



U.S. Agency for International Development

Public Access Plan:

***Ensuring Free, Immediate and Equitable
Access to the Results of Federally Funded
Scientific Research***

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1. Purpose and Scope

1.1. USAID's Mission

On behalf of the American people, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) promotes and demonstrates democratic values abroad, and advances a free, peaceful, and prosperous world. In support of America's foreign policy, USAID leads the U.S. Government's international development and disaster assistance through partnerships and investments that save lives, reduce poverty, strengthen democratic governance, and help people emerge from humanitarian crises and progress beyond assistance.

1.2. Purpose

The purpose of the U.S. Agency for International Development's (USAID's) Public Access Plan ("the Plan") is to increase public access to the results of USAID funded research in response to the February 22, 2013 Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) Memorandum, [Increasing Access to the Results of Federally Funded Scientific Research](#) and the August 25, 2022 OSTP Memorandum, [Ensuring Free, Immediate, and Equitable Access to Federally Funded Research](#). These memoranda recommend that Federal departments and agencies with an annual Research and Development (R&D) expenditure of more than \$100 million develop a plan to increase public access to the results of federally funded research. This Plan will guide the development of Agency procedures and policies to achieve this objective. It will make USAID-funded research products available and accessible to the public, industry, and scientific community unencumbered to the extent allowable by applicable law. These research products include peer-reviewed research publications, datasets, and other supporting artifacts. Through greater access to these products, USAID will maximize its return on investment in research¹ and will expedite evidence-based policy making in support of its mission around the world.

1.3. Objectives

USAID's Public Access Plan is designed to promote the following objectives:

- Establish USAID's commitment to increase public access to results of scientific research;
- Support best practices for managing scholarly publications and scientific research data to achieve broad-based development objectives;
- Preserve and increase the use of research results to enhance scientific discovery in support of USAID's development objectives;
- Promote and contribute to USAID's scientific integrity; and
- Support USAID's efforts to achieve Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Access by enhancing access to federally funded research.

¹ This plan is inclusive of all USAID-supported research. See section 3., Definitions.

1.4. Scope and Applicability

USAID's Plan applies to all USAID-funded research that implementing partners conduct under acquisition or assistance awards. The Plan applies to USAID-funded, peer-reviewed scholarly publications and research data. It also covers all USAID-funded supporting artifacts, which include code books, data dictionaries, data gathering tools, notes on data quality, and explanations of redactions, that pertain to these peer-reviewed scientific manuscripts and research data.

1.5. USAID Implementation

USAID will implement the Plan to the extent feasible and as consistent with privacy, [indigenous rights](#), national security considerations, and international development and foreign policy objectives. Implementation of this Plan also aligns with applicable law, regulation, policy, and government-wide guidance, particularly the OSTP August 2022 Memorandum on [Ensuring Free, Immediate, and Equitable Access to Federally Funded Research](#) and [USAID's Mission Statement](#).

Aspects of the Plan refer to USAID implementing partners. In this Plan, USAID implementing partners are awardees of acquisition or assistance awards. The Plan's implementation must be consistent with the terms and conditions of implementing partner acquisition and assistance awards.

2. Authority

The Plan conforms to the following authorities and resources that govern and guide federal agencies' information management and protection of data:

- The [Information Quality Act](#) (December 21, 2000) requires the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to promulgate guidance to agencies ensuring the quality, objectivity, utility, and integrity of information (including statistical information) disseminated by Federal agencies.
- [OMB Memorandum M-19-15](#) ("Improving Implementation of the Information Quality Act", April 24, 2019) updates agency responsibilities under the Information Quality Act to reflect innovations in information generation, access, management, and use, and to help agencies address common problems with maintaining information quality.
- The [Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act](#) ("Evidence Act") of 2018, and its implementing OMB guidance, establishes processes for the Federal Government to modernize its data management practices, evidence-building functions, and statistical efficiency to inform policy decisions.
- [Foreign Assistance Transparency and Accountability Act](#) of 2016 sets out requirements for U.S. agencies involved in foreign assistance for publication of information to "ensure the transparency, accountability, and effectiveness" of U.S. foreign aid.

- [Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects: 25 CFR 225](#) outlines regulations enhancing protection for human research participants.
- [OSTP Memorandum: Ensuring Free, Immediate, and Equitable Access to Federally Funded Research](#) (August 25, 2022) provides guidance to Federal agencies with research and development expenditures on updating their public access plans.
- [National Science and Technology Council \(NSTC\): A Framework for Federal Scientific Integrity Policy and Practice](#) (January 2022) includes the Federal definition of scientific integrity, a model scientific integrity policy for Federal agencies, and a roadmap for assessment and iterative improvement of agency scientific integrity policies and practices.
- [NSTC: Protecting the Integrity of Government Science](#) (January 2022) assesses scientific integrity policies of Federal agencies, identifies instances in which policies have not been followed or enforced, and provides effective practices for strengthening scientific integrity. This report is intended to assist in creating, updating, and implementing scientific integrity policies.
- The [America COMPETES Reauthorization Act of 2010 \(P.L. 111-358\), Section 103](#) (January 4, 2011) outlines the OSTP Director’s “responsibility to coordinate Federal science agency research and policies related to the dissemination and long-term stewardship of the results of unclassified research, including digital data and peer-reviewed scholarly publications, supported wholly, or in part, by funding from the Federal science agencies.”
- [OMB Circular A-11](#) (“Preparation, Submission and Execution of the Budget”, August 3, 2012) defines research and development activities as “creative work undertaken on a systematic basis in order to increase the stock of knowledge, including knowledge of man, culture and society, and the use of this stock of knowledge to devise new applications.” This is consistent with the definition used in this document defined in Section 3.
- The [Freedom of Information Act \(FOIA; 5 U.S.C. 552\)](#) provides the public the right to request access to records from any Federal agency. [See ADS Chapter 507, Freedom of Information Act \(FOIA\)](#) for applicability and guidance.
- The [E-Government Act of 2002 \(44 U.S.C. 101\)](#) promotes “the use of the Internet and emerging technologies within and across Government agencies to provide citizen-centric Government information and services,” as well as providing “enhanced access to Government information and services.”

- [OMB Circular A-130](#) (“Managing Information as a Strategic Resource”, July 28, 2016) specifies that “[t]he open and efficient exchange of scientific or technical government information... fosters excellence in scientific research and effective use of federal research and development funds.”
- [OMB Memorandum M-10-06](#) (“Open Government Directive”, December 8, 2009) encourages transparent government and openness by directing agencies to “publish information online in an open format that can be retrieved, downloaded, indexed and searched by commonly used web search applications.” It further defines an open format as one that is “platform independent, machine readable, and made available to the public without restrictions that would impede the re-use of that information.”
- [OMB Bulletin 12-01](#) (“Guidance on Collection of U.S. Foreign Assistance Data”, September 25, 2012) includes three (3) attachments and provides information on the statutory requirement to provide foreign assistance data from all U.S. Government agencies.
- [OMB Memorandum M-13-13](#) (“Open Data Policy-Managing Information as an Asset”, May 9, 2013) establishes a framework to help institutionalize the principles of effective information management at each stage of the information life cycle to promote interoperability and openness.
- [OMB Guidelines for Ensuring and Maximizing the Quality, Objectivity, Utility, and Integrity of Information Disseminated by Federal Agencies](#) establishes guidelines that “provide policy and procedural guidance to Federal agencies for ensuring and maximizing the quality, objectivity, utility, and integrity of information (including statistical information) disseminated by Federal agencies.”
- [OMB Memorandum M-05-03](#) (“Issuance of OMB’s *Final Information Quality Bulletin for Peer Review*”, December 16, 2004) establishes “government-wide guidance aimed at enhancing the practice of peer review of government science documents. This Bulletin is one aspect of a larger OMB effort to improve the quality of scientific information upon which policy decisions are based.”
- The [Paperwork Reduction Act, 44 U.S.C. 3501-3520](#) (PRA) provides the statutory framework for the Federal Government’s collection of information. Per the PRA, obtaining facts or opinions (including data) from 10 or more non-Federal persons is generally considered a “collection of information” that triggers the PRA approval process.
- The [Privacy Act of 1974, 5 U.S.C. §552a – As Amended](#) establishes a code of fair information practices that governs the collection, maintenance, use, and dissemination of information about individuals that is maintained in systems of records by Federal agencies.

- [The Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health \(HITECH\) Act](#) (February 17, 2009), enacted as part of the [American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009](#), promotes the adoption and meaningful use of health information technology.
- [The Agency for International Development Acquisition Regulation \(AIDAR\) Appendix I to Chapter 7 - USAID's Academic Publication Policy](#) is a statement of USAID policy on publication, or release to parties other than those specifically authorized, of unclassified materials gathered or developed under contracts with academic institutions. USAID favors and encourages the publication of scholarly research as well as the maximum availability, distribution, and use of knowledge developed in its program.

In addition, the Plan conforms to the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR), the AIDAR, and Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards, as well as USAID policies and directives. These policies include the Automated Directive System (ADS) chapters [502](#) (USAID Records Management), [508](#) (Privacy Program), [507](#) (Freedom of Information Act [FOIA]), [540](#) (Development Experience Information), [578](#) (USAID Information Quality Guidelines), and [579](#) (USAID Development Data). It does not rescind any USAID regulations, policies, or guidance.

3. Definitions

For the purpose of this Plan, the following definitions apply:

- **Data Asset:** A collection of data elements or datasets that may be grouped together ([USAID Development Data Library \[DDL\]](#)).
- **Dataset:** An organized collection of structured data, including data contained in spreadsheets, whether presented in tabular or non-tabular form. For example, a dataset may represent a single spreadsheet, an extensible mark-up language (XML) file, a geospatial data file, or an organized collection of these ([ADS Chapter 579](#)). A dataset does not include unstructured data, such as email or instant messages, PDF files, PowerPoint presentations, word processing documents, images, audio files, or collaboration software.
- **Digital Data:** Quantitative and qualitative programmatic measurements that are entered directly into a computer. Examples include numeric targets established during activity design or implementation; baseline, mid-line, or final measurements created or obtained via field assessments; surveys or interviews; performance monitoring indicators as specified in the Contractor's approved Activity Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Plan (Activity MEL Plan or AMELP); evaluation results; or perception metrics collected from beneficiaries on the quality and relevance of International Disaster Assistance and Development Assistance (["USAID Acquisition Regulation \(AIDAR\):](#)

[Planning, Collection, and Submission of Digital Information as well as Submission of Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Plans to USAID](#),” hereafter referred to as the “USAID Digital Information Rule,” proposed December 15th, 2021).²

- **Digital Information:** A subset of data and means a) digital text; b) digital data; c) digital objects; and d) metadata created or obtained with USAID funding regarding international development or humanitarian assistance activities supported by this award that are represented, stored, or transmitted in such a way that they are available to a computer program ([USAID Digital Information Rule](#)).
- **Digital Object:** Includes digital or computer files that are available to a computer program. Examples include digital word processing or PDF documents or forms related to activity design, assessment reports, periodic progress and performance reports, academic research documents, publication manuscripts, evaluations, technical documentation and reports, and other reports, articles and papers, whether published or not. Other examples include datasets, spreadsheets, presentations, publication-quality images, audio and video files, communication materials, information products, XML files, and software, scripts, source code, and algorithms that can be processed by a computer program ([USAID Digital Information Rule](#)).
- **Final Published Article:** A publisher’s authoritative copy (the version of record) of the article, including all modifications from the publishing peer-review process, copyediting, stylistic edits, formatting changes, and post-print corrections, if any.
- **Intellectual Work:** In the context of this Plan, it includes all works that document the implementation, monitoring, evaluation, and results of international development assistance activities, which may include program and communications materials, evaluations and assessments, information products, research and technical reports, progress and performance reports (excluding administrative financial information), and other reports, articles, and papers, whether published or not ([ADS Chapter 579](#)).
- **Peer Review:** “A process of subjecting an author’s scholarly work, research, or ideas to the scrutiny of others who are experts in the same field” ([Miriam Webster](#)). Peer review generally encompasses a rigorous, formal, and documented evaluation process using objective criteria and qualified and independent reviewers to make a judgment of the technical and scientific merit of an article or paper, usually published in a peer-reviewed journal or scholarly publication.
- **Peer-reviewed Manuscript:** An author's final manuscript of a peer-reviewed work, including all modifications from the peer-review process.

² Please note that the [USAID Digital Information Rule](#) is a proposed rule at this time and not yet final. The rule may be revised or otherwise updated before it is final. USAID will update its Public Access Plan to align with the final version of the Rule.

- **Research:** A systematic investigation, including research development, testing, and evaluation, designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge ([22 CFR 225](#)). (Also see [USAID’s Scientific Research Policy](#) for USAID’s application of the term “research”).
- **Research Data:** The recorded factual material commonly accepted in the scientific community as necessary to validate research findings, but not any of the following: preliminary analyses, drafts of scientific papers, plans for future research, peer reviews, or communications with colleagues. This “recorded” material excludes physical objects (e.g., laboratory samples). Research data also do not include:
 - Trade secrets, commercial information, materials necessary to be held confidential by a researcher until they are published, or similar information which is protected under law; and
 - Personnel and medical information and similar information the disclosure of which would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy, such as information that could be used to identify a particular person in a research study ([22 CFR 226.36 \(d\)\(2\)\(i\)](#)).
- **Scientific Integrity:** The adherence to professional practices, ethical behavior, and the principles of honesty and objectivity when conducting, managing, using the results of, and communicating about science and scientific activities. Inclusivity, transparency, and protection from inappropriate influence are hallmarks of scientific integrity (OSTP, [A Framework for Federal Scientific Integrity Policy and Practice](#)).
- **Structured Data:** This term is used to describe data that resides in a database or information system. This data is generally organized and more searchable than unstructured data ([ADS Chapter 502](#)).
- **Unstructured Data:** This term is used to describe data that does not reside within a database or information system. Some examples of unstructured data would be word processing documents, digital presentation files, and email messages. ([ADS Chapter 502](#)).

4. USAID-funded Research Results

USAID’s Plan leverages existing USAID information management requirements, policies, procedures, and resources, such as current information management systems (e.g., the [Development Experience Clearinghouse \[DEC\]](#) and the [DDL](#)). Currently, USAID maintains existing Agency policies that outline requirements and guidance for managing USAID-funded information, including USAID-funded research results, throughout a complete project or activity

lifecycle. USAID also has award provisions and policies for acquisition and assistance awards that mandate submission of (1) intellectual works, including research results, and (2) data created or obtained in performance of the award. While these existing requirements apply to all USAID-funded intellectual works and data broadly, they serve as the foundation for USAID's Public Access Plan.

To learn more about USAID's policy directives for USAID-funded information, please see [USAID's ADS Chapter 540](#) and [ADS Chapter 579](#). To review USAID award provisions that require submission of USAID-funded information, please see [USAID's Acquisition Regulation \[AIDAR\]](#), and ADS Chapters [303](#) (Grants and Cooperative Agreements to Non-Governmental Organizations), [303maa](#) (Standard Provisions for U.S. Nongovernmental Organizations), [303mab](#) (Standard Provisions for Non-U.S. Nongovernmental Organizations), and [303mat](#) (Standard Provisions for Fixed Amount Awards to Nongovernmental Organizations). Please visit the [DEC](#), USAID's central repository for development experience materials, and the [DDL](#), USAID's central repository for machine-readable data, for submission instructions and access to submitted publications and data.

Please also note that USAID published a proposed [USAID Digital Information Rule](#) that outlines updates to USAID's contract clauses. The Proposed Rule is not yet finalized. USAID will ensure that the Plan aligns with the final version of the Rule.

USAID policy chapters and award provisions include guidance and requirements for USAID-funded research results, particularly peer-reviewed publications and research data. USAID's Public Access Plan focuses on outlining USAID's plan for current activities that advance access to federally-funded research, and future activities that will enhance the current actions in alignment with the [OSTP August 2022 Memorandum](#).

4.1. Peer-reviewed Publications

4.1.1. Submission of Peer-Reviewed Publications

USAID requires the submission of USAID-funded intellectual works to Agency repositories. These requirements include USAID-funded research results, such as journal articles (see [ADS 540.3.2.3a](#)). USAID Operating Units (OUs) must follow the submission requirements and guidance outlined in [ADS Chapter 540](#), while USAID-funded implementing partners must follow the requirements in their award terms and conditions.

Currently, USAID OUs are responsible for considering appropriate requirements related to intellectual works, data products, and attendant data rights when designing awards. Cognizant Contracting Officers (COs) and Agreement Officers (AOs) are responsible for ensuring that appropriate clauses and provisions are inserted in awards that require implementing partners to submit USAID-funded intellectual works to the [DEC](#) (see [ADS Chapter 540.2.c](#); [USAID's AIDAR 752.7005](#) and [ADS Chapter 302mas](#) [Special Contract Requirements]; and ADS Chapters [303](#), [303maa](#), [303mab](#), and [303mat](#)). USAID-funded researchers must submit a copy of USAID-funded, peer-reviewed manuscripts or final published articles, if available, in accordance

with their award terms and conditions. USAID workforce should work with implementing partners during the work planning process and throughout the award to plan for submission of and public access to research results, including peer-reviewed publications.

USAID OU Contracting Officer Representatives (CORs)/Agreement Officer Representatives (AORs) must review and approve USAID-funded intellectual works created under awards prior to submission to the [DEC](#) to ensure that they meet Agency standards for information quality, objectivity, utility, and integrity, as outlined in [ADS Chapter 578](#) and [OMB Memorandum M-05-03](#).

4.1.2. Allowable Costs under Awards

Costs associated with preparing manuscript submissions and submitting manuscripts to the [DEC](#) are allowable costs under awards when award terms and conditions require submission of research publications.

USAID will explore the feasibility of developing processes or policies to ensure that USAID staff (e.g., activity planners, CORs/AORs) include peer-reviewed publications in scopes of work and/or program descriptions, such that publication costs are allowable under awards. These costs could include publisher fees to make the final published article freely available and publicly accessible at the time of publication.

4.1.3. Metadata Records for Peer-Reviewed Publications

USAID maintains and publishes freely available and publicly accessible metadata records for USAID-funded, peer-reviewed publications registered in and/or submitted to the [DEC](#). USAID creates these metadata records in the [DEC](#) from information received from several different sources:

- USAID OU and USAID-funded implementing partner registrations and/or submissions to the [DEC](#), and
- Records about USAID-funded final published articles that academic research service partners provide (e.g., records from services such as [CHORUS](#) and [Clarivate Web of Science](#)).

The [DEC](#) metadata records provide users with bibliographic information about a peer-reviewed publication and with a persistent link to access the peer-reviewed manuscript or a final published article. Please note that USAID prefers linking to and providing access to a final published article, provided that it is freely available and publicly accessible.

USAID also maintains a publicly accessible peer-reviewed publications collection in the [DEC](#) to direct visitors to USAID-funded refereed publications registered in and/or submitted to the DEC (see the Peer Reviewed Publications tab on the [DEC homepage](#)). The collection navigates users to a list of records that they can browse and search to find publications of interest.

4.1.4. Public Access to USAID-funded Peer-reviewed Publications

USAID will make Agency-funded, peer-reviewed publications that are registered in and submitted to the [DEC](#) freely available and publicly accessible without embargo after the official publication date of a final published article. USAID will develop standard procedures and capabilities to enable free and public access with the following methods:

- In the event that a final published article is freely available and publicly accessible at the time of publication, USAID will use metadata records in the [DEC](#) to direct users to the Agency-funded final published article. USAID will retain an article's corresponding peer-reviewed manuscript in the DEC archive, provided that the manuscript is registered in and submitted to the [DEC](#).
- In the event that a USAID-funded final published article is not freely available and publicly accessible at the time of publication, USAID will make the article's corresponding peer-reviewed manuscript freely available and publicly accessible, provided that the manuscript is registered in and submitted to the [DEC](#). USAID will use metadata records to maintain links across the peer-reviewed manuscripts and final published articles.

Please note that USAID may withhold from public release a submitted manuscript version that meets one or more of the principled exemptions for public disclosure and is deemed by USAID to be nonpublic. See Section 5 for additional information on restrictions from public disclosure.

4.1.5. License and Terms of Use for Peer-reviewed Publications

The [DEC](#) publishes information in the public domain, unless a copyright is otherwise indicated. DEC visitors may reproduce, publish, or otherwise use public domain information without USAID's permission. USAID requests that users cite the Agency as the source and that authors or USAID receive credit in citations or other bylines, as appropriate (see the [DEC Copyright Notice](#)).

USAID will explore updating or otherwise enhancing the licensing and terms of use that the Agency uses for distributing peer-reviewed manuscripts. USAID will consider updating its licenses to promote the free availability and public accessibility of peer-reviewed manuscripts it disseminates. As part of these potential updates, the Agency will examine synchronizing the licenses used to distribute peer-reviewed manuscripts in the [DEC](#) with potential updates to licenses used to distribute research data in the [DDL](#) (see section 4.2.5). USAID will also examine enhancements to the DEC's display of licensing and terms of use for peer-reviewed publications in the repository's metadata records.

4.2. Research Data

4.2.1. Data Management Planning

USAID requires its OUs to ensure that USAID-funded activities, including activities that generate research results, create a data management plan (DMP) (see [ADS 579.3.1](#)). As a complement to USAID Activity MEL Plans, USAID DMPs are tools that guide the identification of anticipated data

assets and the outlining of tasks needed to manage these assets across a full data lifecycle. DMPs ensure that data assets contribute to the Agency’s evidence base about its development programs and that researchers submit data assets designated as deliverables in accordance with conditions and guidelines in awards.

USAID has recently issued a proposed [USAID Digital Information Rule](#). When finalized, USAID intends to include a provision in most contract awards that would require Agency-funded implementing partners, including researchers, to submit a DMP.³ USAID also intends to develop policies that provide standard provisions for its assistance awards and other instruments to require that Agency-funded implementing partners submit a DMP. USAID COs/AOs will be responsible for ensuring that clauses and provisions requiring DMPs are included in awards.

USAID also anticipates releasing guidance to USAID OUs about data management plans in an Agency mandatory policy reference to [ADS Chapter 579](#). A future policy reference would provide further details to USAID staff about their responsibilities for DMP submission, review, approval, and maintenance processes. For example, it would outline the use of DMPs to describe plans for the submission of USAID-funded structured data to either the [DDL](#) or to an approved, third-party repository, which is widely recognized in an academic discipline and that meets the NSTC’s [Desirable Characteristics of Data Repositories for Federally Funded Research](#) (see [section 4.2.2](#), below).

USAID recognizes the importance of providing the Agency workforce with data literacy skills and specifically trains staff who oversee DMP processes. USAID provides training for Agency officials or others involved in reviewing the merits of researchers’ DMPs. The USAID Data Services Team provides a Data Literacy Training Program that involves the development of both in-person classwork and a series of highly interactive e-Learning modules with various multimedia resources. This curriculum provides a comprehensive overview of the USAID Data Lifecycle, its role in USAID’s Program Cycle, and the role of data management planning in managing data as an asset.

4.2.2. Submission of Structured Data

Currently, USAID OUs and implementing partners must submit USAID-funded structured data to the [DDL](#), USAID’s repository for Agency-funded data. USAID OUs and staff must follow the requirements and guidance outlined in [ADS Chapter 579](#), while implementing partners must follow submission requirements outlined in award terms and conditions. The submission requirements for USAID-funded data include research data, particularly data assets and datasets associated with peer-review publications (see [ADS 579.3.4](#)). The Plan provides additional guidance for submitting research data to USAID.

³ USAID intends to include a provision requiring submission of DMPs in contract awards fully or partially funded with program funds exceeding the simple acquisition threshold. Several additional exemptions, such as exemptions for certain emergency food assistance programs, will apply.

USAID OUs and implementing partners must register a metadata record about USAID-funded research data that support intellectual works, including research data that underlie USAID-funded peer-reviewed manuscripts and final published articles, with the [DDL](#). USAID OUs and implementing partners must then submit USAID-funded research datasets either to the [DDL](#) or to another approved, third-party digital repository that is publicly accessible. If OUs or partners submit research datasets to an approved repository other than the [DDL](#), USAID OUs and implementing partners must register a metadata record describing the research datasets with the [DDL](#) and include necessary information to access the research datasets (e.g., a persistent link to the publicly available research datasets).

To the extent practicable, USAID will consider updates to Agency policies and procedures about the submission of USAID-funded research data to approved, third-party digital repositories that are publicly accessible. USAID will also examine updates to ensure that approved, third-party repositories align with the NSTC's [Desirable Characteristics of Data Repositories for Federally Funded Research](#).

4.2.3. Submission of Unstructured Data and Other Digital Objects

Currently, USAID OUs and implementing partners must submit USAID-funded unstructured data to the [DEC](#), per award terms and conditions. USAID OUs must follow the submission requirements and guidance outlined in [ADS Chapter 540](#), while implementing partners must follow submission requirements outlined in award terms and conditions. Unstructured data include, but are not limited to text, presentations, images, audio files, video files, and other communication materials.

USAID OUs and implementing partners should also submit other USAID-funded digital objects to USAID's digital repositories, per award terms and conditions. Examples of other digital objects include but are not limited to software, scripts, source code, and algorithms that can be processed by a computer program. USAID OU staff and implementing partners should reference the [DEC website contact information](#) or the [DDL website contact information](#) to coordinate submission of these objects to the appropriate USAID repository.

4.2.4. Allowable Costs Under Awards

Costs associated with preparing research data submissions for the [DDL](#) and submitting research data to the DDL can be allowable costs under awards, when award terms and conditions require submission of research datasets.

4.2.5. Public Access to USAID-funded Research Data

USAID will make Agency-funded research data that underlie USAID-funded, peer-reviewed publications and that are registered in the [DDL](#) freely available and publicly accessible without embargo after the official publication date of the final published article, provided that USAID's internal review process designates the research data as public. USAID will make metadata records about research data freely available and publicly accessible, along with any instructions to access the datasets, if the research data are designated as public or restricted public.

USAID reviews all data submitted to the [DDL](#) during the Agency's data publication process to make decisions about public release (see [ADS Chapter 579.3.3.3](#), [579.3.3.4](#), and [579.3.3.5](#)). The Agency's internal review examines the privacy and security risks associated with individual datasets and proposes appropriate access levels consistent with law and policy, in consultation with relevant clearance officials. USAID uses tiered access levels established in OMB implementing guidance for the Foundations in Evidence Based Policy Making Act to designate access levels for datasets: public, restricted public, and non-public (see [ADS Chapter 579.3.3.4](#)).

Following the publication process and access determination, the [DDL](#) stores Agency-funded data assets and individual datasets and manages access to datasets according to their designated access levels. The [DDL](#) makes metadata records freely available and publicly accessible for all data assets published to the [DDL](#).

USAID will consider updates to Agency policies, particularly [ADS Chapter 579](#), as necessary to strengthen Agency guidance for making research data publicly available without embargoes, consistent with law, privacy, security, indigenous rights, and foreign policy and international development objectives. USAID will also explore updates to award terms and conditions where applicable to clarify or enhance any requirements related to the submission and publication of research data.

4.2.6. Licenses and Terms of Use for Research Data

Unless a third-party license applies, the [DDL](#) publishes data with licenses that promote free availability and public accessibility (see [DDL Terms of Use](#)). The [DDL](#) publishes datasets that USAID OUs and staff create and submit to the [DDL](#) with a Government Work License. The repository publishes datasets that USAID-funded partners create and submit with a [Creative Commons](#) license. [DDL](#) users can reference the metadata records for individual datasets to view the license and terms of use.

USAID will explore updating or otherwise enhancing the licensing and terms of use that the Agency uses for distributing USAID-funded data. USAID will examine updating its licenses to promote the free availability and public accessibility of the data it disseminates.

5. Restrictions on Public Release

Following the submission of USAID-funded research results and their underlying data to Agency repositories, USAID reviews submissions to make determinations about public release (see [ADS Chapter 540](#) and [ADS Chapter 579](#) for review procedures and authorities). USAID determinations regarding public releases and exceptions to releases are governed by law, regulation, government-wide guidance, and Agency policy. USAID references the six principled exceptions outlined in [OMB Bulletin 12-01](#), which are also reflected in the [OSTP February 2013 Memorandum](#) and the [OSTP August 2022 Memorandum](#), to guide assessments for the public release of data and results in Agency repositories.

[OMB Bulletin 12-01](#) establishes the following exceptions to the public disclosure of foreign assistance information:

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

Moreover, USAID has outlined specifications in its DEC and DDL submission requirements, as well as in Agency policy, that prohibit the inclusion of proprietary/financially sensitive information and personally identifiable information (PII) prior to submission to USAID.

6. USAID Digital Repositories

USAID operates Agency information systems that support submission requirements and meet Agency goals for widely publishing and sharing the results of USAID-funded development activities, including research results. The Agency maintains digital repositories that provide long-term preservation and access to these results, which are the evidence-base for USAID-funded development activities.

The [DEC](#) hosts records of international development assistance activities that USAID and its implementing partners conduct. The [DDL](#) hosts machine-readable datasets and accompanying documentation that USAID and its implementing partners create during international development activities.

USAID's Plan leverages these existing digital repositories for implementation. The Plan identifies the [DEC](#) and the [DDL](#) as the solutions that support submission of USAID-funded research results, such as peer-reviewed publications and data, and that ensure the responsible, long-term preservation of these research results. It also establishes the [DEC](#) and the [DDL](#) as the solutions

for advancing the free availability and public accessibility of research results submitted to USAID.

The following sections briefly describe [DEC](#) and the [DDL](#) submission, preservation, and publication capabilities, which support Plan implementation. They also outline forward efforts to ensure that USAID repository capabilities meet the NSTC's [Desirable Characteristics of Data Repositories for Federally Funded Research](#).

6.1. Development Experience Clearinghouse (DEC) (<https://dec.usaid.gov/>)

USAID operates the [DEC](#) as the Agency's digital repository for development experience materials, which are the information products derived from the planning, implementation, evaluation, and results of international development assistance programs. The [DEC](#) is USAID's permanent archive for USAID-funded intellectual works and unstructured data, which include but are not limited to the following materials in a variety of media (e.g., text, images, audio/visual): journal articles, research reports, evaluations and assessments, contract information, tutorials, policy and planning documents, activity information sheets, training materials, images, audio recordings, and video.

USAID staff and implementing partners use the DEC's online submission process to submit Agency-funded intellectual works to the [DEC](#), in accordance with award terms and conditions. Staff and partners must follow submission guidance posted on the DEC website (see [DEC submission page](#) and [DEC Frequently Asked Questions](#)). They must also ensure that submitted materials meet required standards (e.g., COR/AOR approval, removal of financially sensitive and PII, compliance with Section 508 (of the [Rehabilitation Act of 1973](#)), conformance to USAID branding requirements, adherence to National Archives and Records Administration [NARA]-approved file formats).

Upon submission, the [DEC](#) creates a metadata record for each submitted intellectual work. It assigns a unique system identifier (a DocID) to this record and the associated file. The [DEC](#) then stores submitted intellectual works in standard, archival file formats that promote public access and re-use. Currently, the [DEC](#) stores documents such as peer-reviewed publications in archival PDF formats, which do support full-text search. The [DEC](#) has provided large corpuses of stored documents for conversion to machine-readable formats and use in exploratory analytics projects, and will continue to enhance capabilities that support such efforts as the Agency modernizes its digital repository systems.

DEC users, such as Agency staff, researchers, and the public, can search the DEC with [basic and advanced search](#) features to find resources and then access those resources. Users can review detailed bibliographic information and download their search results. They may also perform searches using the [DEC's Application Programming Interface \(API\)](#). To facilitate easy access and search, the DEC provides full public access to publications' metadata and unencumbered access to documents.

6.2. Development Data Library (DDL) (<https://data.usaid.gov/>)

USAID operates the [DDL](#) as the Agency’s digital repository for USAID-funded, machine-readable data that the Agency and its implementing partners create and collect. The [DDL](#) is USAID’s comprehensive inventory and permanent archive for USAID-funded structured data and supporting documentation, which include but are not limited to the following types of data: performance monitoring data (e.g., datasets underlying indicators, datasets underpinning performance reports), USAID-funded evaluation data (e.g., datasets underpinning evaluation findings), survey data (e.g., population-based surveys, integrated household surveys, economic assessments, public opinion), research data, and USAID operational data (e.g., official development assistance data, financial data).

USAID staff and implementing partners use the DDL’s online submission process to submit Agency-funded data to the [DDL](#), in accordance with award terms and conditions. Staff and partners must follow submission guidance posted on the DDL website to create data assets and to register and submit individual datasets (see the [DDL User Guide](#) and the DDL [Frequently Asked Questions](#)). They must also ensure that submissions meet required standards, such as submission in acceptable non-proprietary, machine-readable formats and removal of PII.

Upon registration, the [DDL](#) creates a metadata record and provides the ability to upload and submit a dataset. It assigns a unique system identifier to the metadata record and associated submitted datasets. Following a dataset submission, the [DDL](#) stores submitted datasets in non-proprietary, machine-readable formats that support long-term preservation and re-use.

The [DDL](#) supports managing access to and publication of datasets with three access levels: public, restricted public, and non-public (see [ADS 579.3.3.4](#)). The DDL publication process consists of a review process that identifies any privacy and security risks associated with datasets and results in the designation of datasets with an appropriate access level.

DDL users, such as Agency staff, researchers, and the public, can search the [DDL catalog](#) with basic and advanced search features to discover published DDL records. DDL metadata records are also searchable in the [Data.gov](#) data catalog. Users can review detailed metadata about data assets and individual datasets, which include data citation information, and access available datasets. Users are able to download available datasets manually or via APIs, which enable data downloads.

6.3. Modernization of USAID Information Systems and Digital Repositories

USAID is modernizing the Agency’s information systems to enhance and streamline capabilities for the submission and management of USAID-funded information and data (see USAID’s [Information Technology Strategic Plan](#)). USAID is pursuing development of a USAID Digital Front Door (DFD) as a central portal for USAID-funded implementing partners to submit digital information, under the terms and conditions of their awards (see the proposed [USAID Digital Information Rule](#) published in the Federal Register on December 15, 2021). USAID has also developed the [Development Information Solution](#) (DIS) as an agency-wide portfolio

management system that enables USAID staff and implementing partners to perform a broad range of business operations, reporting and planning tasks in one place.

USAID is exploring the modernization of its digital repositories, the [DEC](#) and [DDL](#), to provide central, integrated services across the information and data that they store and publish. USAID will use modernization opportunities to enhance repository features that support the NSTC's [Desirable Characteristics of Data Repositories for Federally Funded Research](#) and similar characteristics of trusted digital repositories.

7. Accessibility Components of the Public Access Plan

7.1. USAID Digital Repository Search and Discovery

USAID's [DEC](#) and [DDL](#) provide search capabilities that enable users to discover and access the digital information and data, including USAID-funded research results, that are curated within these repositories. Both the [DEC](#) and the [DDL](#) also maintain features that enable users to browse materials.

The [DEC](#) delivers a search experience that offers [basic and advanced search options](#) with multiple filters. [DEC](#) search includes full-text search of the documents curated in the repository. The [DEC](#) also maintains [special collections](#), including a [peer-reviewed publications collection](#), to facilitate browsing. The [DDL](#) enables search through a [comprehensive data catalog](#) that offers a faceted search experience. [DDL](#) search helps users discover the catalog records for datasets that interest them and provides them abilities to navigate directly to individual metadata records that enable access to the datasets.

7.2. USAID Digital Repository Preservation

USAID's [DEC](#) and [DDL](#) provide preservation capabilities and processes to ensure the long-term management and accessibility of USAID-funded information, including Agency-funded research results. For example, the [DEC](#) stores materials in archival formats that support long-term access and re-use, and the [DDL](#) stores datasets in non-proprietary, machine-readable formats.

7.3. Acceptable Use Policies and Re-use Rights for Publication and Data

USAID has developed and shared acceptable use policies for peer-reviewed publications and research data stored in the [DEC](#) and [DDL](#) respectively (see section 4.1.4 or 4.2.5 above; see the [DEC Copyright Notice](#) and the [DDL Terms of Use](#)). The DEC maintains a [Copyright Notice](#) and a [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQ\)](#) page that provides general guidance about the re-use rights for publications that it hosts. DEC metadata records for peer-reviewed publications also include an "availability" metadata field listing license information, including the applicability of copyright. The DDL offers a [Terms of Use](#) page and a [FAQ page](#) that provides guidance about the re-use rights for datasets that the repository hosts.

7.4. Accessibility (508 Compliance)

Under Section 508, agencies must give employees with disabilities and members of the public access to information comparable to the access available to others. USAID systems are accessible to people with disabilities and compliant with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act ([29 USC 794d](#)). [ADS Chapter 540](#) and [AIDAR 752.7005](#) mandate that materials submitted to the DEC are 508 compliant. [ADS 302mak](#) (USAID Implementation of Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973) provides additional background on USAID's measures for achieving 508 compliance.

8. Implementation

Improving the quality and accessibility of USAID's research products carries implications for the entire Agency. Starting with the release of the first Plan in 2016, USAID has implemented the Plan collaboratively, leveraged existing resources across the Agency, and updated relevant policies and guidance. The implementation process will continue to:

- Work in full and open consultation with stakeholders, including other federal organizing bodies, libraries, publishers, federally funded researchers, higher education institutions, users of federally-funded research results, and civil society organizations to maintain and improve the Plan; and,
- Explore new approaches and partnerships with publishers and other stakeholders to make final peer-reviewed manuscripts or published articles publicly accessible at the time of publication.

8.1. Roles and Responsibilities

- *Bureau for Inclusive Growth, Partnerships, and Innovation (IPI)*: As the lead implementer for the [USAID Scientific Research Policy](#), IPI will continue to provide subject matter expertise, standards, and other content-related guidance for the implementation of the Plan.
- *Bureau for Planning, Learning and Resource Management (PLR)*: As a key stakeholder for the Agency's implementation of the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act, as well as the Agency's lead for its Program Cycle policy ([ADS 201](#)), PLR will continue to provide guidance and standards for the implementation of the Plan as well as collaboration with M/CIO for business needs and requirements pertinent to Agency information systems.
- *Bureau for Management, Office of the Chief Information Officer (M/CIO)*: M/CIO leads the implementation of the Plan and pursuit of considerations for future activities identified in the Plan with respect to Agency information systems, technology products, policies, and award mechanisms.

- *Bureau for Management, Office of Acquisition and Assistance (M/OAA/P)*: As the chapter owner for [2 CFR 700](#) (USAID's Assistance Regulation) and [48 CFR Chapter 7](#) (AIDAR) as well as ADS Chapters [302](#) and [303](#), M/OAA/P will collaborate to implement this Plan into appropriate Acquisition and Assistance policies and regulations.
- *Bureau for Legislative and Public Affairs (LPA)*: Per [USAID's Scientific Research Policy](#) (Section 6, page 19), LPA assists with the publication and distribution of public research products that USAID staff produce.
- *USAID Data Administration and Technical Advisory (DATA) Board*: The DATA Board oversees the governance of this Plan. The DATA Board establishes the overarching governance and management of data at USAID to serve overseas and headquarters operating units, in order to enhance their day-to-day work involving data.
- *USAID Council on Research and Development (R&D Council)*: The R&D Council is an Advisory Body that oversees and coordinates Agency-wide investments, goals, and objectives related to R&D and recommends management improvements to advance them. It advises USAID's leadership on cross-cutting and multisectoral issues related to Agency policies and procedures for R&D, including the Public Access Plan, and serves as a forum to champion and advance USAID's investments in R&D to achieve the U.S. Government's strategic objectives.
- *USAID Operating Units (OUs)*: USAID Operating Units will work with these Bureaus to carry out this Plan, consistent with USAID policy and guidance developed by the DATA Board, the R&D Council, and/or their related working groups.

8.2. Reporting on USAID's Public Access Plan

USAID will report to OSTP, when requested, on the status of the Agency's Public Access Plan. Reports will include relevant measures that the Agency generates to monitor free availability and public accessibility to USAID-funded research results. For example, the report will typically include the number of peer-reviewed publication records added to the DEC's peer-reviewed publications collection within a specified time period, and the number of data assets added to the DDL's comprehensive data catalog within a specified time period. USAID leverages third-party academic research services including CHORUS and Clarivate Web of Science to obtain relevant data about peer-reviewed publications that acknowledge USAID and that were published after closeout of a USAID award. USAID will explore the feasibility of monitoring additional criteria/measures for evaluating Plan progress and the public accessibility of USAID-funded research results.

8.3. Interagency Coordination

USAID actively participates in the NSTC's Subcommittee on Open Science (SOS) to coordinate the Agency's public access and broader open science efforts with other federal agencies. The Agency maintains representatives on the SOS and nominates technical experts to serve with and

learn from SOS cross-agency working groups, which address topics such as effective data management, open science infrastructure, and research security. USAID will continue its active, productive engagement with the SOS and partnering agencies to inform USAID's implementation and seek opportunities for coordinating with other federal agencies as they implement their Plans.

8.4. USAID Partnerships and Localization

USAID works with other agencies and the private sector to provide training and workforce development related to scientific data management, analyses, and stewardship. Partnerships with the private sector provide USAID with leverage and capacity for managing and publishing federally funded research results and delivering technologies. USAID engages with partners in the private sector to improve data access and compatibility, including the formation of public-private partnerships with foundations and other research funding organizations.

USAID is redoubling its commitment to [localization](#), to shift more leadership for priority setting, project design, implementation, and measuring results to the people and institutions with the capabilities and credibility to drive change in their own countries and communities. To assure the sustainability and long-term success of our development assistance, USAID has an Agency-wide goal of directing 25% of direct funding to local actors by FY 2025. By 2030, 50% of activities will place local communities in the lead to co-design an activity, set priorities, drive implementation, or evaluate impact. To the extent feasible, USAID will extend its public access efforts to include local partner organizations, institutions, academia, and individuals producing and delivering research results.

8.5. Workforce Development and Training

USAID provides an Agency-wide Data Literacy Training Program that is designed to provide USAID's workforce with data literacy skills important to their daily work. USAID's Data Literacy Training Program offers a comprehensive overview of the USAID Data Lifecycle and its role in USAID's Program Cycle, which is USAID's operational model for planning, delivering, assessing, and adapting development programming in a given region or country to advance U.S. foreign policy. The program includes coursework and content about the management and re-use of USAID-funded information, including USAID-funded research results. USAID will explore the feasibility of extending relevant Data Literacy Training Program modules to its implementing partners, including USAID-funded researchers.

8.6. Update and Re-evaluation of the Plan

USAID will amend this Plan as needed, particularly as the Agency issues new or revised rules or policies that impact the Plan.

8.7. Timeline for Policy Development and Implementation

USAID already implements major components and requirements outlined in the Plan. The Plan's implementation timeline in its entirety is part of the Agency's broader timeline for implementing the [Foundations for Evidence-based Policymaking Act](#) and associated guidance and for updating Agency policies, procedures, and award terms and conditions accordingly. For

example, the timeline for any changes to award terms and conditions is tied to the Agency's broader timeline for completing the [USAID Digital Information Rule](#).

This update to USAID's Public Access Plan addresses the updates to guidance outlined in the August 25, 2022 OSTP Memorandum, [Ensuring Free, Immediate, and Equitable Access to Federally Funded Research](#). The implementation timeline focuses on the key milestones provided in the 2022 OSTP Memorandum for carrying out these targeted updates.

- **February 2023:** Agency clearance of the Plan for OSTP and OMB review
- **March - September 2023:** Socialization of the Plan's provisions with Agency stakeholders that support implementation
- **February 2024:** Agency clearance of the Plan for public release
- **May 2024:** Finalization of USAID policy updates to align with the updated Plan's new provisions (e.g., [ADS Chapter 579](#) updates)

8.8. Resources

USAID will use existing policies, procedures, acquisition and assistance award-related language, and information systems (e.g., [DEC](#), [DDL](#)) to implement the Plan. USAID will also provide sufficient staffing and services to govern and manage implementation. USAID will govern and advance the Plan collaboratively with a cross-Agency approach, which uses the USAID DATA Board and the USAID R&D Council to bring stakeholders together from USAID's OUs and Missions.

USAID will include budget estimates that support the Plan's implementation in resource requests for its existing services and solutions during the Agency's normal budget development process. For example, USAID will include any budget estimates for digital repository enhancements related to the Plan in its resource requests for the Agency's repositories (i.e., [DEC](#) and [DDL](#)) during the normal budget development process.