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ADS Chapter 501

The Automated Directives System (ADS)

Partial Revision Date: 05/26/2023
Responsible Office: M/MPBP/POL
File Name: 501_052623

Functional Series 500 – Management Services
 ADS 501 – The Automated Directives System (ADS)
 POC for ADS 501: See [ADS 501maa, ADS Chapters and Point of Contact List](#)

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ADS 501 – The Automated Directives System (ADS)

501.1 OVERVIEW

Effective Date: 05/12/2023

This chapter describes the scope, structure, and format of USAID’s Automated Directives System (ADS), as well the processes for developing, clearing, disseminating, and maintaining operational policies (i.e., ADS chapters or mandatory references) and associated help references (hereinafter collectively referred to as “ADS documents”). The ADS is USAID’s sole, authoritative source for the policies and procedures that govern USAID operations.

501.2 PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITIES

Effective Date: 05/12/2023

a. The **Bureau for Management, Office of Management Policy, Budget and Performance, Policy Division (M/MPBP/POL)** provides oversight, guidance, and support for the development, clearance, dissemination, and maintenance of ADS documents. In support of this function, there are two key M/MPBP/POL roles: 1) Policy Analysts and 2) the ADS Team.

1) Policy Analysts:

- a) Support ADS Points of Contact (POCs) in developing new ADS documents and/or substantively revising ADS documents;
- b) Review draft ADS documents to ensure that they: are clear, concise, and coherent; conform with relevant laws, regulations, and Agency policies; minimize burden to the extent appropriate; and advance Agency priorities (e.g., Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility [DEIA], burden reduction) as applicable; and
- c) Conduct implementation and impact assessments during policy implementation to inform policy improvements.

For a current list of Policy Analyst assignments by chapter, see [ADS 501sal, M/MPBP/POL Policy Analysts](#).

2) The ADS Team:

- a) Coordinates the Agency clearance process described in section **501.3.4**, and exceptions to the Agency clearance process described in section **501.3.5**;

- b) Makes line and copy edits to ADS documents to ensure they conform to the style guide in [ADS 501mac, ADS Writing Guidelines and Style Guide](#);
- c) Administers the [ADS website](#); and
- d) Issues Agency Notices on the sponsoring Bureau/Independent Office's (B/IO's) behalf that announce new, revised, or archived ADS documents.

The ADS Team can be reached at ads@usaid.gov.

- b. **M/MPBP leadership** provides final approval of all ADS documents prior to issuance, after such documents have been cleared through the Agency process per section **501.3.4**, or an exempted process per section **501.3.5**.
- c. **ADS Points of Contact (POCs)** are designated individuals who have primary responsibility for developing ADS documents within their areas of responsibility and updating them as needed to ensure they remain current. ADS POCs work to ensure that: 1) ADS documents under their purview are clear, concise, and coherent; 2) that they conform with relevant laws, regulations, and Agency policies; 3) that they minimize burden to the extent appropriate; and 4) that they advance cross-cutting Agency priorities as applicable.
- d. **ADS Clearing Officials** are individuals designated by their B/IO's leadership to review new and substantively revised policies and provide comments and clearance on behalf of their B/IO. In most cases, ADS Clearing Officials collaborate with key colleagues in their B/IO during the clearance process to collect comments and adjudicate them as necessary to ensure that the final submission fully reflects the B/IO's position.

Each B/IO is allowed two designated ADS Clearing Officials. If a B/IO opts to only designate one ADS Clearing Official, the Clearing Official is responsible for designating an alternate when on leave for three or more business days by emailing ads@usaid.gov. For a current list of ADS Clearing Officials, see [ADS 501mab, Clearance List for ADS Material](#).

- e. **Office Directors, Division Chiefs, or their deputies in B/IOs** (hereinafter referred to collectively as "Office Directors") designate ADS POCs for existing or prospective ADS documents under their B/IO's purview. Responsible B/IO leadership must ensure that designated ADS POCs: 1) are subject matter experts (SMEs), or alternatively, are individuals who can develop and/or update the ADS document in coordination with SMEs; and 2) are U.S. direct hires since this function is inherently governmental per [FAR 7.503](#).

f. The **USAID Workforce** must comply with the policies and required procedures in the ADS. As stakeholders with equities in USAID policies, they may also provide feedback to support continuous improvement by: 1) submitting comments on any policy through the [ADS Feedback Form](#); 2) supporting policy formulation activities; and/or 3) participating in implementation or impact assessments (see **501.3.7.2**).

501.3 POLICY DIRECTIVES AND REQUIRED PROCEDURES

501.3.1 ADS Scope and Purpose

Effective Date: 05/26/2023

The ADS 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.

The ADS:

- **May not** contain procedures that are internal to a B/IO or Mission (for guidance on Mission Orders, see [ADS 527sab, Guidance on Preparing Mission Orders](#));
- **May not** establish requirements or procedures for contractors, recipients and/or other outside parties. In addition, USAID-directed acquisition and assistance procedures that convey a cost or administrative impact on contractors and/or recipients may be subject to notice-and-comment rulemaking in accordance with the Office of Federal Procurement Policy Act ([41 U.S.C. § 1707](#)), and/or prior approval from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) in accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act ([44 U.S.C. § 3501](#)).
- **May not** supersede any federal requirements that take precedence over USAID policy decisions, including but not limited to requirements in federal laws, regulations, Executive Orders, Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circulars and Bulletins, and provisions in the Department of State's [Foreign Affairs Manual \(FAM\)](#) applicable to USAID.

501.3.2 ADS Coherence with Development Policies

Effective Date: 05/12/2023

Operational policies in the ADS complement development policies developed and cleared under [ADS 200, Development Policy](#). Per ADS 200, there are multiple types of development policy documents, including "policies" and "strategies." "Policies" articulate the Agency's corporate position and set a specific direction for a sectoral or cross-

cutting goal or issue. “Strategies” focus on achieving specific programmatic targets in a sector or cross-cutting area. For a comprehensive list of development policies, see the [Policy Registry](#).

In cases in which a development policy establishes operational requirements, the B/IO that owns the policy must work with M/MPBP/POL and the ADS POC(s) associated with the relevant ADS operational polic(ies) to make conforming edits as soon as feasible to ensure ongoing policy coherence. For further guidance on the clearance process for conforming amendments to the ADS, see section **501.3.5.4**.

501.3.3 ADS Architecture

501.3.3.1 ADS Functional Series

Effective Date: 05/12/2023

The ADS is organized into six functional series. Taken together, these series cover USAID programming and management operations:

- Series 100: Agency Organization and Legal Affairs
- Series 200: Programming
- Series 300: Acquisition and Assistance
- Series 400: Human Resources
- Series 500: Management Services
- Series 600: Budget and Finance

501.3.3.2 Overview of ADS Chapters and Associated References

Effective Date: 05/12/2023

Each ADS functional series contains chapters organized by topic.

- **ADS Chapters** are policies that establish mandatory operational requirements on a given topic. ADS chapters may also include non-mandatory guidance, where applicable (see section **501.3.3.4** on requirements versus guidance).

ADS chapters can contain two types of references: 1) mandatory references and 2) additional help references.

- **Mandatory References** are policies appended to an ADS chapter (or multiple ADS chapters) that establish mandatory operational requirements (and non-mandatory guidance, where applicable) on a given sub-topic. Since mandatory

references establish mandatory requirements, they carry the same weight as ADS chapters in establishing required procedures. There are two types of mandatory references:

- **Internal Mandatory References** that are developed, cleared, and codified according to the clearance processes described in this chapter; and
- **External Mandatory References** that are cleared or codified through processes outside of USAID (e.g., a law promulgated by the U.S. Congress, or a regulation subject to federal rulemaking procedures).
- **Additional Help References** are a type of ADS document appended to an ADS chapter (or multiple ADS chapters) that provide non-mandatory guidance on a given sub-topic. Since additional help references cannot establish mandatory requirements, they are not considered to be policy. As a result, their addition or revision is considered to be a conforming amendment that is not subject to the standard Agency clearance process (see sections **501.3.5.1** and **501.3.5.4** on conforming amendments).

501.3.3.3 Structure of ADS Chapters and Associated References

Effective Date: 05/12/2023

Each ADS chapter has a standardized structure with six mandatory sections. For additional guidance, see [ADS 501saq, ADS Chapter Template](#).

1. **Overview:** This section provides a brief summary of the purpose of the chapter and/or the major requirements that it addresses, as well as brief background (if necessary) on why the chapter exists. Ideally, this section is no longer than one to two paragraphs.
2. **Primary Responsibilities:** This section lists the major operating units (OU), positions, or functions at USAID that are responsible for executing requirements described in the subsequent Policy Directives and Required Procedures section, along with brief descriptions of key responsibilities.
3. **Policy Directives and Required Procedures:** This section is the heart of the ADS chapter. It provides mandatory requirements, as well as non-mandatory guidance, where applicable. This section is typically broken down into subsections so that users can quickly find the information they need.
4. **Mandatory References:** This section provides a list of mandatory references with embedded hyperlinks. It is broken down into two subsections: 1) Internal Mandatory References and 2) External Mandatory References.

5. **Additional Help:** This section provides a list of additional help references with embedded hyperlinks.
6. **Definitions:** This section lists any key terms that are mentioned in the chapter that need to be defined. If any terms in this section exist in other chapters, the definitions in the respective chapters must align (see the [ADS Glossary](#) for a master list of terms).

Internal mandatory references do not have a standardized structure. However, ADS POCs must follow the [ADS 501mac, ADS Writing Guidelines and Style Guide](#). Additional help references also do not have a standardized structure. While the structure of additional help references is flexible, ADS POCs should follow [ADS 501mac](#) to the extent appropriate.

501.3.3.4 Requirements versus Non-Mandatory Guidance

Effective Date: 05/12/2023

As described in **501.3.3.2**, the ADS contains both requirements and non-mandatory guidance:

- **Agency Requirements** refer to operational procedures that are obligatory wherever applicable. Agency requirements are codified in ADS chapters and mandatory references (see section **501.3.3.2**), and are denoted by the auxiliary verb, “must.”
- **Non-Mandatory Guidance** refers to recommendations, guidelines, or best practices, implying some degree of discretion. Non-mandatory guidance can reside in any type of ADS document, including additional help references (see **501.3.3.2**), and is denoted by the auxiliary verb, “should.”

501.3.3.5 ADS Document Ownership

Effective Date: 05/12/2023

Each ADS document has a designated B/IO that “owns” the document. The B/IO that owns the document must have primary responsibility for, or oversight of, the principal topic addressed in the chapter. In the limited case in which two B/IOs have jurisdiction over a topic, two B/IOs may own the document.

Each ADS document also has a designated ADS POC (or in limited cases, POCs). The ADS POC must be employed in the B/IO that owns the document. The POC has primary responsibility for developing the ADS document and/or updating it as needed to ensure it remains current. For a current list of ADS POCs for ADS chapters, see [ADS 501maa, ADS Chapters and Point of Contact List](#).

Guidance regarding designating or replacing ADS POCs is as follows:

- Office Directors, Division Chiefs, or their deputies in responsible B/IOs (hereinafter referred to collectively as “Office Directors”) must designate ADS POCs for existing or prospective ADS documents under their B/IO’s purview by emailing the ADS Team at ads@usaid.gov. The Office Director must ensure that the designated ADS POC is: 1) a SME, or alternatively, is an individual who can develop and/or update the ADS document in coordination with SMEs; and 2) is a U.S. direct hire since this function is inherently governmental per [FAR 7.503](#).
- If an ADS POC determines that an ADS document is more appropriately managed by a different B/IO, the responsible ADS POC must work with their Office Director to identify the appropriate B/IO, obtain the B/IO’s buy-in, and identify a new ADS POC. After identifying the new ADS POC, the responsible Office Director must email the ADS Team to alert them of the change. The Office Director must copy the new ADS POC and the new POC’s Office Director on the designation email and indicate that all parties concur with this decision. If the Office Director is unable to obtain the target B/IO’s buy-in, the Office Director may contact the ADS Team for assistance.
- By default, the ADS POC is also the POC for subsidiary ADS mandatory references and additional help references (i.e., ADS documents that share the same ADS number). However, in some cases, a different ADS POC may own the document. Depending on the topic addressed in the reference, this POC may or may not be from the same B/IO. To designate a different ADS POC for an ADS reference, the responsible Office Director in the B/IO that seeks to own the reference must email the ADS Team to alert them of the designation. The Office Director must copy the ADS POC for the parent chapter on the designation email and indicate that the POC concurs with this decision.
- If an ADS POC departs their position, the ADS POC must alert the ADS Team and work with their Office Director to identify a new ADS POC.

501.3.3.6 ADS Document Revision Types

Effective Date: 05/12/2023

There are three different types of revisions to ADS documents. The applicable revision type is listed on the cover page of the ADS document along with the issuance date:

- **Full Revision:** More than 75 percent of the ADS document has been revised since the previous issuance.
- **Partial Revision:** Less than 75 percent of the ADS document has been revised since the previous issuance. For documents classified as partially revised, new or changed language is highlighted in yellow so that users can quickly identify what has changed.

- **New Edition:** The ADS document is a new policy and there have not been any previous versions.

501.3.4 Agency Clearance Process

Effective Date: 05/12/2023

Unless exempted per section **501.3.5**, ADS POCs must request clearance through the Agency clearance process for all new ADS chapters or mandatory references (hereinafter collectively referred to as “policies”). In addition, unless exempted, POCs must request clearance through the Agency clearance process for fully or partially revised policies that include substantive revisions. “Substantive revisions” refer to changes that either add or remove a requirement, or substantively alter the meaning or intent of a requirement.

501.3.4.1 Overview of the Agency Clearance Process

Effective Date: 05/12/2023

The Agency clearance process consists of three phases. In addition, there is a critical period prior to this process known as “Phase Zero.”

Overview of Agency Clearance Process	
Phase 0	Policy Formulation. The ADS POC works collaboratively with stakeholders to develop and/or update the policy, and then submits it M/MPBP/POL (see 501.3.4.2 for additional information).
Phase 1	Editing. M/MPBP/POL works with the ADS POC to prepare the policy for the clearance process. The Policy Analyst reviews the draft policy and may raise issues for the ADS POC’s action. A designated editor on the ADS Team then edits the policy as necessary (see 501.3.4.3 for additional information).
Phase 2	Clearance. The ADS Team sends the policy to ADS Clearing Officials for their review and clearance. The ADS POC revises the policy to address comments, if any. The policy may undergo a round-two reclearance process if the policy was substantively altered (see 501.3.4.4 for additional information).
Phase 3	Issuance. The ADS Team makes final edits to the policy and M/MPBP leadership approves it for issuance. The ADS Team then codifies the policy on the ADS website at the same time that it issues an Agency Notice to announce its release (see 501.3.4.5 for additional information).

501.3.4.2 Phase Zero: Policy Formulation

Effective Date: 05/12/2023

During Phase Zero, the ADS POC works collaboratively with the responsible Policy Analyst and other stakeholders to analyze, develop, and/or update the subject policy. As part of this process, the ADS POC must do the following:

a. Contact M/MPBP/POL. As a first step, the ADS POC must contact M/MPBP/POL at ads@usaid.gov to obtain a Google Doc version of the current policy. If the envisioned policy change is significant, the ADS POC may also request a consultation with their designated Policy Analyst to discuss their plans and/or seek support as needed. For a current list of Policy Analyst assignments by chapter, see [ADS 501sal](#).

b. Review Any/All Policies that May Affect the Prospective Policy. The ADS POC must review all policies that impact the prospective policy. This includes, but is not limited to:

- The current policy and its associated references;
- Relevant laws, regulations, and/or other sources of federal requirement;
- Relevant USAID policies, strategies, and/or vision statements; and/or
- Relevant interagency policies, strategies, and/or vision statements.

c. Identify and Execute a Plan for Analysis and Stakeholder Engagement. If the envisioned policy change is significant, the ADS POC should work with their B/IO colleagues and other Agency stakeholders to identify and execute a plan for analysis and engagement to ensure that policy decisions are based on evidence. Potential sources of evidence include focus groups, key informant interviews, data, and surveys, among other approaches.

The ADS POC may also request that M/MPBP/POL conduct an independent assessment to inform decision making. This option can help minimize bias and enhance the credibility of recommendations, while generating insights that provide fresh perspectives. For additional information on this service, see section **501.3.7.2**.

d. Develop or Update the Policy Based on ADS Writing Guidelines. The ADS POC must develop or update the policy based on the writing guidelines in [ADS 501mac, ADS Writing Guidelines and Style Guide](#).

e. Clear the Policy through the ADS POC's B/IO and Other Stakeholders as Appropriate. Before submitting the policy to M/MPBP/POL, the ADS POC must clear the final draft of the policy through their B/IO based on their B/IO's internal procedures. If the policy change is significant, the ADS POC should also pre-clear or pre-vet the policy through any major Agency stakeholders inside or outside of their B/IO that have equities in the policy. While this is not mandatory, this practice can help ensure that ADS POCs address any controversial issues and/or generate necessary buy-in before the policy enters the official clearance process.

f. Submit the Policy Package to M/MPBP/POL to Initiate the ADS Process.

The ADS POC must submit the final policy package to the ADS Team at ads@usaid.gov to initiate the ADS process. This package must include:

1. The final policy draft (in Google doc format) that was cleared through the ADS POC's B/IO;
2. The [ADS POC Policy Submission Form](#); and
3. An Agency Notice that announces the release of the new or revised policy. The ADS POC should ensure that the submitted Notice: 1) conforms with the [Guidelines for Drafting ADS Policy Notices](#); and 2) has been cleared according to their B/IO's internal procedures for Agency Notices. (Note: Per [ADS 504](#), M/MPBP/POL has management oversight of the Agency Notice system. Per section **501.3.4.5**, M/MPBP/POL must issue ADS Agency Notices on the B/IO's behalf at the same time that the policy is codified.)

501.3.4.3 Phase One: Editing

Effective Date: 05/12/2023

During Phase One, M/MPBP/POL works with the ADS POC to prepare the policy for the Agency clearance process.

This process includes the following steps:

1. **The Policy Analyst Reviews the Policy and Associated Agency Notice.** After the ADS POC provides the draft policy to M/MPBP/POL at the conclusion of Phase Zero (see section **501.3.4.2**), the designated Policy Analyst must review the policy to ensure: 1) that it is clear, concise, and coherent; 2) that it conforms with relevant laws, regulations, and Agency policies; 3) that it minimizes burden to the extent appropriate; and 4) that it advances cross-cutting Agency priorities (e.g., DEIA) as applicable. Based on this review, the Policy Analyst may develop some questions or comments for the ADS POC to address.

In some cases, the Policy Analyst may determine that the policy is not ready to enter the Agency clearance process, because it requires further revisions. In this case, the Policy Analyst communicates further guidance to the ADS POC.

2. **The ADS Team Edits the Policy.** Subsequent to the Policy Analyst's content review, the ADS Team must make line and copy edits to ensure the policy conforms to the style guide in [ADS 501mac, ADS Writing Guidelines and Style Guide](#). If the policy is an existing policy that has been partially revised, the ADS Team must highlight all revisions in yellow. If the POC revises 75 percent or more of an existing policy, it is considered a full revision. The ADS Team must provide the revised policy containing any edits or comments from the Policy

Analyst and the ADS Team to the ADS POC.

3. **ADS POC Responds to Comments.** The ADS POC must respond to any edits or comments from the Policy Analyst and the ADS Team. To ensure the ADS revision process continues to move expeditiously, the ADS POC should respond to edits and/or comments within five business days. Once all parties are satisfied, the revised policy proceeds to Phase Two (see section **501.3.4.4**).

501.3.4.4 Phase Two: Clearance

Effective Date: 05/12/2023

During Phase Two, the ADS Team coordinates the Agency clearance process with designated ADS Clearing Officials. Based on the comments that ADS Clearing Officials submit, the ADS POC revises the policy to obtain clearance.

This process includes the following steps:

1. **The ADS Team Sends Policy to ADS Clearing Officials.** Upon the conclusion of Phase One (see section **501.3.4.3**), the ADS Team must send the policy draft, along with a Google-based [ADS Clearance Comment Tracker](#), to ADS Clearing Officials for their review and clearance.
2. **ADS Clearing Officials Review Policy and Provide Comments.** ADS Clearing Officials must review the policy and provide comments or suggested changes, as applicable, in a B/IO-specific copy of the provided comment tracker. If the policy is an existing policy that has been partially revised, the ADS Clearing Official should only comment on the revised language, as reflected in the yellow highlights.

In most cases, ADS Clearing Officials should also collaborate with colleagues in their B/IO during this period to collect comments. In such cases, the ADS Clearing Official must adjudicate them as necessary to ensure that the final submission reflects the B/IO's corporate position.

ADS Clearing Officials must ensure that responses in their B/IO's comment tracker flag any "substantive comments" that either request: 1) new requirement(s), and/or 2) edits that substantively alter the meaning or intent of a requirement. ADS Clearing Officials must submit their clearance comments – or confirmation that their B/IO has no comments – to the ADS Team within 10 business days of receiving the policy draft. If an ADS Clearing Official does not respond within 10 business days, they forfeit their right to clear. If there are extenuating circumstances, ADS Clearing Officials may request an extension by emailing the ADS Mailbox (ads@usaid.gov) with the justification for the request. ADS Clearing Officials must request the extension before the original clearance deadline ends (i.e., the 10th business day). M/MPBP/POL may grant the

extension at their discretion. The maximum extension is five business days. The ADS Team must not accept comments after the deadline period unless an extension was approved.

During the clearance period, the ADS Team may only accept comments from the authorized ADS Clearing Official unless the official designates, in writing, a different individual to provide comments/clearance on their behalf (see [ADS 501mab, Clearance List for ADS Documents](#)).

3. **The ADS Team Consolidates Comments.** Upon receiving the B/IO-specific comment trackers, the ADS Team must merge them into a single [Agency Clearance Consolidated Tracker](#) that includes additional columns to capture the ADS's POC response. The ADS Team must then send the consolidated tracker to the ADS POC for their review and response.
4. **ADS POC Revises Policy and Responds to Comments.** The ADS POC must review the comments in the consolidated comment tracker and decide what, if any, revisions to make (see [ADS 501sam, How to Sort and Filter Comments in ADS Comments Trackers](#)). Based on these decisions, the ADS POC must: 1) revise the policy as appropriate; and 2) note in the associated comment tracker whether each comment was addressed or declined. If an ADS Clearing Official provided comments on text that was not revised as part of a partial revision, the ADS POC may address these comments, or may note them for a future revision.

If the ADS POC declines a suggested change, the POC must explain the rationale in the comment tracker. In some cases, the POC may also decide that it is appropriate to reach out to the commenter (often the ADS Clearing Official) and/or leadership in their B/IO to verbally explain the rationale or negotiate a compromise. This is often important in the case of "substantive comments."

The ADS POC must send the final revised policy, along with responses in the associated comment tracker, to the ADS Team. The ADS POC should respond to clearance comments within 10 business days. If an extension is needed, the ADS POC must email ads@usaid.gov with justification to why more time is needed to respond.

5. **The ADS Team Sends Responses to ADS Clearing Officials.** The ADS Team must send the revised policy to ADS Clearing Officials along with a filtered version of the consolidated comment tracker that just includes responses to comments from the relevant B/IO. Before sending the revised policy, the ADS Team must ensure that additional revisions made during the clearance process are highlighted in yellow.
6. **If Applicable, the ADS Team Coordinates a Round-Two Reclearance**

Process (Procedures 1-4). If an ADS Clearing Official submitted a “substantive comment” during the clearance process to request the addition or removal of a requirement or edits that substantively alter the meaning or intent of a requirement, and the ADS POC accepted the substantive comment(s), the ADS Team must send the revised policy to all ADS Clearing Officials for a round-two reclearance process. During this reclearance process, the ADS Clearing Officials must only comment on policy that changed as a result of substantive comments that were accepted during the first round of clearance. The ADS Team must highlight this revised language for ADS Clearing Officials before sending the policy out for reclearance. The ADS Team must provide five business days for ADS Clearing Officials to respond to the revised document(s). If circumstances warrant greater urgency, the reclearance time may be shorter.

If, after reclearance, agreement has still not been reached on a substantive issue, leadership from the ADS POC’s B/IO should contact M/MPBP leadership to schedule a mediated discussion. If differences cannot be resolved through mediation, M/MPBP leadership may further elevate the issue for decision to the Assistant Administrator for Management (AA/M), which may include consultation with the Administrator or Deputy Administrator. M/MPBP should work with both parties to ensure that the differences are clearly set forth in a joint/split memorandum when the proposed action is presented to the AA/M for decision.

501.3.4.5 Phase Three: Issuance

Effective Date: 05/12/2023

During Phase Three, the ADS Team makes final edits to the policy, secures approval from M/MPBP leadership, and codifies the policy on the [ADS website](#) at the same time that it releases an Agency Notice to announce its release.

This process includes the following steps:

- 1. The ADS Team Makes Final Edits.** The ADS Team must make final line/copy edits, as necessary. If the policy was partially revised, the ADS Team must also ensure that any additional revisions are highlighted in yellow.
- 2. M/MPBP Leadership Approves the Policy and Associated Agency Notice.** M/MPBP leadership must review the policy and associated Agency Notice and provide final approval as appropriate. In limited cases, M/MPBP leadership may ask questions or request changes (including to the Agency Notice).
- 3. The ADS Team Issues the Policy and Agency Notice.** Once approved, the ADS Team must convert the final Google Doc into a PDF that is compliant with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act ([29 U.S.C. § 794d](#)) and post it on the [ADS website](#). At the same, the ADS Team must issue the Agency Notice that announces the policy’s release on the B/IO’s behalf.

501.3.5 Exceptions to the Agency Clearance Process

501.3.5.1 Overview of Exception Types

Effective Date: 05/12/2023

There are four types of exceptions to the standard Agency clearance process (see section **501.3.4**), each of which is associated with a different limited clearance process. For additional guidance on these limited clearance processes, see sections **501.3.5.2** to **501.3.5.5**.

- 1. Policy Approved by the Administrator/Deputy Administrator.** Applies to new, fully, or partially revised policy that is approved by the Administrator or Deputy Administrator (see section **501.3.5.2**).
- 2. Policy Owned by the Office of Human Capital and Talent Management (HCTM).** Applies to new fully, or partially revised policy in the ADS 400 series that is owned by HCTM (see section **501.3.5.3**).
- 3. Conforming Amendments.** Applies to:
 - Revisions to policy that directly align (or “conform”) with federal laws, regulations, or other sources of federal requirement;
 - Revisions to policy that directly align (or “conform”) with other policies in the ADS, or Agency decisions that have been subject to high-level review;
 - Revisions to policy that do not change the meaning or intent of any requirements (e.g., updates to hyperlinks; line edits to improve clarity; “should”-statements, etc.); and
 - Revisions to, or addition of, additional help references that conform with the policy and do not themselves establish any new requirements (see section **501.3.5.4**).
- 4. Archival of ADS Documents.** Applies to archiving policy or additional help references (see section **501.3.5.5**).

In addition to these four exception types, [ADS 501](#) and [ADS 504](#), and their accompanying references, are also excepted from the Agency clearance process.

501.3.5.2 Process for Administrator/ Deputy Administrator Approval

Effective Date: 05/12/2023

Per section **501.3.5.1**, policies that are approved by the Administrator or Deputy Administrator are excepted from the standard Agency clearance process described in section **501.3.4**. ADS POCs should only use this option in extraordinary circumstances, and in consultation with their leadership. Careful consideration is important because policies that are cleared through the Agency clearance process (see section **501.3.4**) benefit from Agency feedback representing a diversity of technical and functional perspectives, resulting in policies that are arguably more feasible, operational, and effective.

If an ADS POC opts to utilize this option, the process is as follows:

1. **ADS POC Contacts the ADS Team.** As a first step, the ADS POC should contact M/MPBP/POL at ads@usaid.gov to obtain a Google Doc version of the current policy.
2. **ADS POC Drafts the New or Revised Policy.** The ADS POC should develop the new or revised policy such that it conforms with the policy formulation guidelines in section **501.3.4.2**.
3. **ADS POC Submits Policy and Associated Agency Notice for Approval to Administrator or Deputy Administrator.** The ADS POC must submit the policy, and an associated Agency Notice to announce the policy's issuance for approval through an Action Memo to the Administrator or Deputy Administrator, with clearance from their B/IO, Office of the General Counsel (GC), and the Bureau for Management (M Bureau). The ADS POC should also clear the Action Memo through any B/IOs that have major equities in policy implementation. In the Action Memo, the ADS POC should provide a justification for clearing the policy through the Administrator or Deputy Administrator.
4. **The Policy Analyst Reviews Policy to Inform M Bureau's Clearance.** As part of M Bureau's clearance, the designated Policy Analyst should review the policy.
5. **Once Approved, ADS POC Submits Policy Package to the ADS Team.** Once the Administrator or Deputy Administrator approves the policy, the ADS POC must send the following package to the ADS Team at ads@usaid.gov:
 - A Google Doc of the final policy draft that was approved by the Administrator or Deputy Administrator; and
 - The approved, signed Action Memo.
6. **The ADS Team Makes Final Edits.** The ADS Team must line/copy edit the final policy, as necessary, to ensure it conforms to the style guide in [ADS 501mac, ADS Writing Guidelines and Style Guide](#). If the policy was partially revised, the

ADS Team must also ensure that revisions are highlighted in yellow.

7. **M/MPBP Leadership Approves the Policy and Associated Agency Notice for Issuance.** M/MPBP leadership must provide a final quality control review. Since the Administrator has already approved the policy, M's Bureau's approval at this juncture is limited to ADS standards as defined in this chapter and conformance with laws, regulations, and/or other sources of federal requirement.
8. **The ADS Team Issues the Policy and Agency Notice.** The ADS Team must convert the final Google Doc into a PDF that is compliant with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act ([29 U.S.C. § 794d](#)) and post it on the [ADS website](#). At the same, the ADS Team must issue the Agency Notice announcing the policy's release on the B/IO's behalf.

501.3.5.3 Process for Policy Owned by HCTM

Effective Date: 05/12/2023

Per section **501.3.5.1**, policies that are owned by HCTM are excepted from the standard Agency clearance process described in section **501.3.4**.

The process is as follows:

1. **ADS POC Contacts the ADS Team.** As a first step, the ADS POC must contact M/MPBP/POL at ads@usaid.gov to obtain a Google Doc version of the current policy.
2. **ADS POC Drafts the New or Revised Policy.** The ADS POC should develop the new or revised policy such that it conforms with the policy formulation guidelines in section **501.3.4.2**.
3. **ADS POC Clears the Policy through HCTM, GC, and the Unions.** The ADS POC must clear the policy through HCTM, GC, and the two Unions that represent USAID employees: 1) the American Federation for Government Employees (AFGE); and 2) the American Foreign Service Association (AFSA).
4. **ADS POC Submits Policy Package to the ADS Team.** The ADS POC must send the following package to the ADS Team at ads@usaid.gov:
 - A Google Doc of the final policy draft that was cleared through HCTM, GC, and the Unions, along with clearance documentation from these three parties;
 - The [ADS POC Policy Submission Form](#); and

- An Agency Notice that announces the release of the new or revised policy. The ADS POC should ensure that the submitted Notice: 1) conforms with the [Guidelines for Drafting ADS Policy Notices](#); and 2) has been cleared according to their B/IO's internal procedures for Agency Notices. (Note: Per [ADS 504](#), M/MPBP/POL has management oversight of the Agency Notice. Per section **501.3.4.5**, M/MPBP/POL must issue ADS Agency Notices on the B/IO's behalf at the same time that the policy is codified.)
- 5. The Policy Analyst Reviews the Policy and Agency Notice.** The designated Policy Analyst must review the package. The Policy Analyst must place particular emphasis on ensuring that any new or revised requirements advance DEIA as appropriate. This includes confirming that any requirements related to the employment lifecycle (e.g., outreach, recruitment, hiring, training, development and advancement, engagement and retention) are designed to ensure they do not exclude, limit or otherwise disadvantage any of the Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO)-protected classes in [ADS 110](#). Based on this review, the Policy Analyst may develop some questions or comments for the ADS POC to address.
 - 6. The ADS Team Edits Policy.** Subsequent to the Policy Analyst's content review, the ADS Team must line/copy edit the final policy, as necessary, to ensure it conforms to the style guide in [ADS 501mac, ADS Writing Guidelines and Style Guide](#). If the policy is an existing policy that has been partially revised, the ADS Team must highlight all revisions in yellow. The ADS Team must then provide the revised policy with edits and comments from the Policy Analyst and ADS Team to the ADS POC.
 - 7. ADS POC Responds to Comments.** The ADS POC must respond to any edits or comments from the Policy Analyst and the ADS Team and make revisions as necessary.
 - 8. The ADS Team Makes Final Edits.** The ADS Team may make additional copy, line and/or formatting edits, if necessary.
 - 9. M Bureau's Office of Acquisition and Assistance, Policy Office (M/OAA/P) Reviews the ADS Policy and Agency Notice.** M/OAA/P must also review the policy to ensure that it conforms with relevant laws, regulations, and Agency policies related to acquisition and assistance. Based on this review, M/OAA/P may similarly develop some questions or comments for the ADS POC to address.
 - 10. M/MPBP Leadership Approves the Policy and Associated Agency Notice.** M/MPBP leadership must review the policy and associated Agency Notice and provide final approval, as appropriate. In limited cases, M/MPBP leadership may

ask questions or request changes (including to the Agency Notice).

- 11. The ADS Team Issues the Policy and Agency Notice.** The ADS Team must convert the final Google Doc into a PDF that is compliant with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act ([29 U.S.C. § 794d](#)) and post it on the [ADS website](#). At the same, the ADS Team must issue the Agency Notice announcing the policy's release on the B/IO's behalf.

501.3.5.4 Process for Conforming Amendments

Effective Date: 05/12/2023

Per section **501.3.5.1**, an ADS document that qualifies as a "conforming amendment" is an exception to the standard Agency clearance process described in section **501.3.4**.

The process is as follows:

- 1. ADS POC Contacts the ADS Team.** As a first step, the ADS POC must contact M/MPBP/POL at ads@usaid.gov to obtain a Google Doc version of the current policy or additional help reference.
- 2. ADS POC Drafts Revisions to the Policy, and/or Develops/Revises the Additional Help Reference.** If the ADS document is a policy (i.e, chapter or mandatory reference), the ADS POC must ensure that revisions conform with the writing guidelines in [ADS 501mac, ADS Writing Guidelines and Style Guide](#). If the ADS document is an additional help reference, the structure is more flexible. However, ADS POCs should follow [ADS 501mac](#) to the extent appropriate.
- 3. ADS POC Clears the Policy through their B/IO.** The ADS POC must clear the final draft of the policy/additional help reference through their B/IO based on their B/IO's internal procedures.
- 4. ADS POC Submits Revised Policy or Additional Help Package to the ADS Team.** The ADS POC must submit the following package to the ADS Team at ads@usaid.gov:
 - The final draft of the policy or additional help reference that was cleared through the ADS POC's B/IO. If the ADS POC made conforming edits based on multiple rationale, the ADS POC should add comments in the document itself to facilitate the Policy Analyst's review;
 - The [ADS POC Policy Submission Form](#);
 - An Agency Notice that announces the release of the new and/or revised ADS document(s). The ADS POC should ensure that the submitted Notice: 1) conforms with the [Guidelines for Drafting ADS Policy](#)

[Notices](#); and 2) has been cleared according to their B/IO's internal procedures for Agency Notices. (Note: Per [ADS 504](#), M/MPBP/POL has management oversight of the Agency Notice. Per section **501.3.4.5**, M/MPBP/POL must issue ADS Agency Notices on the B/IO's behalf at the same time that the policy is codified.)

5. **The Policy Analyst Reviews the ADS Document and Agency Notice.** The designated Policy Analyst must review the package. The Policy Analyst must place particular emphasis on ensuring that any new and/or updated requirements conform with federal or Agency policies/decisions, and do not deviate or extend beyond such policies/ decisions in any way. Based on this review, the Policy Analyst may develop some questions or comments for the ADS POC to address.
6. **The ADS Team Edits the ADS Document.** Subsequent to the Policy Analyst's and M/OAA/P's review, the ADS Team must line/copy edit the final document, as necessary, to ensure it conforms to the style guide in [ADS 501mac, ADS Writing Guidelines and Style Guide](#). If the ADS document is a partially revised policy (i.e., a chapter or mandatory reference), the ADS Team must also highlight all revisions in yellow. The ADS Team must then provide the revised document to the ADS POC along with any edits or comments from the Policy Analyst, M/OAA/P, and the ADS Team.
7. **ADS POC Responds to Comments.** The ADS POC must respond to any edits or comments within 15 business days. If the Policy Analyst determines that a proposed revision does not qualify as a conforming amendment and the ADS POC does not agree, leadership from the ADS POC's B/IO may elevate the decision to M/MPBP leadership and/or the AA/M for a final decision. Otherwise, the policy in question would have to go out for Agency clearance.
8. **M Bureau's Office of Acquisition and Assistance, Policy Office (M/OAA/P) Reviews the ADS Document and Agency Notice.** M/OAA/P must also review the document to ensure that it conforms with relevant laws, regulations, and Agency policies related to acquisition and assistance. Based on this review, M/OAA/P may similarly develop some questions or comments for the ADS POC to address.
9. **M/MPBP Leadership Approves the Policy and Associated Agency Notice.** M/MPBP leadership must review the policy and associated Agency Notice and provide final approval, as appropriate. In limited cases, M/MPBP leadership may ask questions or request changes (including to the Agency Notice).
10. **The ADS Team Issues the Policy and Agency Notice.** The ADS Team must convert the final Google Doc into a PDF that is compliant with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act ([29 U.S.C. § 794d](#)) and post it on the [ADS website](#). At the same, the ADS Team must issue the Agency Notice that announces the policy's

release on the B/IO's behalf.

501.3.5.5 Process for Archiving ADS Documents

Effective Date: 05/12/2023

Per section **501.3.5.1**, ADS documents submitted for archival are excepted from the standard Agency clearance process described in section **501.3.4**.

If the subject ADS document is an additional help reference, the ADS POC should email the archival request to the ADS Team at **ads@usaid.gov**. The ADS Team should then remove the content from the [ADS website](#). At their discretion, the ADS POC may submit an Agency Notice to announce the archival of the additional help reference.

If the subject ADS document is a policy (i.e., a chapter or mandatory reference), the process is as follows:

1. **ADS POC Conducts Due Diligence.** Before submitting an archival request to M/MPBP/POL, the ADS POC must first ensure that content is either obsolete or is codified elsewhere in the ADS. If there are discrete elements of the policy that are not obsolete or codified elsewhere in the ADS, the POC must identify another ADS document where the language can reside. In addition, the POC must reach out to all relevant stakeholders to ensure that they concur with the decision to archive the document. Key stakeholders typically include GC and any B/IOs that have an implementation role in the policy.
2. **ADS POC Submits Archival Package to the ADS Team.** The ADS POC must submit the following request package to the ADS Team at **ads@usaid.gov**:
 - The [ADS POC Policy Submission Form](#); and
 - An Agency Notice that announces the archival of the ADS document. The ADS POC should ensure that the submitted Notice: 1) conforms with the [Guidelines for Drafting ADS Policy Notices](#); and 2) has been cleared according to their B/IO's internal procedures for Agency Notices. (Note: Per [ADS 504](#), M/MPBP/POL has management oversight of the Agency Notice. Per section **501.3.4.5**, M/MPBP/POL must issue ADS Agency Notices on the B/IO's behalf at the same time that the policy is codified.)
3. **The Policy Analyst Reviews Archival Request and Agency Notice.** The designated Policy Analyst must review the package. If the subject ADS document is a policy (i.e., a chapter or mandatory reference), the Policy Analyst must place particular emphasis on ensuring that content is obsolete or codified elsewhere in the ADS, and that all relevant stakeholders concurred with the decision. Based on this review, the Policy Analyst may develop some questions or comments for the ADS POC to address.

4. **ADS POC Responds to Comments.** The ADS POC should respond to any questions or comments from the Policy Analyst within 10 business days.
5. **M/MPBP Leadership Approves the Archival Request and Associated Agency Notice.** M/MPBP leadership must review the archival request and provide approval, as appropriate. In limited cases, M/MPBP leadership may ask questions or request changes (including to the Agency Notice).
6. **The ADS Team Issues the Agency Notice.** The ADS Team must remove the ADS document from the [ADS website](#) and archive it per section **501.3.10**. At the same, the ADS Team must issue the B/IO's Agency Notice that announces the policy's archival.

501.3.6 ADS Dashboard

Effective Date: 05/12/2023

The [ADS Dashboard](#) provides a real-time, easy-to-understand view of the status of ADS documents going through clearance (see sections **501.3.4** and **501.3.5** on ADS clearance processes). The ADS Dashboard is a valuable tool for ADS POCs and ADS Clearing Officials who frequently have questions about ADS documents in-process. The ADS Dashboard also promotes an efficient and effective policy management function by providing transparency and accountability around ADS clearance metrics and associated performance.

For more information on how to read the ADS Dashboard, see:

- [ADS Dashboard Data Dictionary](#) – This document defines each column in the ADS Dashboard. It also defines the values used under each column.
- [Steps by ADS Clearance Type](#) – This document describes the values for a particular column in the Dashboard titled, “Current Step.” This resource is also linked within the Data Dictionary referenced above.

M/MPBP/POL manages the ADS Dashboard. As a result, the Dashboard only captures process-related data beginning when the ADS POC formally submits the policy package to M/MPBP/POL to initiate processes described in this chapter. The ADS Dashboard does not capture data on timeframes related to any processes that occur before the ADS POC submits the package to M/MPBP/POL. This includes the “Phase Zero” policy formulation phase that takes place before any ADS clearance process (see section **501.3.4.2**). In addition, the ADS Dashboard does not capture any clearance processes that take place before the ADS POC submits the policy package to M/MPBP/POL (e.g., clearance through the ADS POC's B/IO, or clearance through GC and the Unions for policies owned by HCTM [see section **501.3.5.3**].)

501.3.7 **Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) During Policy Implementation**

501.3.7.1 **Overview of MEL During Policy Implementation**

Effective Date: 05/12/2023

Policies are living documents that should evolve or change as lessons are learned or circumstances change. Once a policy is codified, the ADS POC (and other stakeholder[s], as relevant) should implement MEL practices to continually assess the policy's utility and effectiveness and make evidence-based decisions regarding policy adaptations that may be needed. Typical questions include:

- Is the policy being implemented as intended?
- Does the policy introduce unnecessary burden?
- Are there gaps in the policy?
- Is the policy written broadly enough but with enough clarity to apply in varying circumstances?
- Is the policy achieving intended result(s) and/or outcomes?
- Is the information in the policy still up-to-date or relevant (e.g., vis-a-vis other Agency policies, federal laws and regulations, Agency systems/ technologies, etc)?

For additional questions to consider when evaluating a policy, see [ADS 501sak, ADS Implementation and Impact Assessments](#).

501.3.7.2 **Implementation and Impact Assessments**

Effective Date: 05/12/2023

At the request of responsible B/IOs and/or Agency leadership, M/MPBP/POL may conduct independent assessments of policies to help improve organizational effectiveness. Through independent assessment, M/MPBP/POL can help protect the integrity of the assessment process, add credibility to assessment judgments, and provide fresh perspectives on the policies being evaluated.

M/MPBP/POL conducts two types of assessments: implementation assessments and impact assessments. In many cases, it may be important to combine aspects of both types of assessments to inform policy improvements.

- **ADS Implementation Assessments** evaluate whether and/or the extent to which a policy was implemented as planned and expected outputs (e.g.,

performance of particular procedures, production of particular products) were achieved.

- **ADS Impact Assessments** evaluate the ultimate impact of a policy; i.e., the extent to which the policy's higher-order goal or purpose was achieved.

To request an assessment, B/IO and/or Agency leadership must submit a request to M/MPBP/POL. Upon receiving a request, M/MPBP/POL should determine whether assessment findings have the potential to advance Agency priorities and/or improve organizational effectiveness, and whether it has sufficient resources to conduct the assessment. If M/MPBP/POL agrees to conduct the assessment, both parties must work together to develop a mutually-agreeable scope of work (SOW) that establishes a plan for the assessment, including objectives, key questions, data sources, milestones, deliverables, and the audience who will receive the report. The requesting B/IO and/or Agency leadership may use the findings to inform policy improvements as they deem appropriate.

For an illustrative list of questions that M/MPBP/POL and the requesting bureau might identify as part of an implementation or impact assessment, see [ADS 501sak](#).

501.3.8 ADS Feedback Form

Effective Date: 05/12/2023

Any member of the USAID workforce may submit anonymous feedback through the [ADS Feedback Form](#) regarding potential improvements to the ADS, including any of the processes described in this chapter. If the feedback pertains to a particular chapter or mandatory reference, M/MPBP/POL must share the feedback with the relevant ADS POC to inform potential updates. If the commenter opts to provide their name, M/MPBP/POL may follow-up for additional feedback.

501.3.9 Annual ADS Certification and Work Plan

Effective Date: 05/12/2023

B/IOs and designated ADS POCs must regularly review ADS documents under their purview and make updates as necessary to ensure they remain current and consistent with laws and regulations, and current management practices. This includes determining when ADS documents are obsolete or redundant and can be archived.

In order to ensure the ongoing relevancy, accuracy, and cohesion of the ADS, M/MPBP/POL must facilitate an annual work planning exercise with all B/IOs responsible for policies. As part of this exercise, M/MPBP/POL must provide B/IOs with a standard template that lists all of the chapters and mandatory references for which the B/IO is responsible, as well as the designated ADS POCs and the date of the last revision. Responsible B/IOs must forecast anticipated policy actions for the upcoming fiscal year for revising policies, archiving policies, and/or producing new policies, along

with the expected timeline for submitting ADS documents to M/MPBP/POL. If no updates are planned for a particular policy, the B/IO must certify that it remains accurate and relevant.

501.3.10 ADS Records Management

Effective Date: 05/12/2023

In accordance with the Federal Records Act ([44 U.S.C. 31](#)) and corresponding Code of Federal Regulations (CFRs), M/MPBP/POL must maintain and preserve archived ADS documents. Taken together, these documents codify the organization, functions, policies, and procedures of USAID. Members of USAID's workforce may access archived ADS documents at any time by emailing ads@usaid.gov.

501.4 MANDATORY REFERENCES

501.4.1 External Mandatory References

Effective Date: 05/12/2023

- a. [36 CFR 1194, Electronic and Information Technology Accessibility Standards](#)
- b. [36 CFR 1222, Directives documenting agency programs, policies, and procedures](#)
- c. [44 U.S.C., sec 3101, Records Management by Agency Heads](#)
- d. [Administrative Procedure Act \(P.L. 79-404\)](#)
- e. [U.S. Constitution, Article V](#)

501.4.2 Internal Mandatory References

Effective Date: 05/12/2023

- a. [ADS 501maa, ADS Chapters and Points of Contact List](#)
- b. [ADS 501mab, Clearance List for ADS Documents](#)
- c. [ADS 501mac, ADS Writing Guidelines and Style Guide](#)
- d. [ADS 504, Agency Notices](#)
- e. [ADS 551, Section 508 and Accessibility](#)
- f. [ADS Glossary](#)

g. [ADS POC Policy Submission Form](#) (available on the USAID intranet)

501.5 ADDITIONAL HELP

Effective Date: 05/12/2023

a. [ADS 501saq, ADS Chapter Template](#)

b. [ADS 501sak, ADS Implementation and Impact Assessments](#)

c. [ADS 501sal, M/MPBP/POL Policy Analysts](#) (available on the USAID intranet)

d. [ADS 501sam, How to Sort and Filter Responses in ADS Comments Tracker](#)

e. [ADS Dashboard](#) (available on the USAID intranet)

f. [Guidelines for Drafting ADS Policy Notices](#) (available on the USAID intranet)

501.6 DEFINITIONS

Effective Date: 05/12/2023

Additional Help Reference

A type of ADS document appended to an ADS chapter (or multiple ADS chapters) that provides non-mandatory guidance on a given sub-topic. Since additional help references cannot establish mandatory requirements, they are not considered to be a policy document in the ADS. As a result, their addition or revision is considered to be a conforming amendment that is not subject to the Agency clearance process. (**Chapter 501**)

ADS Chapter

A type of policy document that establishes mandatory operational requirements on a given topic. ADS chapters may also include non-mandatory guidance, where applicable. Most ADS chapters contain two types of references: (1) mandatory references and (2) additional help references. (**Chapter 501**)

ADS Clearance Process

A series of steps that must be completed before an ADS document is codified in the ADS. These steps are differentiated by the ADS clearance type. Agency clearance is the standard ADS clearance type (see [501.3.4](#)). There are also four ADS clearance types for ADS documents that qualify for an exception to this process: (1) Administrator/Deputy Administrator approval; (2) policy owned by HCTM; (3) conforming amendments; and (4) archival of ADS documents (see [501.3.5](#)). (**Chapter 501**)

ADS Clearing Official

A designated individual in a Washington Bureau or Independent Office (B/IO) who reviews new and substantively revised policies (i.e., ADS chapters or mandatory references) and provides comments and clearance on behalf of their B/IO. Depending on the B/IO's internal procedures, ADS Clearing Officials may also collaborate with colleagues in their B/IO during this process to collect comments and adjudicate them as necessary to ensure that the final submission fully reflects the B/IO's corporate position. **(Chapter 501)**

ADS Document

An umbrella term that refers to all types of documents in the ADS; i.e., 1) chapters, 2) mandatory references and 3) additional help references. **(Chapter 501)**

ADS Impact Assessment

A type of ADS assessment that evaluates the ultimate impact of a policy, i.e., the extent to which the policy's higher-order goal or purpose was achieved. **(Chapter 501)**

ADS Implementation Assessment

A type of ADS assessment that evaluates whether and/or the extent to which a policy was implemented as planned and expected outputs (e.g., performance of particular procedures, production of particular products) were achieved. **(Chapter 501)**

ADS Point of Contact (POC)

A designated individual for an ADS chapter or mandatory reference who has primary responsibility for developing and updating ADS documents within their area of responsibility. ADS POCs work to ensure that (1) ADS documents under their purview are clear, concise, and coherent; (2) that they conform with relevant laws, regulations, and Agency policies; (3) that they minimize burden to the extent appropriate; and (4) that they advance cross-cutting Agency priorities (e.g., DEIA) as applicable. Per [FAR 7.503](#), ADS POCs must be U.S. direct hire employees. **(Chapter 501)**

Agency Requirement

An operational procedure in the ADS that is obligatory wherever applicable or the criteria for conformance applies. Agency requirements are codified in ADS chapters and mandatory references, and are denoted by the auxiliary verb, "must." **(Chapter 501)**

Automated Directives System (ADS)

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 501)**

Conforming Amendment

A type of modification to the ADS that is excepted from the Agency clearance process.

Conforming amendments include:

- Revisions to policy that directly align (or “conform”) with Federal laws, regulations, or other sources of legal requirement;
- Revisions to policy that directly align (or “conform”) with other Agency policies, or Agency decisions that have been subject to high-level review;
- Revisions to policy that do not change the meaning or intent of any requirements (e.g., updates to hyperlinks; line edits to improve clarity; should-statements, etc.); and
- Revisions to, or addition of, additional help references that conform with the policy and do not themselves establish any new requirements. (**Chapter 501**)

Copy Edits

A type of editing that involves the correction of spelling, grammar, word usage, punctuation, and the other mechanics established in a style guide such as that in [ADS 501mac, ADS Writing Guidelines and Style Guide](#). (**Chapter 501**)

Development Policy

A type of USAID policy that articulates the Agency’s corporate position for a sectoral or cross-cutting goal or issue consistent with U.S. Government and Administrator directives. For additional information on USAID Development Policies, see [ADS 200, Development Policy](#).

Directive

An official or authoritative instruction. In the ADS, directives are a synonym for “Agency requirements” that convey procedures that are obligatory wherever applicable or the criteria for conformance applies. Agency directives are codified in ADS chapters and mandatory references, and are denoted by the auxiliary verb, “must.” (**Chapter 501**)

Effective Date

A date listed below each section in an ADS chapter that indicates when the section was established or substantively revised, whichever is later. (**Chapter 501**)

External Mandatory Reference

A type of ADS mandatory reference that is cleared or codified through processes outside of USAID and with which the policy must conform (e.g., a law promulgated by the U.S. Congress, or a regulation subject to federal rulemaking procedures). (**Chapter 501**)

Full Revision

A classification on the cover page of an ADS document indicating that more than 75 percent of the document has been revised since the previous issuance. (**Chapter 501**)

Guidance

A general term that refers to advice or instructions. In the ADS, guidance is typically an umbrella term that refers to mandatory requirements, as well as non-mandatory guidance. (**Chapter 501**)

Internal Mandatory Reference

A type of ADS mandatory reference that is developed, cleared, and codified according to the clearance processes described in [ADS 501](#). (**Chapter 501**)

Line Edits

A type of editing that aims to improve the clarity of writing on a sentence level by making suggestions regarding word choice, syntax, or tone. (**Chapter 501**)

Mandatory Reference

A type of policy document appended to an ADS chapter (or multiple ADS chapters) that establishes mandatory operational requirements (and non-mandatory guidance, where applicable) on a given sub-topic. Since mandatory references contain mandatory requirements, they carry the same weight as ADS chapters. There are two types of mandatory references: 1) internal mandatory references and 2) external mandatory references. (**Chapter 501**)

New Edition

A classification on the cover page of an ADS document indicating that the ADS document is new and that there are no previous versions. (**Chapter 501**)

Non-Mandatory Guidance

Recommendations, guidelines, or best practices implying some degree of discretion. Non-mandatory guidance can reside in any type of ADS document, including additional help references, and is denoted by the auxiliary verb, “should.” (**Chapter 501**)

Operational Policy

A synonym for ADS policy that establishes mandatory operational requirements for the USAID workforce. The ADS is the sole, authoritative source of USAID operational policy. There are two types of operational policies in the ADS: 1) ADS chapters; and 2) ADS mandatory references. (**Chapter 501**)

Partial Revision

A classification on the cover page of an ADS document indicating that less than 75 percent of the document has been revised since the previous issuance. For ADS documents classified as partially revised, new or changed language is highlighted in yellow so that users can quickly identify what has changed. (**Chapter 501**)

Plain Language

According to the Plain Writing Act of 2010 ([P.L. 111-274](#)), plain language refers to “writing that is clear, concise, well-organized, and follows other best practices appropriate to the subject or field and intended audience”. Writing in plain language typically means using simple words, concise sentences, and active voice. (**Chapter 501**)

Revision Date

A date listed on the lower-right corner of a chapter, mandatory reference, or additional help reference’s cover page. This date reflects the date that the ADS document was codified and published on the ADS website. Use of the title, “New Edition,” indicates that the chapter was issued for the first time. The title, “Partial Revision,” indicates that some portions of the chapter were modified. The header, “Full Revision,” indicates that the chapter was revised in its entirety. (**Chapter 501**)

Substantive Comment

A type of modification recommended by an ADS Clearing Official during the Agency clearance process that proposes to add or remove a requirement, or substantively alter the intent or meaning of a requirement. (**Chapter 501**)

Substantive Revision

A change to an operational policy that either adds or removes a requirement, or substantively alters the meaning or intent of a requirement. (**Chapter 501**)

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