



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

Activity Approval Memorandum (AAM)

Mandatory Reference for ADS Chapter 201

Partial Revision Date: 03/15/2021
Responsible Office: PPL/SPP
File Name: 201mai_031521

I. Overview

Per [ADS 201.3.4](#), Operating Units (OUs) must approve new activities through Activity Approval Memorandums (AAMs). OUs may approve a single activity or multiple, complementary activities (e.g., under a project) through this memorandum.

Annex 1 provides an illustrative AAM template that OUs may customize to meet their needs. Alternatively, OUs may develop their own templates as long as they conform with the AAM functions described in **Section II** below. In all cases, OUs should ensure that their AAM guidance is streamlined and efficient to minimize lead times.

Unless determined otherwise, a Mission Director, Assistant Administrator, or Director of an Independent Office is responsible for approving the AAM. These officials may delegate this authority to the extent appropriate (e.g., to an Office Director or Project Manager for AAMs below a certain threshold).

II. Functions of the AAM

The AAM has several functions:

- 1) Depending on the mechanism type, the AAM typically authorizes the OU to proceed with releasing a solicitation or finalizing an agreement.
- 2) The AAM provides a way for senior management to review and approve an Activity Description for the proposed activity. Depending on the mechanism (contract, grant, cooperative agreement, etc.), the Activity Description could be a Statement of Work (SOW), Statement of Objectives (SOO) Program Description (PD), Concept Note that emerges from a co-creation process, or language the OU will incorporate into an agreement, among other examples. For assistance awards, OUs also may opt to approve an earlier Concept Paper in lieu of an SOW or PD.
- 3) For USAID field Missions, the AAM documents how the activity will advance results set forth in a Project Development Document (PDD) and/or Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS), as applicable.
- 4) The AAM confirms that the OU has satisfied, or will satisfy, the core pre-obligation requirements listed in the illustrative AAM below before obligating funds. These requirements reflect general provisions based in statute, regulation, or other type of legal authority.¹

¹ OUs may document their compliance with other pre-obligation requirements through a simple checklist separate from the AAM (see [Additional Help: List of Pre-Obligation Requirements for New Activities](#)).

ANNEX 1: AAM TEMPLATE



Month DD, YYYY

ACTION MEMO FOR MISSION DIRECTOR/ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR/INDEPENDENT OFFICE DIRECTOR/OTHER WITH DELEGATED AUTHORITY [FULL NAME]

FROM: [Full Name], Director, [Technical] Office

SUBJECT: Activity Approval Memo for the [Name] Activity

Recommendation

That you approve the [“Name”] activity described below and in Tab 1. The purpose of this activity is to [insert purpose, no more than one sentence]. *[If a government-to-government (G2G) activity: By approving this activity, you approve the use of the partner government’s systems and institutions for the implementation of direct assistance, based on the conclusions and recommendations of the G2G risk assessment (see Tab 2).]*

This activity will be a [type of mechanism; e.g., contract, grant, cooperative agreement, cost reimbursement G2G agreement] awarded through [type of solicitation process; e.g., full-and-open competition]. The total USAID estimated contribution to the [Name] activity is [\$XX], with an expected life of [number] years, beginning on or around [expected start date]. The activity will be funded using [funding type or account]. [Office] will manage the funds. [Office] expects an initial obligation of [\$XX] for this award using Fiscal Year (FY) [20XX] funds in FY [20XX].

Approve _____ Disapprove _____

Background/Discussion

This section should be no more than one page and address the following:

- 1. The core development problem that the activity will address;*
- 2. How the OU identified the design need and, if applicable, how it will build on past activities, including whether this activity is a follow-on; and*

Procurement Sensitive

3. *How the design team conducted the analytic design process, including the sources of evidence used.*
4. *If a G2G activity: How the risk assessment process was carried out per ADS 220.3.4 (Steps 2-5).*

Summary Activity Description

This section should summarize key elements of the Activity Description. Generally, this section should be no more than one paragraph.

Linkages

This section should include the following:

- *For Missions, one short paragraph about how the proposed activity will advance results set forth in a Project Development Document (PDD) and/or Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS), as applicable.*
- *For Missions and Washington OUs, one short paragraph about how the activity will support the Agency's key strategies or policies, such as the Journey to Self-Reliance, USAID's [Acquisition and Assistance Strategy](#), and the [New Partnerships Initiative](#).*

Management

*This section should identify the primary office that will manage the activity, and if possible, the Contracting/Agreement Officer's Representative (COR/AOR) or **Government Agreement Technical Representative (GATR)** (by position, title) who will have overall responsibility for day-to-day oversight of the activity.*

Pre-Obligation Requirements

The AAM package must confirm that the OU has satisfied, or will satisfy, the core pre-obligation requirements—as shown herein—before obligating funds. These requirements reflect general provisions based in statute, regulation, or other type of legal authority. OUs may address these requirements through short narratives, as shown below. Alternatively, OUs may opt to attach a checklist as an annex to this memorandum to confirm they have satisfied, or will satisfy, these requirements.

Note: OUs may document their compliance with other pre-obligation requirements in this memorandum, or through a simple checklist separate from the AAM (see [Additional Help: List of Pre-Obligation Requirements for New Activities](#)).

See illustrative language below:

The status of the pre-obligation requirements for the [Name] activity are set forth below. [Name of Mission/Bureau/Independent Office] will not obligate any funds for this activity until it has satisfied all applicable pre-obligation requirements and documented this compliance in its records.

Budget: [A/n Independent Government Cost Estimate (IGCE)/ Budget] that provides a reasonably firm estimate of the cost of this proposed activity to the U.S. Government was completed.

Congressional Notification: Congressional Notification # XX, which expired without objection on [Date], notified the use of funding from [FY XXX] for this activity.

Funding Availability: The table below reflects the current funding available for the [Name] activity. Funds from [FY 20XX] in the amount of [\$XX] are expected to be available for the initial year of implementation.

	Fiscal Year 20[XX]				
[Funding Type/ Account]	[\$XX]	[\$XX]	[\$XX]		
[Funding Type/ Account]	[\$XX]	[\$XX]	[\$XX]		
Total	[\$XX]	[\$XX]	[\$XX]		

Gender Analysis: The mandatory gender analysis described in [ADS 205](#) was completed as part of the [Name] [project/activity] design process, and key findings were incorporated into the design as appropriate. *[Include a couple examples of key findings and how the OU incorporated them into the design and/or solicitation as applicable.]*

Environmental Compliance: *This subsection must state the current status of the environmental compliance assessment(s) that cover this activity per [ADS 204](#), [201.3.4.5](#), and [22 CFR 216](#). Statements could be to the effect of the following, depending on the unique circumstances of the activity:*

If a threshold determination or Request for Categorical Exemption was approved:

- [A/n Initial Environmental Examination (IEE)/Request for Categorical Exclusion (RCE)/Environmental Assessment (EA)] for this activity, with concurrence from the [Bureau/Independent Office Environmental Officer] has been approved. *If applicable:* The threshold determination was [fill in determination]. *If the threshold decision was a Negative Determination with Conditions or a Positive Determination:* The [COR/AOR/GATR], in consultation with the Mission Environmental Officer (MEO), will oversee the implementation of the requirements in the [IEE/EA]. In addition, the MEO must approve an Environmental Mitigation and Monitoring Plan (EMMP) before major programmatic implementation begins.

If there was not sufficient information on which to complete a meaningful environmental review during the project/activity design process, and the activity will be further defined during the solicitation process:

- A threshold determination for this activity, with concurrence from the [Bureau/Independent Office Environmental Officer], has been deferred until the pre-award stage. Until a threshold determination is approved, no award will be made. The Planner will work with the Mission Environmental Officer (MEO) to complete all environmental compliance documentation in a timely manner. The designated [COR/AOR/GATR] will oversee the implementation of these requirements, as applicable.

If there was not sufficient information upon which to complete a meaningful review during the project/activity design process, and the activity will be further defined post-award:

- A threshold determination for this activity, with concurrence from the [Bureau/Independent Office Environmental Officer], has been deferred until the post-award stage. Until a threshold decision is approved, major implementation may not occur. The designated [COR/AOR/GATR] will work with the Mission Environmental Officer (MEO) to complete all environmental compliance documentation in a timely manner. The [COR/AOR/GATR] will oversee the implementation of these requirements, as applicable.

Climate Risk Assessment: *This subsection must state the current status of the climate risk assessment that covers the activity per [ADS 201.3.4.5](#), [ADS 201mal](#), and [Executive Order 13677](#). Statements could be to the effect of the following, depending on the unique circumstances of the activity:*

If a climate risk assessment was completed during the project/activity design process:

- The mandatory climate risk assessment described in ADS 201mal was completed as part of the [Name] [project/activity] design process. The assessment identified [low, moderate, and/or high] climate-related risks associated with this activity. *If the assessment identified moderate or high risks:* This assessment was part of the approved [insert environmental compliance document (e.g., Initial Environmental Examination [IEE])], and climate risk management measures [have been/will be] integrated into the [Scope of Work; Environmental Mitigation and Monitoring Plan; Activity Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Plan, etc.]. The designated [COR/AOR/GATR] will oversee the implementation of the requirements. *If the assessment identified low risks:* This assessment was documented in the approved [insert environmental compliance document (e.g., IEE)]. As the assessment identified low risks, no additional measures to mitigate climate risk are required.

If there was not sufficient information upon which to complete a meaningful assessment during the project/activity design process, and the activity will be further defined during the solicitation process or post-award:

- The mandatory climate risk assessment described in ADS 201mal has been deferred, with [Bureau/Independent Office Environmental Officer] concurrence, until [the pre-award stage or the post-award stage]. Until an assessment is approved, [an award may not be made/major implementation may not occur]. The [Planner/COR/AOR/GATR] will work with the Climate Integration Lead to complete the assessment in a timely manner. The [COR/AOR/GATR] will oversee the implementation of these requirements, as applicable.

If a climate risk assessment is not required because the CDCS-level risk-screening (or for Washington, a higher-level climate-risk assessment) did not identify any moderate or high risks for the relevant Development Objective (DO), Intermediate Result (IR) and/or sector:

- An activity-level climate risk assessment is not required because the [CDCS] did not identify any moderate or high risks for the [name] [Development Objective (DO)/Intermediate Result (IR)/sector]. This determination was documented in the approved [insert environmental compliance document (e.g., IEE)].

If a G2G activity: G2G Risk Assessment: The mandatory risk assessment described in [ADS 220](#) was completed. This assessment informed the conclusions and recommendations in the resultant Risk Mitigation Plan and (if applicable) Capacity Development Plan (see Tab 2). The [GATR] will ensure that [this/these plan(s) is/are] incorporated into the final agreement and associated documents as appropriate.

Authority

Per [ADS 103](#), as [Mission Director/Assistant Administrator/Independent Office Director] for [[USAID/Country]/[Washington Bureau or Independent Office]], you have delegated authority for all aspects related to “program implementation” and “strategic planning” for [Mission/Bureau/Independent Office]. Therefore, you have the authority to approve this Action Memorandum.

Attachments:

Tab 1—Activity Description (e.g., an SOW, SOO, PD, Concept Note, language to incorporate into an agreement, etc.)

Tab 2—If a G2G activity: 1) Risk Mitigation Plan, and 2) if applicable, Capacity Development Plan

CLEARANCE PAGE FOR ACTIVITY APPROVAL MEMO for the [Name] activity

Drafter: [Full Name], [Office/Title], [Phone Number]

The list of clearances prior to Mission Director/Assistant Administrator/designee approval is at each OU's discretion. However, it is highly recommended that this list be efficient or streamlined to facilitate the activity's expeditious review and approval.

Clearances

[Technical Office]: [JDoe]

[Program Office]: [JDoe]

[OAA]: [JDoe]

[RLO/GC]: [JDoe]

[DMD/DAA]: [JDoe]

Clearance Status

Date

If applicable, Info-Copy

[OFM]: [JDoe]