



Limitations to Disclosure and Exemptions to Public Dissemination of USAID Evaluation Reports

A Mandatory Reference for ADS Chapter 201

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As described in [ADS Chapter 201](#), Missions and Washington Operating Units (OUs) will promote transparency and learning by disseminating evaluations when the evaluation report has been completed. Evaluation reports, including Annexes to the report, must be made publicly available by being submitted to the Development Experience Clearing (DEC) (www.dec.usaid.gov) within three months of the evaluation's conclusion.¹

Before becoming publically available, evaluation reports must be adjusted to remove information that falls under one of the “principled exceptions to the presumption in favor of openness” established in [OMB Bulletin 12-01, “Guidance on Collection of U.S. Foreign Assistance Data.”](#) These exceptions include:

- When public disclosure threatens national security interests;
- When public disclosure is likely to jeopardize the personal safety of U.S. personnel or recipients of U.S. resources;
- When public disclosure would interfere with the Agency's ability to effectively discharge its ongoing responsibilities in foreign assistance activities;
- When there are legal constraints on the disclosure of business or proprietary information of non-governmental organizations, contractors, or private sector clients;
- When the laws or regulations of a recipient country apply to a bilateral agreement and restrict access to information; or
- When data reveal private information about individuals that must be kept confidential consistent with ethical guidelines and federal regulations (see [ADS 508, Privacy Program](#)).

If information in the report is removed, it should be clear in the document where information has been removed, and a statement should be included on the cover page stating:

“Limited redactions have been made to in accordance with the principled exceptions to the presumption in favor of openness established in OMB Bulletin 12-01, “Guidance on Collection of U.S. Foreign Assistance Data.”

¹ This Mandatory Reference concerns evaluation *reports*. ADS Policy on limitations to disclosure and exemptions to public dissemination of evaluation *data* are addressed in [ADS 579](#). The principled exemptions to the presumption in favor of openness are the same for both evaluation reports and evaluation data.

Redactions are not appropriate to address USAID disagreement with the findings or content of the evaluation report. In those cases, a statement of difference may be attached as an Annex.

In some cases, limited redactions may not be sufficient and Missions and Washington OUs may request an exception to the requirement to publish the report publicly on the DEC. Principled exceptions to this requirement require clearance from the Bureau for Policy, Planning, and Learning Office of Learning, Evaluation, and Research (PPL/LER); and must fall under one of the “principled exceptions to the presumption in favor of openness” established in [OMB Bulletin 12-01, “Guidance on Collection of U.S. Foreign Assistance Data”](#) as described above.

In most cases, an exception will result in the evaluation report being placed on the Sensitive but Unclassified (SBU) portion of the DEC, which makes it accessible to USAID employees but not available to the public. Requests for an exception must be sent as a decision memo from the relevant Mission Director or Washington-based Office Director to the Director of PPL/LER. The memo must include a justification based on the exceptions described above. For those evaluation reports deemed SBU, Missions and Washington OUs should make every effort to provide an edited version that can be made publicly available.

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