ADS Chapter 200

Formulation, Implementation, and Governance of USAID Development and Humanitarian Policies

Functional Series 200 – Programming
ADS 200 – Formulation, Implementation, and Governance of USAID Development and Humanitarian Policies
POC for ADS 200: See ADS 501maa, ADS Chapters and Point of Contact List

This chapter has been revised in its entirety.

Table of Contents

ADS 200 – Formulation, Implementation, and Governance of USAID Development and Humanitarian Policies

200.1 OVERVIEW
Effective Date: 04/04/2024

This chapter describes the process of creating and implementing USAID development and humanitarian policies, and advancing policy cohesion across USAID. "USAID development and humanitarian policy" is defined as directives on the objectives, principles, and approaches that shape the Agency's efforts to achieve development and humanitarian outcomes. The term, "policies," is used broadly throughout this chapter to refer to a variety of documents that describe the Agency's approach to international development and humanitarian assistance.

ADS 200 applies in its entirety to all USAID staff involved in the development, clearance, implementation, and management of development and humanitarian policies and supporting documents. This chapter:

- Defines the types of USAID development and humanitarian policy documents;

- Establishes the principles of inclusivity, sustainability, local leadership, coherence, and a strong evidence-base for all USAID development and humanitarian policy documents;

- Describes and provides references for the process of formulating, clearing, and implementing a USAID development and humanitarian policy document;

- Describes and provides references for supporting effective policy implementation, including developing implementation plans, how-to notes, and technical guidance;

- Clarifies when and how development and humanitarian policy documents must be revised and/or transitioned; and

- Describes practices and principles for shaping and engaging in processes for U.S. Government (USG)-wide policies and international development and humanitarian commitments.

The guidance contained in this chapter only applies to development and humanitarian policy (see **ADS 501, The Automated Directives System** for the policies and procedures that govern USAID operational policy).

200.2 PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITIES
Effective Date: 04/04/2024

a. The **Administrator** formulates and executes U.S. foreign assistance policies and programs in line with the foreign policy and national security guidance of the President,

the Secretary of State, and the National Security Council (NSC). The Administrator leads Agency policymaking and ensures coherence with U.S. foreign assistance, foreign policy, and national security objectives. The Administrator approves development and humanitarian policies and strategies defined in this chapter and can delegate approval authority for development and humanitarian policies and strategies.

b. The **Deputy Administrator for Policy and Programming (DA-PP)** is responsible for USAID's policy and programming, and oversees the Agency's Regional and Pillar Bureaus. The DA-PP chairs the Policy Advisory Council and authorizes formulation of off-cycle policies, strategies, and position papers defined in this chapter.

c. The **USAID Policy Advisory Council (PAC)** is chaired by the DA-PP, and is composed of Assistant Administrators (AAs), Assistants to the Administrator (AtAs), from each Bureau; Directors from each Independent Office; the designees of the aforementioned individuals; the Agency Counselor; and Senior Advisors identified by the Chair.

The PAC enhances Agency-level policy coherence by providing a senior leadership forum to discuss the Agency's policy priorities, consistency across USAID policy formulation and implementation processes, and alignment with U.S. national security and foreign policy objectives. The PAC, in addition to the Administrator's office, identifies new, emerging, or evolving topics for Task Teams and provides input on Task Team terms of reference (TOR). The PAC may also form policy Sub-Councils to coordinate and provide guidance on ongoing cross-cutting policy priorities. The PAC approves creation of new Task Teams and Policy Sub-Councils. The PAC reviews the mandate for and reapproves the continuation of each Sub-Council at least every five years, via the Policy Agenda. All functions of the PAC build in engagement with Missions, to the extent possible.

The PAC is mandated to:

- Review and discuss an Agency-level Policy Agenda identifying policies for formulation, revision, retirement, and transition, based on the findings of the biennial Policy Review (e.g., 2023-2025);

- Serve as a forum for Agency leaders to regularly discuss and proactively address the Agency's policy priorities and gaps, including policy formulation and implementation coherence across USAID and alignment with U.S. national security and foreign policy objectives;

- Advance the Agency's burden reduction efforts by assessing the impact of new policy requirements on Agency staff and partners and ensuring alignment with the Agency's operational, budgetary, and human resources; and

- Guide the formulation and implementation of the Policy Framework.

See the **PAC Terms of Reference**.

d.   The **Office of Policy (POL)** is responsible for elevating USAID's policy voice and planning, coordinating, and engaging on development, humanitarian, and wider U.S. foreign policy and national security issues. POL co-manages the PAC with the Bureau for Planning, Learning, and Resource Management (PLR) (see **ADS 101** for POL's functional statement).

e.   The **Director of the Office of Policy (D/POL)** leads the Independent Office and co-manages the PAC with the Assistant to the Administrator of PLR (AtA/PLR). D/POL co-approves position papers and the Policy Agenda with AtA/PLR. D/POL is responsible for managing the Task Team process.

f.   The **Bureau for Planning, Learning, and Resource Management (PLR)** is responsible for directing the Agency's program and resource planning to shape overall strategic investments and performance. The Bureau leads the development of guidance and tools for effective and coherent policy implementation, program planning, design and evaluation, learning and knowledge management, program budget formulation and execution, and strategic donor engagement. PLR reviews and clears all policy documents defined in this chapter.

g.   The **Assistant to the Administrator for PLR (AtA/PLR)** leads the Bureau and co-manages the PAC with D/POL. The AtA authorizes the release of draft policies for public comment, and jointly with D/POL, co-approves Position Papers and the Policy Agenda. The AtA reviews and clears all policy documents defined in this chapter.

h.   The **Bureau for Planning, Learning, and Resource Management, Office of Policy Implementation and Analytics (PLR/PIA)** coordinates policy formulation and implementation processes, conducts analyses on development and humanitarian topics, and supports the establishment and implementation of Agency development and humanitarian policies in close coordination with POL. Key responsibilities include:

- Maintaining the USAID Policy Registry;

- Providing interpretation regarding policy formulation and implementation, and the content of this chapter;

- Guiding each Policy Working Group through all steps of the policy formulation, clearance, and implementation planning process;

- Supporting development of the USAID Policy Framework;

- Serving as the secretariat for the Policy Advisory Council in coordination with POL;

- Co-leading development of the Policy Agenda with input from relevant stakeholders (see section **200.3.1**), in coordination with POL;

- Leading biennial Policy Reviews (see section **200.3.1**) that review existing internal USAID policy and implementation efforts; and

- Supporting, in coordination with POL, USAID engagement in interagency policy processes and other policy dialogues, and advocating for development and humanitarian perspectives and considerations in U.S. foreign and national security policy formulation.

i. The **Bureau for Planning, Learning, and Resource Management, Office of Strategic and Program Planning (PLR/SPP)** has a three-fold role in operationalizing development policy:

- Assists Operating Units (OUs) in articulating the linkage to USG-wide policies such as the National Security Strategy, the State-USAID Joint Strategic Plan, and Integrated Country Strategies.

- Guides operationalization of the Agency's Policy Framework, and other USAID development and humanitarian policies and budgets. Specifically, SPP advises OUs on integrating development policy into strategies, projects, and activities.

- With PLR's Office of Learning, Evaluation, and Research (PLR/LER), advises on and reviews draft USAID policies and policy implementation plans for alignment with Program Cycle requirements and USG-wide policies and strategies.

j. The **Bureau for Planning, Learning, and Resource Management, Office of Learning, Evaluation, and Research (PLR/LER)** supports the Agency's work to be a learning organization that generates key information and evidence through monitoring, research, and evaluation to determine what works in development. PLR/LER along with PLR/SPP, discuss and clear new Program Cycle requirements or recommendations included in a policy, strategy, or an implementation plan. PLR/LER is a technical resource for developing the evidence base during formulation of policy documents and the learning sections of policy and strategy implementation plans.

k. The **Bureau for Planning, Learning and Resource Management, Office of Budget and Resource Management (PLR/BRM)** is responsible for leading USAID's program resource planning processes and budget capabilities and ensuring the alignment of resources to policy.

l. The **Bureau for Planning, Learning, and Resource Management, Office of Development Cooperation (PLR/DC):**

- Serves as the Agency's lead interlocutor, relationship manager, and coordinator with multilateral organizations, bilateral donor government partners, and

philanthropic foundations, including for international commitments with broad relevance or on cross-cutting policy issues;

- Tracks international development commitments, including global agreements endorsed by the United States in intergovernmental fora, such as the United Nations, as well as Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) (and similar agreements) signed by USAID OUs with counterparts from other bilateral donors or multilateral or philanthropic organizations; and

- Informs and includes relevant OUs when engaging partners in specific policy areas of sectoral or regional significance.

m. The **Bureau for Planning, Learning, and Resource Management, Policy Implementation Working Group (PLR PIWG)** serves as a consultation body of staff across PLR to review implementation issues for policies, and assess related burdens.

n. The **Bureau for Management (M Bureau):**

- Provides centralized management services for the Agency and ensures that the Agency's core systems related to operational expense budgets, operational policy, financial accounting and management, acquisition and assistance (A&A), and information management are adequately integrated in programming processes;

- Provides feedback on USAID policy documents to ensure that operational needs are considered; and

- Reviews and clears on all USAID and interagency policy documents.

o. The **Office of Human Capital and Talent Management (HCTM)** provides leadership and direction in defining and managing USAID workforce planning processes. This includes recruiting staff that directly and indirectly support implementation of USAID policies. During policy and strategy drafting processes, HCTM engages in discussions on how staffing patterns respond to policy implementation.

p. **Pillar Bureaus** provide technical leadership and expertise for the Agency and are **Policy Owners** of relevant policy documents, serving as the formally designated Bureau/Independent Office (B/IO) for those policies. Pillar Bureaus:

- Identify and disseminate good practices to USAID's Regional Bureaus and Missions, as well as manage central mechanisms that support the design, implementation, and evaluation of field programs and sector strategies and policies;

- Engage in development of both USAID and interagency policy documents, and are responsible for obtaining approval to initiate a policy formulation process;

- Support advancing achievement of development results in their relevant sectors, including through development of policies and support documents, providing in-person and virtual technical assistance to Missions, and building Agency capacity in relevant sectors;

- Provide technical input into the interagency policy process to ground policy documents in multi-sectoral evidence, ensure connection and coordination with related processes, and may lead interagency policy processes when they are the USAID experts in the relevant sector; and

- Review and clear all relevant policy documents defined in this chapter.

q. **Policy Working Groups (PWGs)** are groups that formulate policies and strategies and develop implementation plans. PWGs are defined by a TOR that defines membership, roles, timelines, and deliverables. PWGs are formed by the B/IO drafting the policy and include diverse representation from B/IOs substantially affected by the proposed policy and/or have relevant technical as well as regional skills and knowledge, staff representatives from PLR/PIA and the Bureau for Management, Office of Management Policy, Budget, and Performance (M/MPBP), and field staff. PWGs include a single or a small group of **Policy Drafters** who lead the writing of the policy documents.

r. **Regional Bureaus** are the main link between USAID/Washington (USAID/W) and Missions. Regional Bureaus are responsible for leading policy and budget decisions based on regional and country context, expertise, and analyses. While Regional Bureaus are not typically Policy Owners, in certain situations, in particular regional policies (which are not subject to this chapter), a Regional Bureau may take a leadership role in formulating development policy documents, in coordination with respective Missions. Regional Bureaus can also provide support and advice for the research, writing, implementation, and evaluation of the geographic context for Agency-wide policies. Regional Bureaus advise Missions on integrating and implementing development policy documents and principles into programs. Regional Bureaus review and clear all policy documents defined in this chapter.

s. **Missions**, including bilateral and regional Missions and country offices, implement USAID and USG policies and relevant international commitments within their processes and programs, to the fullest extent possible and as appropriate. Missions also participate in USAID policy formulation, assessment, and review processes, as relevant. Missions should stay current with development and humanitarian policies and sector-specific approaches adopted by the USG and USAID, and employ those, as appropriate. Some Missions shape bilateral agreements directly with host governments. This can have implications for how USAID policies are implemented and operationalized in each country.

t.   Policy **Task Teams** are time-bound, action-oriented groups of Agency leaders and experts that coordinate strategy to address a specific and timely policy priority on a new, emerging, or evolving policy issue that lacks an established Policy Owner or has multiple internal stakeholders. Task Teams improve the Agency approach, enhance interagency engagement, and refine Agency strategy on the selected issue. Task Team co-leads identify diverse members for the team from across the Agency, and draft a TOR that defines membership, purpose, activities, deliverables, and timelines. The PAC approves the creation of new Task Teams.

u.   **Policy Sub-Councils** are standing groups of Agency leaders and experts that coordinate implementation, strategic communications and positioning, and interagency and external engagement of a cross-cutting policy priority or initiative that lacks an established Policy Owner or has multiple internal stakeholders. Sub-Councils ensure the Agency's effective execution of multi-pronged approaches, underpin robust interagency engagement, and help adapt existing strategy on the selected issue to changes in context. Some Sub-Councils ensure institutionalization of earlier Task Team efforts and/or ongoing implementation of current strategies, policies, or position papers on cross-cutting topics. Sub-Council co-leads identify diverse members for the body from across the Agency and draft a TOR that defines membership, purpose, activities, and key responsibilities. The PAC approves creation of new Sub-Councils.

v.   The **Office of the General Counsel (GC)** provides legal advice and support on matters related to policy development and implementation. GC reviews and clears all USAID and interagency policy documents, including in preparation for the public comment period and before publication.

w.   The **Bureau for Legislative and Public Affairs (LPA):**

- Supports policy processes by approving and posting draft policy documents for public comment;

- Ensures policy documents comply with the **USAID Style Guide**, branding, graphic standards, and accessibility requirements;

- Provides advice and support on document design and layout;

- Supports launch and roll-out activities for approved policy documents, posts policies to the Policy Registry, champions policies, and ensures public messaging is consistent; and

- Reviews and clears all USAID and interagency policy documents.

200.3   POLICY DIRECTIVES AND REQUIRED PROCEDURES

200.3.1   Principles for Development and Humanitarian Policies
Effective Date: 04/04/2024

All USAID development and humanitarian policies must reinforce the principles of inclusivity, sustainability, local leadership, and being evidence-based.

Inclusivity: All individuals, regardless of their identity or socioeconomic status, should be able to participate equitably in development and humanitarian assistance programs, share the benefits of such efforts, and contribute to decision-making processes. USAID policy formulation and implementation processes must (1) engage with and integrate the perspectives of diverse groups of internal, external, and local stakeholders; (2) ensure that the content, practices, and approaches articulated in a policy document promote diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA); (3) advance gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, as described in **ADS 205, Integrating Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in USAID's Program Cycle**; and (4) elevate the roles of local people, organizations, and systems in priority setting, codesign, and implementation.

Sustainability: Development policies must advance the achievement of long-term development results that are responsive to local contexts, systems, needs, and priorities. Humanitarian policies should also consider sustainability and responsiveness to local contexts, systems, needs, and priorities, including coordination with relevant development efforts to strengthen humanitarian-development-peace nexus, when possible and when doing so does not interfere with addressing urgent humanitarian needs or compromise core humanitarian principles. Sustainability depends on effective local ownership to produce results that are valued and adaptive in the face of changing circumstances.

Local Leadership: USAID development and humanitarian policies must maximize opportunities to put local actors in the lead, strengthen local systems and capacities, articulate principles and strategic objectives in ways that allow OUs to support local priorities and contexts, advance local leadership and entrepreneurship, and form mutual, equitable partnerships. Development and humanitarian policies must allow for sufficient flexibility to respond to local contexts, priorities, and needs, and support OUs to adapt policy principles and approaches accordingly.

Evidence-based: USAID development and humanitarian policies must be evidence-based, meaning positions put forward in the policy must be grounded in credible and appropriate evidence. Credible and appropriate evidence is evidence that uses the type of data, source of data, and analytical method necessary to generate the evidence to support the position. USAID believes that extensive and intentional inclusion of local and indigenous actors is critical to strengthen the quality and impact of evidence at all stages. Positions that prioritize specific actions for specific situations (such as recommending interventions to address specific development goals) should be informed by cost-effectiveness evidence from USAID-originated and externally-originated impact evaluations (as defined in ADS 201, i.e., evaluations that employ counterfactual analysis such as randomized controlled trials in order to establish a causal relationship between an intervention and a change in a desired development outcome). USAID policy documents must identify both where evidence is strong and where gaps exist,

then prioritize and focus learning agendas such that USAID can help both fill those gaps and disseminate the knowledge gained to the local and global development community.

200.3.2   Policy Agenda
Effective Date: 04/04/2024

USAID development and humanitarian policy planning is articulated in the biennial Policy Agenda. Endorsed by the PAC, the Policy Agenda is a two-year plan that (1) articulates policy priorities for USAID in accordance with USG and USAID Administrator priorities, (2) authorizes new policies to be developed, and (3) outlines actions related to the revision, retirement, or transition of existing policy documents.

200.3.2.1   Development of the Policy Agenda
Effective Date: 04/04/2024

Every two years, PLR/PIA leads a Policy Review to assess the prioritization, use, and efficacy of the Agency's development and humanitarian policies. This review includes consultation with the PAC sub-groups: Task Teams and Policy Sub-Councils. PLR/PIA presents findings from the Policy Review to the PAC to inform the next iteration of the Policy Agenda. The specific focus of the Policy Review can be adjusted to provide the analysis required to support development of the next Policy Agenda.

PLR/PIA, in consultation with POL, uses the outcomes of the Policy Review, analysis of policy gaps and emerging global trends, and input from B/IOs to generate a draft biennial Policy Agenda for deliberation, discussion, and input from the PAC. The following are considerations for recommending policy actions in the Policy Agenda:

- Alignment with the USAID Policy Framework, National Security Strategy, and State-USAID Joint Strategic Plan;

- Responsiveness to emerging policy priorities, gaps in Agency policy guidance, and/or new statutory or regulatory requirements;

- Age of the policy document and continued technical relevance of the policy approach and issue area;

- Resource base for implementation, including financial resources, staffing, and leadership support;

- Costs, benefits, and feasibility of implementation requirements, including the potential burden on Missions and Washington-based staff;

- Opportunity to consolidate policies that address similar themes or technical areas;

- Value-add of having a formal policy document versus a different approach to institutionalization, such as support documents, USAID operational policy in the

ADS, and/or Position Papers;

- Level of recognition and use;

- Alignment with evidence and locally-driven feedback loops; and

- Alignment with this chapter and other relevant operational policies in the ADS.

PLR/PIA, in consultation with POL and with input from B/IOs, identifies an action (revise, transition, retire) in the Policy Agenda for all development and humanitarian policies set to expire in the upcoming two-year period. The Policy Agenda acknowledges, but does not include, recommendations about USG interagency policies.

200.3.2.2   Approval of the Policy Agenda
Effective Date: 04/04/2024

An approved Policy Agenda consists of a list of development and humanitarian policies to be formulated, revised, retired, and transitioned along with a brief rationale for each action. The PLR AtA and D/POL jointly co-approve the Policy Agenda, following consultation with the PAC on policy formulation, revision, retirement, and transition decisions. PLR distributes the approved Policy Agenda to the Agency via an Agency Notice and ProgramNet, and updates the Policy Agenda on a semi-annual basis, through consultation with the PAC, as needed.

200.3.2.3   Review and Update of the Policy Agenda
Effective Date: 04/04/2024

During the two-year lifespan of the Policy Agenda, PLR/PIA and POL review the Policy Agenda to identify if any updates are required and consult the PAC for input on updates. These updates could include identifying new policies for formulation, revision, transition or retirement due to changes in the criteria identified in section **200.3.2.1**. The PAC has the opportunity to discuss any changes to the Policy Agenda proposed by PLR/PIA, POL, or B/IOs.

200.3.3   Overview of USAID Policy Documents and Supporting Documents

200.3.3.1   Policy Documents
Effective Date: 04/04/2024

USAID development and humanitarian policies include the following types of documents: Policy Framework, individual policies, strategies, and position papers, referred to collectively as USAID policy documents. All USAID policy documents, including sector specific ones, must follow the principles and process laid out in this chapter. Leadership of all relevant B/IOs, or their designees, must clear the USAID development and humanitarian policy documents.

- **USAID Policy Framework:** Establishes the Agency's highest policy priorities, articulates how they coherently translate to the Agency's work, and guides USAID's approaches to foreign assistance and program implementation. The Policy Framework acknowledges other USG foreign policy priorities and international development commitments and helps translate those policies in a manner applicable to USAID. The Policy Framework articulates how the Agency's existing suite of policy documents fits together to achieve overarching goals. PLR is responsible for managing the drafting process for the Policy Framework in consultation with POL and other B/IOs via the PAC, once the Administrator initiates the process. PLR, POL, DA-PP, and/or the PAC can propose initiation of a Policy Framework to the Administrator. The term "framework" is reserved solely for this Agency-wide Policy Framework.

- **Policies:** A USAID policy is a document that articulates the Agency's vision and direction for a development or humanitarian issue or sector, or a development practice area, and helps organize the Agency to maximize impact and achieve sustainable results. Policies may integrate related technical areas or sub-sectors in order to strengthen policy coherence and avoid duplication. Policies outline a set of evidence-based goals and principles that guide decisions and actions toward a desired end state. A policy does not set specific time-bound targets. Policies are recommended to have few or no requirements and take a change management approach to help people engage and adapt to the implementation of new policies.

    - Document Lifespan: Policies expire after ten years.

    - Document Page Limit: The maximum length for a policy is 15 pages.

    - Document purpose: For an issue or development practice area that will be implemented largely by being integrated into projects and activities across a range of country contexts and sectors.

    - Intended audience: Internal and external.

- **Strategies:** A USAID strategy is a document that sets specific and time-bound programmatic results for a sector or cross-cutting area with substantial and dedicated resources. A strategy articulates a desired end state(-s) or goal(s), a hierarchy of objectives, a logic model, and the planned actions, which will be taken to achieve them. A strategy must include explicit targets linked to its objectives, a plan for achieving those targets within a defined time period, and a method for assessing progress. Strategies are recommended to have few or no requirements and take a change management approach to implementation.

    - Document Lifespan: Strategies must be time-bound, typically for 4-10 years.

○ Document Page Limit: The maximum length for a strategy is 20 pages.

○ Document purpose: For sectors and program areas with substantial and dedicated resources.

○ Intended audience: Internal and external.

● **Position Papers:** A USAID position paper is a brief document that states the Agency's approach to a sub-sector or specific topic, and is intended for both external and internal audiences. A position paper is best paired with technical guidance or How-To Notes for more details on how to implement it. A position paper must not include requirements or an implementation plan. Position papers differ from policies in that they address specific sub-sectors, or serve as an initial USAID statement on an emerging priority. They may be used to build consensus and provide quick policy guidance to the Agency and may serve as a basis for engaging in interagency discussions.

○ Document Lifespan: Position Papers expire after five years.

○ Document Page Limit: The maximum page length for a position paper is five pages.

○ Document purpose: To communicate the Agency's position on a development or humanitarian sub-sector, practice topic, or an emerging issue.

○ Intended audience: External and internal.

See **ADS 200saa, Policy Document Type Selection** to determine which policy document is appropriate for your needs.

200.3.3.2   Policy Document Requirements
Effective Date: 04/04/2024

Staff drafting a policy document must ensure the document:

● Reinforces the policy principles (see section **200.3.1**);

● Contributes to policy coherence, and be consistent with USG and USAID priorities, including the USAID mission, vision, and values;

● Minimizes burdens and requirements, and be adaptable to a variety of Mission contexts;

● Integrates relevant cross-cutting issues to the greatest extent appropriate to advance policy objectives;

- Aligns with, but does not supersede, relevant USAID operational policies in the ADS (see section **200.3.3**); and

- Is written clearly and in plain language, in alignment with the [USAID Style Guide](#).

Staff must obtain PLR/PIA's approval before applying any deviation from the requirements of this chapter and its associated Mandatory References. PLR/PIA cannot approve a deviation from the requirement to align with, but not supersede, relevant operational policies.

Policy Coherence: A USAID policy document must specify how it supports a unified approach to programming (including consistent use of USAID terminology), and identify linkages with documents including the USAID Policy Framework, USAID policy documents in related or cross-cutting areas, and relevant sub-sectoral position papers and technical guidance. All USAID policy documents must be consistent with USAID's mission, vision, and values, and should consider alignment with USG policies including the National Security Strategy and the State-USAID Joint Strategic Plan.

Burden Reduction: Policy drafters must limit requirements in policies and strategies, including reducing or replacing outdated or inefficient existing processes and requirements with more streamlined and effective efforts that support achievement of development and humanitarian outcomes. In the event that requirements are included, they must be clearly identified as requirements in the document. It is strongly recommended that policies and strategies leverage change management approaches and sustained support to Missions, rather than focusing on compliance alone. Burden reduction approaches include using existing Agency planning and reporting processes, limiting new requirements, and tiering requirements to different-sized projects, activities, and Missions. Policies and strategies should be adaptable to a wide-range of USAID Mission sizes, regions, budgets, and operating contexts. To balance the competing requirements of different policies and strategies, PLR and the M Bureau must carefully review and monitor requirements during the clearance process. The PAC must also review and monitor the requirements throughout implementation.

Cross-cutting Issues: All policy documents should identify opportunities to integrate cross-cutting issues and approaches, as appropriate, including, but not limited to: anti-corruption; climate change; conflict and violence prevention; democracy, human rights and governance; digital, geospatial, and behavioral science; gender; humanitarian-development-peace nexus; inclusive development; LGBTQI+; local systems strengthening; private sector engagement; resilience to shocks and stresses; and rule of law. Drafters are encouraged to harness the Agency's diverse expertise from across the Agency's Missions and B/IOs to enhance the rigor, relevance, and effectiveness of USAID policies and strategies.

Content: Policies should include the following sections:

- Cover page,

- Table of Contents,
- Executive Summary,
- Introduction,
- Background,
- Goals,
- Principles,
- Policy Into Practice,
- Learning,
- Conclusion,
- Glossary, and
- Bibliography.

Strategies should include the same sections, plus strategic objectives, a logic model, results and learning, and resource considerations. Position papers should include an introduction, background, problem statement, vision and principles, conclusion, and bibliography.

See **ADS 200mac, Policy Document Requirements and Content** for detailed information on the required outline, content, and other requirements for each type of policy document.

200.3.3.3   Policy Support Documents
Effective Date: 04/04/2024

Policy support documents are not policies. As a result, drafters must not include new requirements in policy support documents. Support documents are not subject to the formulation process outlined in this chapter and associated Mandatory References. Similar to policies, support documents should seek to be inclusive of diverse views and experiences, contribute to policy coherence, and minimize burdens to the greatest extent possible. Policy owners are encouraged to engage relevant offices, units, and Bureaus in the development of region or sector specific support documents. Some types of support documents include the following, which is not an exhaustive list:

- **How-To Notes**: A USAID How-To note provides brief, practical, evidence-based, step-by-step information on how to implement a specific element of a policy or strategy (such as how to promote equitable gender norms) or how to apply a policy or strategy to a specific technical area (such as how to advance gender equality and women's empowerment in the agriculture sector). A How-To note can be linked to a policy/strategy's implementation plan, position paper, or be a standalone document. One policy may have multiple How-To notes to guide a policy's application within different sectors or sub-sectors, and/or to focus on different objectives or focus areas. Policy-related How-To notes are optional and must not contain new requirements or mandatory actions. In general, a How-To note may not be longer than five pages. The B/IOs that houses the subject matter expertise for the particular topic must clear the How-To notes. For example, the Bureau for Management, Office of Acquisition and Assistance

(M/OAA) must clear on acquisition and assistance (A&A)-related notes. Consultations with relevant Bureaus, M, and PLR are strongly recommended.

● **Technical Guidance**: Technical guidance explains in detail how to implement the Agency's approach to a policy/strategy, sector, issue, or sub-sector. Pillar/Regional Bureaus develop and clear technical guidance. The guidance is intended for relevant technical staff (but does not have the ability to create requirements for partners). In some cases, technical guidance may be shared with external audiences. Technical guidance may be used to guide Missions and B/IOs on the appropriate use of funds for a particular area, provide in-depth guidance on developing solicitations, or provide guidance on monitoring, evaluation, or indicators. Technical guidance can be used in several situations including:

    a. Paired with a position paper to support Agency implementation of the identified approach to a sub-sector or emerging issues;

    b. As a deliverable from a Development or Humanitarian Policy or Strategy Implementation Plan to provide additional details; or

    c. As a support document to the effective implementation of an operational policy (e.g., ADS chapter).

Technical guidance does not constitute a policy document, and is not cleared through PLR. Technical guidance must not exceed 30 pages and drafters are strongly encouraged to take a change management approach to encourage engagement and implementation rather than a compliance approach. Technical guidance can not be used to establish new Agency policy requirements. Technical guidance must not include any requirements that are not included in existing Agency policies (i.e., development or humanitarian policies, operational policies).

● **Toolkits**: Toolkits are collections of resources to support the implementation of a policy document. Toolkits may include How-To notes, technical guidance, templates, checklists, presentation materials, talking points, recordings of webinars or speeches, frequently asked questions documents, social media resources and more. Toolkits can not be used to establish new Agency policy requirements. Toolkits do not constitute a policy document, and are not cleared through PLR. Policy owners are strongly encouraged to take a change management approach in developing toolkits, to encourage engagement and facilitate implementation rather than a compliance-based approach.

See **ADS 200saa, Policy Document Type Selection** to determine which policy support document is appropriate for your needs.

200.3.3.4   Coherence with Other Policies
Effective Date: 04/04/2024

Development and humanitarian policies must demonstrate coherence and alignment with and must not contradict the following policies:

- **ADS**: The ADS is USAID's operational policy. It is USAID's sole and authoritative source for the policies and procedures ("directives") that govern USAID operations. The ADS conveys codified information to the USAID workforce so they can carry out their responsibilities, consistent with applicable laws, regulations, and Agency mandates. The ADS system is an integral component of the Agency's overall internal control system to ensure operational effectiveness and efficiency in support of USAID's mission (see **ADS 501**).

- **Interagency Policies**: Interagency processes often result in USG policies or strategies that address a key issue and identify goals and objectives for more than one agency or department, such as the U.S. Global Food Security Strategy. See **ADS 200mae, U.S. Government Interagency Policies**, for more information on the formulation and clearance process for interagency policies.

200.3.3.5   Policy Registry
Effective Date: 04/04/2024

The **Policy Registry** contains all Administrator-approved development and humanitarian policy documents that are currently in effect. The Policy Registry is a publicly accessible list and includes USG policies that have implications for USAID and related USAID-specific implementation plans. PLR/PIA maintains the Policy Registry and works with LPA to add new or revised policy documents and remove transitioned policy documents.

PLR/PIA also maintains the **internal Development and Humanitarian Policy and Practice page on ProgramNet**, which includes the full roster of current policy documents, snapshots of each, and links to policy-specific resource pages that contain items supporting the implementation of a particular policy.

200.3.4   Policy Formulation and Clearance Process
Effective Date: 04/04/2024

Staff must obtain the following authorization before formulating a policy document:

Development and humanitarian policy documents, including policies, strategies, and position papers are authorized by being included in the Policy Agenda (see section **200.3.2**). See section **200.3.7** for the authorization process for off-cycle policy documents.

200.3.4.1   Process for Policies and Strategies
Effective Date: 04/04/2024

The process for formulating and clearing policies and strategies consist of the following steps:

- Step 1. Establish a PWG.

- Step 2. Analyze evidence.

- Step 3. Draft the policy document.

- Step 4. Conduct internal and external comment periods.

- Step 5. Approve and publish the policy document.

Within three months from the approval of the Policy Agenda, the lead B/IO should form a PWG to lead the formulation of the policy or strategy. Specific responsibilities of the PWG include overseeing the processes of reviewing and summarizing the evidence base, consulting with stakeholders, drafting the policy document and implementation plan, and obtaining clearances.

When forming the PWG, the lead B/IO must consider DEIA and must include representatives from the B/IOs that are substantially affected by the proposed policy, staff with relevant expertise and perspective, and representatives from Missions, including Foreign Service National (FSNs). The PWG must include points-of-contact from PLR/PIA and M/MPBP to advise on policy formulation and ensure the policy or strategy is aligned with and does not contradict the Agency's operational policies in the ADS.

See **ADS 200mad, Policy Formulation and Approval Processes**, for more details on the formulation process for policies and strategies.

200.3.4.2   Process for Position Papers
Effective Date: 04/04/2024

Compared to the formulation and clearance process for policies and strategies, the process for position papers is more abbreviated and conducted on a smaller scale. For example, drafting teams may be smaller than a typical PWG, and there can be fewer consultations.

The formulation process for position papers consist of the following steps:

- Step 1. Launch a new position paper formulation process.

- Step 2. Analyze available information and evidence.

- Step 3. Draft the position paper.

- Step 4. Clear and publish the position paper.

See **ADS 200mad, Policy Formulation and Approval Processes**, for more details on the formulation process for position papers.

200.3.5 Implementation, Monitoring, and Assessment of Policies and Strategies
Effective Date: 04/04/2024

Policy implementation is defined as a set of actions taken to achieve the goals of the policy. Policies should articulate what success in achieving the desired change looks like and implementation plans should articulate the actions necessary to achieve that change. An implementation plan must not include new requirements that are not already articulated in the policy or strategy. The lead B/IO is responsible for supporting the implementation of a policy or strategy across the Agency, including at the Mission level. The lead B/IO must specify how they plan to coordinate and track the implementation of a policy or a strategy. While implementation largely occurs at the OU level, the lead B/IO has primary responsibility for identifying gaps and challenges in implementation, and providing resources and support to address those gaps and challenges and strengthen capacity for implementation.

Implementation plans are required for policies and strategies to guide the efforts of internal stakeholders. Lead B/IOs must develop the implementation plan within 90 days from the approval of the policy or strategy. There are no implementation plans for position papers, since they do not establish new requirements and are generally directed to an external audience. The lead B/IO may develop associated support documents such as How-To notes or technical guidance for internal audiences.

For policies and strategies, the PWG must develop an implementation plan summary (see the How-To note linked below) to be submitted with the Action Memo for policy approval. The PWG should consider drafting the implementation plan concurrently with the policy document, when possible, and hold substantive discussions regarding implementation throughout the drafting process (see the **How-To Note on Planning for Policy Implementation** for additional guidance). The PWG should incorporate flexibilities in the implementation plan to allow Missions to align policy and strategy implementation efforts to local context, priorities, and needs. Also, PWGs should consider consulting local stakeholders and international stakeholders with a focus on impacted local communities when drafting the implementation plan. The PWG must complete the full implementation plan no later than three months after publishing the policy document. The PWG must submit both the summary and the implementation plan to PLR, M, GC, and all B/IOs for review and clearance. In addition, the relevant PLR/PIA policy analysts will share draft policy implementation plans with PIWG for discussion and consultation.

200.3.5.1 Implementation Plan Components
Effective Date: 04/04/2024

An implementation plan should include the following information (see **ADS 200mac** and How-To Note on Planning for Policy Implementation for recommended approaches and templates). In the case of a revised policy or strategy, the implementation plan must also be updated, and include the following components. It may draw heavily on an existing plan or ongoing implementation efforts, and should articulate both the ongoing implementation actions and new actions that are planned to bolster implementation and socialize the Agency to changes in the revised policy document. As with policy requirements, staff must obtain PLR/PIA's approval before applying any deviation from these requirements.

- Profile of targeted OUs,

- Stakeholders,

- Recommended and required implementation actions,

- Opportunities to scale requirements to Mission or project size,

- Learning and assessment approach,

- Monitoring approach (for strategies only), and

- List of implementation tools.

200.3.5.2   Implementation Resources
Effective Date: 04/04/2024

USAID B/IOs are encouraged to robustly support implementation of policies, including through the generation of guidance documents. These guidance notes promote achievement of existing policy document goals and objectives, but do not establish or create new policy, as defined in section **200.3.3.3**. Support documents typically enhance a policy's or strategy's implementation by providing practical guidance and fleshing out technical details to help staff effectively implement USAID policies and strategies. Examples include: help notes, technical guidance, templates, and toolkits.

Support documents are not required to follow the procedures outlined in this chapter; instead, B/IOs may establish Bureau-specific procedures for developing and vetting good practice documents. B/IOs must, however, seek input from the OUs within the Agency that have relevant expertise or will be affected by the recommendations put forth in a support document. B/IOs may not issue good practice documents that meet the definitions of a policy or a strategy stated in section **200.3.3.1**, or include new requirements in support documents. Lead B/IOs are also strongly encouraged to identify additional resources for implementation such as in-person or virtual technical support, communities of practice, training, and project or activity funding.

200.3.5.3   Monitoring, Assessing, and Learning from Implementation
Effective Date: 04/04/2024

Lead B/IOs should plan to learn continuously from policy implementation in order to adapt approaches and tools and track the desired change to achieve policy and strategy goals. For example, the lead B/IO could take annual stock of implementation plans, sufficiency of available toolkits and training, trends in general budget allocations, and other relevant issues. The lead B/IO may choose to approach learning in a structured manner such as tracking specific indicators using existing systems; reviewing results and key issue narratives from annual Operational Plans (OPs) and/or Performance Plan and Reports (PPRs); or gathering qualitative data from those most familiar with policy implementation. The lead B/IOs should capture diverse perspectives and lessons learned from policy implementation from local stakeholders most impacted by the policy and use this learning to improve implementation. In addition to these general good practices, lead B/IOs for strategies must also define and set targets and articulate how progress towards the targets must be measured.

In order to capture valuable lessons learned and adapt to any changes in context or operating environment, the lead B/IO should consider conducting an implementation assessment between five and ten years after the policy document's publication. The goal of a policy implementation assessment is to determine whether the implementation actions support achievement of the policy document's goals and objectives; identify enablers and constraints; and make recommendations for more effective implementation in the future.

Policy implementation assessment guidance, along with examples, is available in the **ProgramNet Policy Implementation Assessments Library**. The lead B/IO should contact PLR/PIA (**plr.pia@usaid.gov**) to post the completed policy implementation assessment to the **Development Experience Clearinghouse**, the Agency's public repository of assessments.

200.3.6   Revision and Transition of USAID Policy Documents
Effective Date: 04/04/2024

Policy owners must contact PLR/PIA at least one year in advance of the policy's expiration to ensure that policy revision, transition, or retirement is included in the biennial Policy Agenda (see section **200.3.3.1** for the lifespans of each type of policy document). When developing the biennial Policy Agenda, PLR/PIA, in coordination with the policy owners, must address all policy documents set to expire during the lifespan of the Policy Agenda, and recommend whether a policy document requires revision or transition. The policy owner must formally revise the policy document or PLR or the policy owner must retire or transition the policy document prior to its expiration date.

A policy, strategy, or position paper may require revision or transition prior to its expiration date if the content becomes out-of-date, context changes significantly, or a policy implementation assessment recommends extensive revision. With the endorsement of the PAC, PLR/PIA may elect to transition, retire, or revise a policy document when it is set to expire, or earlier if necessary, if at least one of the following criteria is met:

- The goals of the policy document have been achieved.

- The policy document is not aligned with the Agency's current technical and programming approaches, current scientific consensus, advances in development practice, and/or locally-driven feedback loops.

- There are opportunities to consolidate policies, or use different approaches to institutionalization, including use of position papers and technical guidance.

- The policy document is inconsistent with the values that underpin USAID's overarching mission, including the level of burden to Missions and B/IOs.

- The policy document is not aligned with operational policies in the ADS.

- The policy document has limited levels of recognition and utilization.

- The policy document is inconsistent with the Policy Framework, National Security Strategy, and/or Joint Strategic Plan.

The AA or equivalent can propose a policy document's revision, retirement, or transition to the PAC during a semi-annual Policy Agenda update.

200.3.6.1   Revising a Policy Document
Effective Date: 04/04/2024

The policy owner should revise a policy if the issue remains aligned with Agency priorities and requires a stated vision and goals to advance development or humanitarian achievements. The lead B/IO should follow all the steps for developing a new policy document outlined in section **200.3.4.1**. Some steps may be executed more expeditiously than for a new policy. For example, the evidence-base is likely to be well-established and easily synthesized or the PWG may not need to conduct consultations that are as extensive as for a new policy document. A limited revision is rare and appropriate if edits are needed only for contained sections, specific thematic elements, or a single component of the policy document. If the revision is limited, a less extensive revision process may be warranted. The lead B/IO should work jointly with PLR/PIA to design a policy revision process that includes the relevant components from section **200.3.3.2**.

200.3.6.2   Transitioning a Policy Document
Effective Date: 04/04/2024

The PAC may endorse the transition or retirement of a policy document as part of the Policy Agenda when it reaches its expiration date, or when it meets one or more criteria stated in section **200.3.6**. Policy documents selected for retirement are typically no longer needed or relevant, do not represent current good development or humanitarian practices, do not fit the policy definition outlined in section **200.3.3.1**, or do not align with

Agency priorities. Policy documents may be transitioned to technical guidance or operational policy to support institutionalization through a different format. Transitions and retirements are co-authorized through AtA/PLR and D/POL approval of the Policy Agenda or its semi-annual update. PLR/PIA, LPA, and the lead B/IO work together to remove the policy from internal and public websites and references, and issue an Agency Notice when the policy document has been officially transitioned or retired. The lead B/IO must work with M/MPBP on identifying and addressing any impact on existing ADS material. The lead B/IO is responsible for removing or modifying related implementation materials (e.g., guidance documents, training materials) as applicable. Transitioned and retired policy documents must be explicitly marked as such and housed in the Development Experience Clearinghouse in order to maintain a historical record.

200.3.7　Off-Cycle Policy Documents
Effective Date: 04/04/2024

All decisions about formulating, transitioning, retiring, or revising policies and strategies are expected to be endorsed by the PAC through the biennial Policy Agenda, or during the Policy Agenda's annual review and update. In the event of compelling and urgent circumstances (such as an audit finding or new legislation), following a presentation to the PAC, the DA-PP can approve the formulation, revision, retirement, or transition of an off-cycle policy document via an Action Memo that clearly articulates the need for the policy action and the urgency to do so off-cycle. The AAs of the lead B/IO, PLR, GC, LPA, M, and any other relevant B/IO(s), and D/POL must clear this Action Memo. If that action is approved, the lead B/IO must follow the requirements and processes outlined in this chapter.

200.4　MANDATORY REFERENCES

200.4.1　External Mandatory References
Effective Date: 04/04/2024

a.　**[National Security Strategy](#)**

200.4.2　Internal Mandatory References
Effective Date: 04/04/2024

a.　**[ADS 200mac, Policy Document Requirements and Content](#)**

b.　**[ADS 200mad, Policy Formulation and Approval Processes](#)**

c.　**[ADS 200mae, U.S. Government Interagency Policies](#)**

d.　**[ADS 205, Integrating Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in USAID's Program Cycle](#)**

e.　**[ADS 501, The Automated Directives System (ADS)](#)**

f. **Policy Registry**

200.5 **ADDITIONAL HELP**
Effective Date: 04/04/2024

a. **ADS 200saa, Policy Document Type Selection**

b. **Development Experience Clearinghouse**

c. **PAC TOR**

d. **Planning for Policy Implementation**

e. **ProgramNet Policy Implementation Assessments Library**

f. **USAID Style Guide**

200.6 **DEFINITIONS**
Effective Date: 04/04/2024

Automated Directives System
USAID's sole, and authoritative source for the policies and procedures ("directives") that govern USAID operations. The ADS conveys codified information to Agency staff so they can carry out their responsibilities, consistent with applicable laws, regulations and Agency mandates. The ADS system is an integral component of the Agency's internal control system to ensure operational effectiveness and efficiency in support of USAID's mission. (**Chapter 200** and **501**)

Development and Humanitarian Practice Areas
Areas widely applicable to USAID's programming across sectors, and strengthen USAID's ability to achieve sustainable results. They do not relate directly to a single technical or programmatic sector. Development practice areas include knowledge management, evaluation, scientific research, geospatial analysis, and other similar topics. (**Chapter 200**)

Interagency
Refers to other Agencies, Departments, Bureaus, and Office of the U.S. government, including, but not limited to the National Security Council, Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Defense, State, and Treasury, Centers for Disease Control, the Office of the U.S. Global AIDS Coordinator, U.S. International Development Finance Corporation, the Office of Science and Technology Policy, and the National Science and Technology Council. (**Chapter 200**)

International Commitments
Refer to international accords (such as formal agreements, conventions, charters, protocols, decisions, recommendations, declarations, arrangements, memoranda of

understanding (MOU), strategic agreements, and statements of intent) to which USAID or the U.S. government has committed. The U.S. government and, by extension, USAID formally signs on to agreements or voluntarily endorses commitments that have the effect of policy and should, therefore, follow the actions and apply the principles in these agreements. (**Chapter 200**)

Policy Implementation
A set of actions taken to achieve the goals of the policy. (**Chapter 200**)

Policy Owner
The formally designated USAID Bureau/Independent Office (B/IO) (or an Operating Unit [OU] within the B/IO) that covers the issue area addressed in the policy and is responsible for the policy's formulation and implementation. (**Chapter 200**)

Policy Principles
Statements that clarify USAID's perspective and guide USAID's actions related to a specific policy area. They are used to clarify USAID's key considerations and technical approach to a policy area. They guide USAID OUs on how to achieve the broader policy goal or vision. (**Chapter 200**)

U.S. Government Interagency Policy Documents
U.S. Government (USG) policy processes are externally driven policies, commonly initiated by the White House, federal agencies and departments, or at the direction of the United States Congress. These can be on development and humanitarian topics. USG interagency policies include documents such as issue-specific policies or strategies jointly drafted by USAID and other federal agencies or departments. USAID often participates in drafting, shaping, and editing USG interagency policy documents. (**Chapter 200**)

USAID Development and Humanitarian Policy
Encompass directives on the objectives, principles, and approaches that shape USAID's development and humanitarian assistance efforts. This includes USAID Policy Framework, USAID policy documents, interagency policy documents, and documents articulating international commitments. USAID publishes four types of policy documents: (1) the Policy Framework; (2) policies, which outline principles to guide decisions and actions in development and humanitarian assistance; (3) strategies, which outline specific and time-bound programmatic results and include a logic model and measurable targets; and (4) position papers that briefly outline principles and approaches on a sub-sector, specific topic, or emerging issue. (**Chapter 200**)

USAID Policy Framework
Establishes the Agency's highest policy priorities, articulates how they coherently translate to the Agency's work, and guides USAID's approaches to foreign assistance and program implementation. (**Chapter 200**)

USAID Position Paper

A USAID-generated document that states the Agency's approach to a sub-sector, practice topic, or emerging issue. A position paper is best paired with internal-only technical guidance or help note for more details on how to implement it. A position paper does not include requirements. (**Chapter 200**)

USAID Strategy

A USAID-generated document, which sets specific and time-bound programmatic results for a sector or cross-cutting area. A strategy articulates a desired end state(-s) or goal(-s), a hierarchy of objectives, a logic model, and the planned actions, which will be taken to achieve them. A strategy must include explicit targets linked to its objectives, a plan for achieving those targets within a defined time period, and a method for assessing progress. (**Chapter 200**)

200_040424