Policy Document Requirements and Content

A Mandatory Reference for ADS Chapter 200

USAID development and humanitarian policy documents, as defined in ADS 200, include policies, strategies, and position papers. This Mandatory Reference identifies the requirements for each of those documents, as well as the applicable implementation plan. All Policy Working Groups (PWGs) should work with their Bureau for Planning, Learning, and Resource Management (PLR) Point of Contact (POC) on any exception from this process (see **ADS 200mae section 2**).

This Mandatory Reference includes information on:

- Requirements for all development and humanitarian policy documents;

- USAID Policies: Length, Content, and Structure;

- USAID Strategies: Length, Content, and Structure;

- USAID Position Papers: Length, Content, and Structure; and

- Policy/Strategy Implementation Plan: Content and Structure.

1. **Requirements for all development and humanitarian policy documents**

Adherence to Policy Principles and Requirements: Policy drafters must ensure all USAID policy documents are grounded in the principles of inclusivity, sustainability, local leadership, and based on evidence as described in **ADS 200.3.1, Principles for Development and Humanitarian Policies**. This includes ensuring policy documents support policy coherence across the Agency, limit requirements to the greatest extent possible, and integrate cross cutting issues as appropriate, as described in **ADS 200.3.3.2, Policy Document Requirements**.

Branding, Style, and Accessibility Requirements: Policy drafters are responsible for ensuring all USAID development and humanitarian policy documents are consistent with the standards outlined in the following sources:

- **USAID Style Guide**: All USAID policy documents must be well-written, clear, and concise, and, in compliance with the page limits identified below when formatted for publication.

- **USAID Branding Resources**: All USAID policy documents must be professionally formatted and include only graphics and photos that are of high-quality, consistent with the Agency's branding and graphic standards, and cleared by the lead Bureau/Independent Office (B/IO), the Bureau for Legislative and Public Affairs (LPA), and involved stakeholders.

- **Section 508 of the Americans with Disabilities Act**: All USAID policy documents, print and electronic, must be accessible to people with disabilities, including employees and members of the public.

- **Compliance with the Automated Directives System (ADS)**: Policy drafters must ensure all USAID development and humanitarian policies and strategies comply with operational policies in the ADS (i.e., ADS Chapters and ADS Mandatory References). ADS Mandatory References include (1) External Mandatory References, which are governing external statutes, Executive Orders, regulations, and authorities, and (2) Internal Mandatory References, which contain mandatory guidance created internally by USAID. Examples of External and Internal Mandatory References can be found in ADS 201, ADS 300, and other relevant Agency records that facilitate policy implementation.

- **Designation of the lead B/IO (or Operating Unit [OU]) for implementation:** The B/IO that will lead the implementation of policies and strategies (Policy Owner) must be identified in the policy, strategy, or position paper, and in the Action Memo to approve it.

- **Burden Reduction efforts [Policy and strategy only]**: The PWG must include a one to two paragraph summary of the efforts taken by the Policy Owner to reduce, mitigate, and alleviate burdens through this policy in the text of the Action Memo seeking policy or strategy approval. The policy drafter must also describe any efforts to eliminate requirements or recommendations included in previous versions of the policy document, if applicable.

- **Implementation Plan [Policy and strategy only]**: Policy drafters must draft implementation plans for all policies and strategies that identify key actions, and the lead actors, to achieve the goals of that policy or strategy. Implementation planning must begin during the drafting of the document. The implementation plan must not include requirements not already identified in the policy or strategy. A one to three page summary of the key aspects of the draft implementation plan should be attached to the Action Memo for policy or strategy approval.

2. **USAID Policies: Length, Content, and Structure**

The maximum length of a policy is 15 pages of policy text fully formatted in line with the USAID Style Guide, including images, call out boxes, etc. The page count limit does not include the Cover Page, Table of Contents, Glossary, Bibliography, or Annexes.

Policies should include the following sections:

- **Cover Page**

- **Table of Contents**

- **Executive summary:** 1-2 pages

- **Introduction:** 1 page

- ○ Make the case for why this issue is important to USAID and the U.S. Government (USG).
  .
- **Background:** 1-2 pages
  - ○ Review evidence (as defined in **ADS 201.6**) and any existing gaps in available evidence as well as analyses of the context and emerging opportunities.

- **Goals:** 1-2 pages
  - ○ Articulate the Agency's vision: its high-level direction towards reaching a desired end state.

- **Principles:** 1-2 pages
  - ○ Specify a set of guiding approaches and best practices that articulate how the Agency will work to achieve its vision.

- **Policy Into Practice:** 2-3 pages
  - ○ Articulate how the policy applies to different contexts and the recommendations (and requirements, if applicable) to successfully advance the goals of the policy.

- **Learning:** 1-2 pages
  - ○ Identify learning needs and evidence gaps and approach for disseminating learning, including through the Agency Learning Agenda, if appropriate.

- **Conclusion: <**1 page
  - ○ Articulate what the desired change would look like.

- **Glossary**

- **Bibliography**

- **Annexes (optional)**

3. **USAID Strategies: Length, Content, and Structure**

The maximum page length for a strategy is 20 pages of strategy text fully formatted in line with the USAID Style Guide, including images, call out boxes, etc. The page count limit does not include the Cover Page, Table of Contents, Bibliography or Annexes.

Strategies should include the following sections:

- **Cover Page**

- **Table of Contents**

- **Executive summary:** 2 pages

- **Introduction:** 1-2 pages
    - Make the case for why this issue is important to USAID and the USG.

- **Background:** 3 pages
    - Review evidence (as defined in **ADS 201.6**) and any existing gaps in available evidence as well as analyses of the context, the problem which will be addressed, existing gaps, and emerging opportunities.

- **Goal and Strategic Objectives (SOs) (including logic model):** 5-6 pages
    - All strategies must articulate a high-level direction supporting the Agency in reaching a desired end state with respect to a particular issue and a hierarchy of subordinate objectives. These must be presented as a logic model in both diagram and narrative forms that specify how the goal and SOs relate and together are necessary and sufficient for achieving the desired end state. The logic model specifies a theory of change, connections between the planned actions and the strategy's goal(-s), risks, and assumptions.

- **Results and learning**: 3 pages
    - Identify the intended results of strategy implementation.
    - Set measurable targets necessary to achieve the SOs – and indicate how progress towards achieving targets will be measured over the specific time period.
    - Describe learning needs and evidence gaps and approach for disseminating learning, including through the Agency Learning Agenda, if appropriate.

- **Resource considerations:** 2 pages
    - Discuss budget and human resources.

- **Requirements.** (If applicable): one page

- **Conclusion:** 1 page
    - Articulate what the desired change would look like.

- **Glossary**

- **Bibliography**

- **Annexes (optional)**

4. **USAID Position Papers: Length, Content, and Structure**

The maximum page length for a position paper is five pages of text fully formatted in line with the USAID Style Guide, including images, call out boxes, etc. Position papers do not include Annexes.

A position paper should include the following sections:

- **Introduction:** < 1 page
  - Short bullet/paragraph summary of the issue and USAID's approach.

- **Background:** < 1 page
  - Make the case for why this issue is important to USAID and the USG and how it relates to existing USAID policies.

- **Problem Statement:** 1 page
  - Review evidence and any existing gaps in available evidence as well as analyses of the context and emerging opportunities.

- **Vision and Principles:** < 2 pages
  - Articulate the Agency's vision: its high-level direction toward reaching a desired end state.
  - Describe guiding principles and best practices for how the Agency will achieve its vision. Note: This section cannot include requirements.

- **Conclusion:** < 1 page

- **Bibliography**

5. **Policy/Strategy Implementation Plan Content and Structure**

A policy or strategy implementation plan should include the following information.

- **Lead B/IO.** The B/IO (or an OU within the B/IO) as the lead responsible for the policy's or strategy's implementation.

- **Profile of Targeted OUs.** Identify priority Missions or regions, if known, or provide a profile of Missions for which the policy or strategy would be particularly relevant.

- **Stakeholders.** Identify and describe the roles of key stakeholders in implementation, including but not limited to Agency leadership, the lead B/IO, Regional and Pillar Bureaus, Missions, and implementing partners.

- **Recommended Implementation Actions**. An implementation plan should specify actions intended to achieve a policy's or strategy's goals and principles/objectives without, when possible, introducing unnecessary or

duplicative requirements and relying instead on existing structures and ongoing efforts. Recommended actions can include: raising awareness of the policy document with stakeholders; hiring or training personnel to secure required technical skills; setting up coordinating structures; promoting policy integration across the Program Cycle; and improving budget alignment. For each implementation action, identify the:

- ○ Lead B/IO and OU and supporting B/IOs and OUs,

- ○ Timeframe for completing the action,

- ○ Funding or other resources required, and

- ○ Estimated work burden.

● **Requirement flexibility.** Describe policy requirements and flexible options for Missions and B/IOs to achieve the intent of those requirements within the given country and Mission context. The Burden Reduction Program states that Missions and B/IOs are allowed to recommend flexible options for fulfilling Agency policy requirements based on applicability, resource availability, Mission or project size, and size or complexity of an issue in a country, in that country's context in relation to other countries and regions.

● **Learning and Assessment Approach.** An implementation plan should include an approach to carrying out continuous learning from a policy's or strategy's operationalization.

- ● Describe plans for conducting a policy implementation assessment, which is required at least once during implementation, generally at the five-year mark, as policies and strategies are valid for up to a ten-year period.

- ● Include priority learning questions (based on existing evidence gaps, for example) and methods to answer those questions (through evaluation of activities, research studies, cost benefit analysis, etc).

- ● Describe linkages to the Agency Learning Agenda and approaches for disseminating learning.

● **Monitoring Approach (for Strategies only).** An implementation plan for a strategy must articulate how progress towards the targets will be measured and define a set of indicators that will be used to track the targets (ideally, leveraging existing data collection efforts and, as appropriate, using Foreign Assistance Standard Indicators). The Monitoring Approach may include tracking additional indicators not linked to the targets directly but measuring progress towards achieving the SOs.

- **List of Implementation Tools.** This section should summarize the existing and new tools that can facilitate a policy's or strategy's operationalization.

  - Examples: training sessions, templates, how-to documents, and good practice guides, among others.

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