of Concept Presentation**

The responsible Regional Bureau must share the Mission's draft Concept Presentation, which includes its two budget scenarios, with relevant B/IO POCs for feedback. These POCs should then distribute these documents within their B/IO and gather/consolidate internal responses. Feedback from Washington B/IOs should reflect the B/IO's corporate position and not that of individual perspectives. Washington B/IOs must provide input within five (5) business days and provide no more than five (5) comments that represent the most critical feedback. If a B/IO does not provide feedback within five (5) business days, it is presumed to have no comments.

The Regional Bureau must then collate and prioritize feedback on the Concept Presentation and, if necessary, coordinate discussions with relevant B/IOs to resolve any outstanding questions or issues. The Regional Bureau must share Washington B/IO feedback on the Concept Presentation with the Mission at least three (3) business days prior to the DVC.

Wherever possible, the Mission should discuss and/or resolve any comments submitted by B/IOs prior to the DVC. In the event that a Mission is unable to address or resolve a comment with the relevant B/IO during this period, the Mission should seek resolution during the DVC.

### **F. Phase One DVC**

The objective of the Phase One DVC is to achieve agreement on the parameters for the CDCS that were discussed during the Phase One process. The Mission Director (or designee) and the Assistant Administrator (AA) (or designee) for the responsible Regional Bureau must co-chair the DVC. The Regional Bureau must invite POCs from relevant B/IOs, as well as other stakeholders as relevant (which could include stakeholders from the U.S. Embassy and/or the U.S. Department of State).

During the DVC, the Mission must address required content described in **Section III.C**, which includes a summary of comments raised during consultations with B/IOs and the Mission's initial response. If the Mission was unable to resolve any comments prior to the DVC, it should seek resolution during the DVC.

Following the DVC, the Mission -- by working through the Regional Bureau -- must resolve any remaining unresolved issues prior to the finalization of the SOC memo. The Regional Bureau must submit issues that cannot be resolved through discussions between the Mission, Regional Bureau, and B/IO stakeholders to the formal Issues Resolution process described in **Section VIII** of this Mandatory Reference within ten (10) business days following the DVC.

### **G. Phase One Summary of Conclusions Memo**

The final step of Phase One is the drafting, dissemination and approval of the SOC memo. The cleared SOC represents Agency endorsement of the parameters that will govern the CDCS process. Generally, final approval should occur no more than ten (10) business days following the Phase One DVC absent an Issues Resolution process per **Section VII**.

The Regional Bureau must draft the SOC and obtain input from the Mission before it circulates the memo to B/IO stakeholders for clearance. The memo must discuss key decisions made during Phase One, including during the DVC. The SOC should be approximately three pages, excluding annexes, and should not be a transcript of the meeting, but reflect key decisions and follow-up actions. Specifically, the memo must address the following:

- Country Context: A brief description of the most salient features in the country context and the Mission's assessment of **pertinent USAID and third-party development data, as well as their** implications for the new strategy.
- Mission's Vision and Strategic Priorities/Choices: Agreement on the Mission's vision for the CDCS, as agreed to during the Phase One DVC.
- Washington Priorities and Feedback: Agreement on Washington priorities from the questionnaire, review of the Concept Presentation, and the Phase One DVC.
- Budget Scenarios: A summary of the Mission's two budget scenarios, including any discussions about requests for relief from Congressional Directives.
- Transition Plan: Agreement on the Mission's plan to evolve -- or transition -- its approach as **country-wide development progresses**. Per [ADS 201.3.2.8](#), for most USAID Missions, transition plans will be a long-term endeavor. However, for a designated subset of countries that show relatively advanced levels of **development**, Missions must plan for a type of transition planning called a "strategic transition" during the period of the CDCS itself (see [ADS 201mak](#) on Country Transition Planning and **Section VI** in this reference regarding CDCSs that reflect a strategic transition).

- Strategic Alignment and Policy/Strategy Considerations: A brief description of how the Mission's strategic vision and priorities will advance the USG's overall foreign policy, economic, and development priorities.
- Timeline and Duration of Strategy: Agreement on the duration of the CDCS and the preliminary timeline for completing each phase of the CDCS.
- Support from USAID/Washington: Agreement on critical support that B/IOs have pledged to provide to the Mission, including with regards to analyses/assessments and the development of the Results Framework.

The Regional Bureau must circulate the SOC to PPL, BRM, and relevant B/IO stakeholders for clearance. The Regional Bureau, in consultation with PPL, should determine which B/IOs should also clear the memo. All stakeholder B/IOs should receive an informational copy.

Clearing B/IOs must provide their clearance or offer any substantive comments within three (3) business days. If a B/IO does not respond within three (3) business days, the B/IO is presumed to have provided clearance by default. Once cleared, a Deputy Assistant Administrator (DAA) in the Regional Bureau, or his or her designee, provides final approval of the SOC and sends it to the Mission.

## **IV. PHASE TWO: DEVELOPMENT OF THE RESULTS FRAMEWORK**

### **A. Overview of Phase Two**

The objective of Phase Two is to gain Agency agreement on the approaches the Mission will use to advance **high-level, sustainable results** in its partner country given the parameters that were identified during Phase One. During Phase Two, the Mission finalizes its mandatory analyses; reviews other types of evidence and information, including from monitoring and evaluation; establishes its initial development hypotheses for each identified DO; prepares its Results Framework (RF) Summary Paper and Matrices based on these hypotheses; and outlines the next steps to prepare the full CDCS. During this phase, Missions also engage with stakeholders to discuss strategic choices and priorities with a view to ensuring that the CDCS reflects alignment with local priorities.

This phase includes four milestones:

- 1) Development of the RF Summary Paper and Matrices (see **Section IV.B**);
- 2) Washington review of the RF Summary Paper and Matrices (see **Section IV.C**);
- 3) The Phase Two DVC (see **Section IV.E**); and
- 4) The SOC memo (see **Section IV.F**).

During Phase Two, the Mission and responsible Regional Bureau should collaborate with relevant stakeholder B/IO POCs that have critical equities in the subject CDCS (in addition to PPL). The Mission should also consult with BRM and relevant B/IOs after drafting its RF to discuss any budgetary questions or concerns regarding the budget parameters that were identified in the SOC from Phase One.

During this phase, there should be no additional questions about the main priorities or sectors of focus in which the Mission is expected to work, since these decisions were approved in the Phase One SOC.

## **B. Development of the Results Framework Summary Paper and Matrices**

The Mission must develop an RF Summary Paper and a set of RF Matrices (about 10 to 15 pages total). The Mission must submit these documents to the responsible Regional Bureau for circulation within two (2) months after the approval of the SOC from Phase One.

The RF Summary Paper and associated Matrices define the CDCS' highest-order Goal and DOs that the Mission, in collaboration with its development partners, will work to address during the life of the CDCS. They also outline the Mission's initial development hypotheses regarding how and why, and under what conditions, it believes -- based on the given parameters and best available information -- that it will be successful in advancing each of its DOs. The RF Summary Paper and Matrices are the basis for the final draft of the CDCS. They also provide the organizing framework for the Mission-wide Performance Management Plan (PMP) that the Mission must develop following the CDCS process (see [ADS 201.3.2.15](#) on the PMP), as well as learning and adapting that occurs throughout CDCS implementation.

The RF Summary Paper must include the following:

- Articulation of the highest-order CDCS **Goal**;
- A high-level summary of the country context, including an assessment of how priorities of the government, civil society, and the private sector in the partner country align with or diverge from the Mission's **identified** approach;
- The rationale for selected DOs and Intermediate Results (IRs), including how each DO links to the CDCS Goal **and will further sustainable development**, how the DOs differ from the previous CDCS, and other factors as relevant that influenced their selection;
- An update to the Phase One schedule for completing planned analyses and evaluations; and
- An RF diagram that follows the guidance in [ADS 201.3.2.12](#).

The RF Matrices are DO-specific tables that include the following:

- Results statements;
- Development hypothesis statements and narratives;
- Illustrative indicators for IRs and sub-IRs;
- Linkages between results (e.g., among IRs and between the IRs and the DO);
- Relationship to the country context;
- Evidence sources, including evidence from implementation;
- Identification of strategic partners, including a description of how the Mission plans to engage with local institutions and new and underutilized partners to advance sustainability under the CDCS. Specifically, it should describe its approach to the following: 1) direct or sub-awards to new and underutilized local partners -- including government partners -- and locally-established partners; 2) co-creation with local partners and locally-established partners; and 3) capacity building of local partners and locally-established partners;
- Identification of donors and other development actors;
- A preliminary learning agenda with notional questions that arise from gaps in knowledge and evidence in the development hypotheses;
- Critical assumptions and risk factors;
- An annex that includes the Goal-Objective structure of the relevant U.S. Embassy's ICS, as described in [ADS 201.3.2.6](#); and
- This annex is a preliminary [Index of Existing and Planned Projects](#). Missions should only include this annex only if they anticipate developing projects during CDCS implementation (see [ADS 201.3.2.14](#)).

See the [RF Summary and Matrices Template](#) for additional guidance on both of these documents.

### **C. Washington Review of Results Framework Paper and Matrices**

The Mission must submit its RF Summary Paper and Matrices to the responsible Regional Bureau for review at least one (1) month before the Phase Two DVC. The Regional Bureau must then circulate these documents, along with an Issues Matrix, to designated POCs in PPL, BRM, and other B/IO POCs noted in the SOC for Phase One.



These B/IOs must then gather internal feedback and submit comments (cleared at the B/IO-level) to the Regional Bureau via the Issues Matrix. B/IOs must conduct this review within seven (7) business days. If a B/IO does not provide comments within seven (7) business days, the B/IO is presumed to have provided concurrence by default. The Mission should also consult with BRM to revalidate the budget scenarios. The Regional Bureau may wish to convene a meeting to review comments, or to ensure that the comments that were submitted represent the B/IO's corporate position.

Key questions that Washington B/IOs should consider in their review include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Does the CDCS Goal align with national priorities and support USG policy interests, and will it advance and/or contribute to **sustainable development progress in the country**?
- Do the CDCS development hypotheses present a plausible and feasible approach for advancing the Goal? Are they based on development theory, practice, literature, and experience? Do they explain why and how the proposed investments from USAID and others will collectively contribute to, or lead to, achieving the DOs?
- Has the Mission provided a rationale and management plan for any proposed integrated, or cross-sectoral, DOs?
- Do the IRs and sub-IRs logically contribute to the achievement of the DOs? Are the IRs focused, feasible, and measurable?
- Is the RF based on evidence and best practice?
- Do the learning questions reflect key knowledge and/or evidence gaps in the development hypotheses that underpin each DO?
- Do the identified assumptions and/or risks reflect factors that may affect the success of the development hypotheses that underpin each DO?

All reviewing B/IOs are required to classify their feedback as a “significant issue,” a “concern,” or a “general comment”:

- 1) “Significant issues” are issues that the Mission must address for the Agency to approve the CDCS (e.g., a serious concern regarding the logic or feasibility of a proposed strategic or technical approach, the alignment of the proposed approach with an Administration or Agency policy or strategy, or compliance with this guidance). Significant issues must include a recommended resolution, as well as proposed support that Washington B/IOs can offer, if appropriate, to address the issue.



2) “Concerns” reflect suggestions that would improve the clarity of the CDCS (e.g., an important technical clarification).

3) “General Comments” reflect positive feedback to commend Missions.

B/IOs may provide no more than five (5) comments total, including general comments. Regional Bureaus, in consultation with PPL, may also choose to reclassify their feedback if the content does not align with the definitions above. The Regional Bureau must inform reviewing B/IOs of any reclassification. PPL will mediate any disagreements.

The Regional Bureau should consolidate and review comments from Washington B/IO stakeholders within three (3) business days and flag any concerns regarding issues that were raised or the classification of issues as necessary. If needed, the Regional Bureau may have an extra ten (10) business days to facilitate further consultations between the Mission and relevant B/IOs.

Occasionally, disagreements between the Regional Bureau and other B/IOs may persist at the working level over a particular significant issue. In these cases, the B/IO that submitted the issue may re-submit it after obtaining the endorsement of the responsible DAA (or Director, if an Independent Office), who must affirm that the issue represents a significant priority of the B/IO. If, after this, agreement is still not possible, the Regional Bureau should add the issue to the agenda for the Phase Two DVC. Review of the RF Summary and Matrices, the consolidation of Washington inputs, and the resolution of issues should therefore take up to twenty (20) business days (e.g., seven (7) days for review, three (3) days to consolidate comments, and ten (10) days to resolve outstanding issues, if necessary).

#### **D. Phase Two DVC**

The objective of the Phase Two DVC is to achieve agreement on the approaches the Mission will use to advance its **strategic goal**. The Mission Director (or designee) and the AA (or designee) for the responsible Regional Bureau must co-chair the DVC. The Regional Bureau must invite B/IO POCs identified in the SOC from Phase One, in addition to PPL, BRM, and other stakeholders as relevant (which could include stakeholders from the U.S. Embassy and/or the U.S. Department of State). As resources permit, Mission leadership may opt to travel to Washington for the Phase Two DVC.

During the DVC, the Mission must present high-level information from their RF Summary Paper and Matrices, including the following:

- A summary of the parameters that were identified in Phase One that informed the Mission’s approach;

- The CDCS Goal and how it aligns with national priorities and supports USG policy interests;
- The overall RF, including what is new in terms of focus, partners, approaches, and/or responses to changes in context;
- DO-specific presentations that include the development hypothesis for each DO, how the selected approach will contribute to and advance **sustainable development in the country**, how other stakeholders will contribute to each DO, and critical assumptions and/or risks;
- USAID/Washington's significant issues and the Mission's responses; and
- The planned completion date for the CDCS, next steps, and any additional support needed to complete the CDCS in a timely manner.

See the required [Phase Two slide deck template](#) for additional guidance.

The Mission and B/IOs should endeavor to resolve outstanding issues following the DVC. The Regional Bureau must submit issues that cannot be resolved through discussions between the Mission, Regional Bureau, and B/IO stakeholders within ten (10) business days following the DVC to the formal Issues Resolution process described in **Section VIII** of this Mandatory Reference.

### **E. Phase Two Summary of Conclusions Memo**

The Regional Bureau must prepare the SOC for Phase Two within seven (7) business days from the date of the DVC. The cleared SOC represents Agency endorsement of the Mission's focus and chosen strategic approach, and authorizes the Mission to proceed with developing the final CDCS. The SOC should be approximately four pages, excluding annexes, and should not be a transcript of the meeting, but reflect key decisions and follow-up actions.

The Phase Two SOC must succinctly address the following decision points:

- Goal, Strategic Priorities, and Development Objectives: Agreement on the draft Goal, DOs, and strategic priorities.
- Shifts in Strategic Approach/Programming: Agreement on final decisions on any major shifts in strategic approaches and programming, including transitioning in or out of sectors, if applicable.
- Significant Issues and Resolution: The Mission's responses to, and agreed upon resolution on, any significant issues raised during Phase Two (including during the DVC).

- Budget Parameters: A summary of the CDCS' budget parameters, including discussions regarding any relief from Congressional Directives, if applicable.
- Timeline: Any updates to the schedule of tasks for completion of the CDCS, as agreed upon in the DVC.
- USAID/Washington Clearance in Subsequent Phases: Agreement on which B/IOs will clear products during Phase Three.

The Regional Bureau must obtain input from the Mission before it circulates the draft SOC to B/IO stakeholders for clearance. After receiving and incorporating feedback from the Mission, the Regional Bureau must send the SOC to PPL, BRM, and relevant B/IOs that raised significant issues during the Phase Two review for clearance. The Regional Bureau, in consultation with PPL, should determine if any other B/IOs should clear the memo as well. All stakeholder B/IOs should receive informational copies.

Clearing B/IOs must provide clearance or offer any substantive comments within three (3) business days. If a B/IO or designee does not provide clearance or offer substantive comments within three (3) business days, the B/IO is presumed to have provided clearance by default. Once cleared, the Regional Bureau DAA provides final approval of the SOC and sends it to the Mission. Generally, final approval should occur no more than ten (10) business days following the Phase Two DVC absent an Issues Resolution process as outlined in **Section VIII**.

Barring significant changes in the country context between Phases Two and Three, Phase Two is USAID/Washington's last opportunity to raise significant issues. Significant issues that were not raised during Phase Two may not be considered during Phase Three, except for any significant issues that arise related to compliance with Phase Three requirements.

## **V. PHASE THREE: PREPARATION AND APPROVAL OF A CDCS**

### **A. Overview of Phase Three**

The objective of Phase Three is to prepare and approve the full CDCS, which represents Agency endorsement of the Mission's focus and chosen strategic approach. During Phase Three, the Mission applies findings from additional analyses and consultations, further refines its overall development hypothesis and associated RF, and submits the full CDCS to the Regional Bureau under Chief of Mission authority. Phase Three culminates in the final approval of a Mission's CDCS by the responsible Regional Bureau AA and PPL's Assistant to the Administrator (AtA), and subsequent dissemination of the CDCS. Phase Three should begin approximately three (3) months prior to the expected approval of the CDCS.

Phase Three includes the following milestones:

- 1) Development of the first draft of the full CDCS (see **Section V.B**);
- 2) Washington review of the draft CDCS (see **Section V.C**);
- 3) Submission of the final CDCS (see **Section V.D**); and
- 4) Final approval of the CDCS (see **Section V.E**).

During Phase Three, the Mission and responsible Regional Bureau should collaborate with POCs from B/IOs that raised significant issues during Phase Two, in addition to PPL. The Mission should also work with BRM to discuss any remaining budgetary questions or concerns, and review the draft CDCS budget.

During this phase, the review is focused on ensuring that the Mission has adequately addressed any significant issues raised during Phase Two. No new significant issues may be raised, except those related to compliance with Phase Three requirements.

## **B. Development of the First Draft of the Full CDCS**

The Mission must develop a first draft of the full CDCS that further refines and expands upon the RF Summary Paper and Matrices. This draft must include all content of the CDCS as described in the [CDCS Outline Template](#), including all required annexes and any optional annexes. The full CDCS should be no more than 35 pages. The Mission must submit the full draft to the responsible Regional Bureau at least six (6) weeks before the expected approval of the CDCS.

## **C. Washington Review of the Draft CDCS**

Once the Mission has submitted its first draft of the full CDCS, the Regional Bureau must circulate the draft, along with an Issues Matrix, to responsible POCs in PPL, BRM, and those B/IOs that raised significant issues during Phase Two. B/IOs must then gather internal responses and submit feedback to the Regional Bureau within five (5) business days of receiving the draft CDCS. During this time, B/IOs should review the full CDCS to ensure that the Mission has adequately addressed any significant issues that were previously raised during the CDCS process.

No new significant issues may be raised at this time unless they have to do with compliance with the guidance for Phase Three described herein. For example, if the draft is missing required content in the CDCS Outline, PPL or the Regional Bureau may flag the omission as a new significant issue. If a B/IO does not provide feedback within five (5) business days, the B/IO is presumed to have no comments.

The Regional Bureau must consolidate and review comments from B/IO stakeholders, flag any concerns regarding issues raised, and facilitate further consultations between the Mission and B/IOs as necessary. Occasionally, disagreements between the Regional Bureau and other B/IOs may persist at the working level over a particular

significant issue. In these cases, the B/IO that submitted the issue may re-submit the significant issue after obtaining the endorsement of the responsible DAA (or Director, if an Independent Office) or designee, who must affirm that the issue represents a significant priority of the B/IO. If, after this, agreement still is not possible within five (5) business days of the Regional Bureau receiving the Issues Matrix, then the Regional Bureau must submit the issue for resolution through the Issues Resolution process described in **Section VIII** of this Mandatory Reference.

Review of the draft CDCS and consolidation of Washington inputs should take approximately ten (10) business days.

#### **D. Submission of the Final CDCS**

The Mission has three (3) weeks to incorporate final comments, if any, and make necessary revisions to the draft CDCS. It must then submit the final CDCS to the Regional Bureau for approval.

#### **E. Final Approval of a CDCS**

The Regional Bureau must circulate the full CDCS along with an Action Memorandum to BRM and any other B/IOs that raised significant issues during Phase Two for clearance. The Action Memorandum must specify the expiration date of the CDCS and the proposed timing of any expected check-ins with USAID/Washington during CDCS implementation, including the mid-course stocktaking exercise. Responsible B/IOs must provide clearance or offer any substantive comments within five (5) business days. If a B/IO does not provide clearance within five (5) business days, the B/IO is presumed to have provided clearance by default. After BRM and any responsible B/IOs have cleared the CDCS, the Regional Bureau must submit the package for final approval by the Regional Bureau AA followed by the PPL AtA.

### **VI. GUIDANCE FOR DESIGNATED COUNTRIES WITH ADVANCED LEVELS OF DEVELOPMENT**

#### **A. Overview**

As described in **Section I**, [ADS 201.3.2.8](#) and [ADS 201mak](#), designated Missions in countries with relatively advanced levels of development must develop a CDCS that describes opportunities to transition USAID's relationship in the partner country and outline what is achievable during the timeframe of the CDCS. The Mission's vision for a "strategically transitioned" relationship should seek to accomplish the following:

- Move beyond the classic donor-recipient paradigm;
- Build upon and sustain development gains;
- Amplify a country's strengths and only target remaining **development** challenges

in key sectors;

- Leverage new forms of partnerships and new resources that are better reflective of the country's advanced level of **development**; and/or
- Strategically employ resources to mitigate and effectively respond to backsliding.

The Mission's vision for a "strategically transitioned" relationship may take different forms depending on the context, remaining challenges, USAID's comparative advantage, and local priorities.

The process follows the same three phases and timeline for developing a CDCS, but uses a modified [Phase One slide deck template](#), [Phase Two RF Summary Paper and Matrices template](#), budget scenario templates (see [here](#) and [here](#)), and [Phase Three CDCS Outline](#), all of which emphasize strategic transition in development planning. Missions must follow the guidance in **Sections I** through **V** above, but take into account the key differences noted in this section.

## **B. Preparation for the CDCS Process**

As described in **Section II**, Missions should initiate preparations for the CDCS process after conducting the mid-course stocktaking and/or the last portfolio review under their current CDCS. See **Section II** for guidance on preparing for the CDCS process, while noting the following differences:

### 1. Critically Examine the Current Portfolio

Designated Missions must examine their current portfolios with respect to the following:

- Is the Mission only working in sectors that remain relevant for "last-mile" **development** challenges/areas of vulnerability? What sectors are most relevant to the remaining **development** challenges?
- In these sectors or areas, is the Mission using models and approaches that are properly-reflective of the country's relatively advanced level of **development**? If not, why not?

### 2. Develop an Initial Vision for Transition

Designated Missions must consider what USAID's vision for transition should fundamentally entail and contemplate questions such as the following:

- What are the most critical last-mile challenges to **development** that will be the focus of the strategic transition?
- What is USAID's role in the next stage of the strategic transition?

- What is USAID’s business model in the next stage of the strategic transition?
- How might USAID’s footprint and resource envelope change?
- Realistically, how long will it take to get to the transition?

**C. Phase One: Initial Consultations and Parameter Setting**

As described in **Section III**, Phase One marks the official start of the CDCS development process, and Missions and responsible Regional Bureaus should initiate this process approximately eight (8) months before they expect CDCS. See **Section III** for guidance on the Phase One process, while noting the following differences:

- Development of a Concept Presentation by using a modified slide deck (see **Section C(1)** below);
- No budget scenarios in Phase One (see **Section D(2)** below); and
- An SOC memo that captures questions and issues on the strategic transition (see **Section C(3)** below).

1. Development of the Concept Presentation

Based on Washington input on overall priorities, the Mission must prepare the Concept Presentation and submit it to the responsible Regional Bureau ten (10) days in advance of the Phase One DVC. See **Section III.C** for guidance on the Phase One Concept Presentation, while noting the following differences:

The Concept Presentation must cover the following:

- The Mission’s vision for strategic transition that explicitly outlines its priorities/choices and how USAID will evolve its business model in the partner country over the course of CDCS implementation;
- An analysis of what advanced **development** means in this country by using available data and evidence; and
- An assessment of the extent to which the Mission’s current strategic portfolio is addressing critical **development** challenges **faced by** the country.

See this required [Phase One slide deck template](#) for specialized guidance.

2. Phase One Summary of Conclusions Memo



The final step of Phase One is the drafting, dissemination, and approval of the SOC memo. See **Section III.G** for guidance on the Phase One SOC process, while noting the following differences:

The SOC must summarize key decisions on strategic transition that were made during Phase One, including during the DVC, and address the following questions:

- Agreement on the Mission’s preliminary vision for strategic transition and how the vision is explicitly linked to chronic or last-mile **development** challenges (or areas vulnerable to slippage), and USAID priorities;
- Agreement on preliminary thoughts regarding USAID’s business model in the next stage of the strategic transition;
- Decisions about strategic shifts in programming or approaches;
- The amount of time to reach the transition state. If covered during the DVC, Missions should address whether or not the Mission will be fully transitioned by the end of the strategy (e.g., across all sectors) or if the Mission anticipates that the transition will take place over a longer time horizon (if so, the Mission should justify its response); and
- Agreement on foreign policy priorities that have implications for the strategy.

#### **D. Phase Two: Development of the Results Framework**

As described in **Section IV**, the objective of Phase Two is to gain Agency consensus on the approaches that the Mission will use to advance its vision for strategic transition as the country reaches advanced levels of **development**. See **Sections IV** for guidance on the Phase Two process, while noting the following differences:

- Development of an RF Summary Paper and Matrices oriented toward strategic transition (see **Section D(1)** below);
- Development of two budget scenarios, one of which reflects a visionary budget to support the strategic transition (see **Section D(2)** below);
- A Phase Two DVC, which includes the budget scenarios and is oriented toward strategic transition (see **Section D(3)** below); and
- An SOC memo oriented toward strategic transition (see **Section D(4)** below).

##### 1. Development of the Results Framework Summary Paper and Matrices

The Mission must develop an RF Summary Paper and a set of RF Matrices, in addition to the two required budget scenarios (see **Section 2** below), that are all fundamentally



oriented towards strategic transition. See **Section IV.B** for guidance on developing the Phase Two RF Summary Paper and Matrices, while noting the following differences:

The Results Framework Summary Paper must:

- Articulate a CDCS Goal that reflects the vision for the strategic transition;
- Provide a high-level summary of the country context, including an assessment of the country's overall level of **development** in view of the vision for the strategic transition; and
- Explain the rationale for the selected DOs and IRs as they relate to the vision for the strategic transition and the development goals of the government, civil society, and the private sector in the partner country.

The Mission must use this modified [RF Summary Paper and Matrices template](#). In addition, the Mission must attach its two budget scenarios as an annex to this paper.

## 2. Development of Budget Scenarios

As part of Phase Two, designated Missions must develop two budget scenarios -- a Contextual Budget and a Visionary Budget – as well as an associated narrative based on parameters provided by BRM. Missions must submit the budget scenarios and narrative as annexes to the Phase Two RF Summary Paper and Matrices and include them in the agenda for the Phase Two DVC. For additional guidance, see the [budget scenario guidance](#).

## 3. Washington Review of Results Framework Summary Paper and Matrices

The Mission must submit its RF Summary Paper and Matrices to the responsible Regional Bureau for review at least one (1) month before the Phase Two DVC. See **Section IV.C** for guidance on the Washington Review for RF Paper and Matrices.

Key questions that Washington B/IOs must consider in their review of the RF Summary Paper and Matrices include the following:

- Does the proposed CDCS Goal reflect the vision for the strategic transition?
- Do the DOs contribute to progress towards the strategic transition, or should the Mission propose a transition during CDCS implementation that is more ambitious than the DOs reflect?

## 4. Phase Two DVC

The objective of the Phase Two DVC is to achieve consensus on the approaches that the Mission will use to transition relationships and address any last-mile **development**

challenges. See **Section IV.D** for guidance on the Phase Two DVC process. During the DVC, the Mission must present high-level information from the RF Summary Paper and Matrices, including the following:

- A summary of the parameters identified in Phase One that informed its approach, including its vision for the strategic transition;
- An overview of the Mission's current portfolio and its proposed portfolio for the new CDCS based on its vision for the strategic transition;
- The proposed CDCS Goal and how it aligns with the vision for the strategic transition, and supports national priorities and USG policy interests;
- The overall Results Framework, including what is new in terms of focus, partners, approaches and/or responses to changes in context; and
- DO-specific presentations that present the development hypothesis for each DO, including how the selected approach will contribute to the overall vision for the strategic transition, how other stakeholders will contribute to each DO, and critical assumptions and/or risks.

See this modified [slide deck template](#) for additional guidance.

## 5. Phase Two Summary of Conclusions Memo

The cleared SOC represents Agency endorsement of the Mission's focus and chosen strategic approach, and enables the Mission to proceed with developing the final CDCS. In addition to the issues listed in **Section IV.D**, the Phase Two SOC must specifically address the following:

- Agreement on the proposed Goal and DOs, strategic priorities, and how they all support the overall vision for strategic transition;
- Agreement on major shifts in strategic approaches and programming, including plans to transition in or out of sectors, and how the Mission will change its approach to leverage the country's relatively advanced level of **development**;
- A summary of discussions about budget parameters for the Visionary Budget, including any decisions regarding relief from Congressional Directives. (See **Section 2** above.)

### **E. Phase Three: Preparation and Approval of the CDCS**

The objective of Phase Three is to prepare and approve the full CDCS, which represents Agency endorsement of the Mission's focus and chosen strategic approach.

Missions that follow this guidance should refer to **Section V** for general guidance on Phase Three, but prepare the final CDCS according to this [CDCS Outline Template](#).

## VII. POST APPROVAL: DISSEMINATION OF THE CDCS

Within thirty (30) business days of CDCS approval, Missions must prepare and/or format final internal and external versions of their CDCS for posting on USAID websites.

- **Internal Version:** Missions must submit the version approved at the end of the CDCS process to the Regional Bureau for posting on the Agency’s internal websites, [ProgramNet](#) and [USAID Pages](#), which are only viewable by USAID staff. These websites can host CDCSs that contain Sensitive But Unclassified (SBU) information.
- **External Version:** Missions must prepare a modified version of their full CDCS that does not include any SBU information for posting on the external USAID websites, [USAID.gov](#) and the [Development Experience Clearinghouse \(DEC\)](#). These websites are viewable by the general public and can host versions of approved CDCSs that are unclassified and approved for public release. In addition, Missions must submit this version for posting on [ProgramNet](#) along with the internal version. Missions must submit their external version to the responsible Regional Bureau AA and PPL AtA for co-approval before submitting it for posting.

Missions must format the internal and external versions of their final CDCS in accordance with these requirements:

Category	Internal Version	External Version
<b>Content</b>	The “internal” version is the full CDCS document with all annexes that is approved at the end of the CDCS process.	The “external” CDCS includes the sanitized CDCS and the Climate Change Assessment annex. All other annexes contain SBU information and therefore cannot be publicly disseminated.
<b>Header/Footer</b>	Missions must mark the header and footer on all pages of the internal version as “Sensitive But Unclassified.”	Missions must mark the cover page of the external version as follows: 1) “Unclassified” in the header; and, 2) “Approved for Public Release” in the footer.

Category	Internal Version	External Version
<b>Section 508 compliance</b>	Missions must ensure that internal and external versions of their CDCS are compliant with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act ( <a href="#">29 U.S.C. § 794d</a> ).	
<b>Cover Page</b>	Missions must use one of the approved templates for Cover Pages in <a href="#">this document</a> .	
<b>Overall Branding, including logo, colors, typeface, and photography</b>	Missions must ensure that the USAID logo, colors, typeface, and photography in both versions of its CDCS conform to standards established in the <a href="#">USAID Graphic Standards Manual and Partner Co-Branding Guide</a> .	
<b>File Name</b>	Missions must use the following naming convention:  Internal-SBU-CDCS-Country-Month-Year of Expiration	Missions must use the following naming convention:  CDCS-Country-Month-Year of Expiration

For additional guidance on the requirements for formatting final versions of a CDCS and the associated process for posting these versions on internal and external USAID websites, see [CDCS Resource: Posting Internal and External Versions of a CDCS on USAID Websites](#).

**VIII. ISSUES RESOLUTION PROCESS**

In the event that a Regional Bureau and B/IO cannot come to agreement on a significant issue within ten (10) business days during any of the three phases according to **Sections III.E, IV.C** and/or **V.C**, the issue owner’s AA must escalate the issue as described below:

- If, after ten (10) business days of negotiation between the DAAs, agreement has not been reached on the significant issue, the AA or designee of the B/IO that has the significant issue must contact the responsible Regional Bureau AA and the regional backstop in PPL to schedule a mediated discussion.
- PPL’s regional backstop must then schedule a meeting, mediated by PPL, no more than five (5) business days after the initial request; PPL may request position papers before the meeting.
- During the meeting, the Regional Bureau AA and the AA of the B/IO that has the significant issue will make recommendations on a resolution.

- If concurrence is achieved on a resolution, the PPL regional backstop should document the agreed-upon resolution in an Information Memorandum within five (5) business days, cleared by the issue owner's AA, the Regional Bureau AA, and PPL's AtA, which becomes part of the Mission's CDCS file.
- If the Regional Bureau AA or the AA of the B/IO that has a significant issue does not concur on a resolution, they may alternatively draft a Split Memorandum to the Deputy Administrator, as outlined below:
  - The issue owner B/IO and Regional Bureau should each draft their part of a Split Memorandum within five (5) business days of the mediated discussion.
  - The PPL regional backstop must draft an annex to the Split Memorandum that documents the mediated discussion and recommends a resolution; the PPL AtA must approve this Annex.
  - The PPL regional backstop must then submit the Split Memorandum to the Deputy Administrator for final decision. The Deputy Administrator should return a decision to the issue owner B/IO, Regional Bureau, and PPL within seven (7) business days. The Split Memorandum that contains the Deputy Administrator's decision becomes part of the Mission's CDCS file.

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