



# Strategy Updates, Amendments, and Extensions

A Mandatory Reference for ADS Chapter 201

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## 1. OVERVIEW

This mandatory reference explains the requirements and processes for updating Intermediate Results (IRs), amending Development Objectives (DOs), and/or extending Regional or Country Development Cooperation Strategies and Strategic Frameworks (hereinafter collectively referred to as “strategies”).

## 2. UPDATES AND AMENDMENTS

Per [ADS 201.3.2.20](#), strategies are living documents. Operating Units (OUs) should regularly revisit their strategy and its associated development hypotheses to take stock, capture learnings, and make adjustments as necessary. This can be done through Portfolio Reviews, Mid-course Stocktaking (MCST), or ad hoc meetings organized to respond to sudden changes. Potential triggers for adjusting a strategy include, but are not limited to: 1) changes in the country context, such as onset of conflict, that risk giving rise to instability; 2) windows of opportunity that prompt major shifts in programming; 3) internal changes in funding or Agency policy priorities that call for a rescoping or revision of intended results; or 4) changes to the development hypothesis based on findings from monitoring, evaluation, or learning during the course of implementation.

There are two types of strategy adjustments:

- **An update** to a strategy occurs when an OU makes changes at the IR or sub-IR level in the strategy, or makes changes to risks, assumptions, or cross-cutting issues. Updates do not require clearance or approval from USAID/Washington (USAID/W). However, OUs are required to document the update(s) and communicate them to USAID/W pursuant to the process outlined in **Section 2.1** of this Mandatory Reference. The OU must also submit the updated internal and external versions of the strategy for posting on USAID websites pursuant to **Section 2.3** and **Section 5**.
- **An amendment** to a strategy occurs when an OU makes changes at the DO or Goal level in the strategy. Changes made to a Special Objective also require an amendment, unless the change was previously specified in the strategy. Amendments require approval from the relevant Regional Bureau Assistant Administrator (AA) as outlined in **Section 2.2** of this Mandatory Reference. The OU must also submit the amended internal and external versions of the strategy for posting on USAID websites pursuant to **Section 2.3** and **Section 5**.

As part of the process of updating/amending a strategy document, Missions/OUs should consider the implications of such adjustments on key conditions or requirements in their Development Objective Agreements (DOAGs), if applicable. [ADS 201.3.2.18](#) provides guidance for Missions/OUs obligating funds in a DOAG.

If an IR or DO in a strategy document is updated/amended, OUs must work with their relevant State Department counterparts to ensure alignment with the respective Integrated Country Strategy (ICS) Mission Objectives, if applicable. This requirement only applies to DOs and IRs; it does not apply to sub-IRs. In addition, OUs must update their Performance Management Plan (PMP) as soon as possible (and no later than one month following approval of the update or amendment) to reflect the relevant changes made to the strategy (see [ADS 201.3.2.14](#)).

## 2.1 Requirements for Updating Strategies

OUs updating IRs must complete the following steps:

- **Step 1:** The OU updates the strategy to reflect changes to the IR(s) and obtains and documents Mission Director/OU leadership (or designee) approval of the updates.
- **Step 2:** The OU submits an Information Memorandum (see recommended [Strategy Update Information Memorandum Template](#)) to the relevant Regional Bureau Program Office Point of Contact (POC), with the updated internal and external versions of the strategy attached to the Information Memo. The Regional Bureau Program Office must share the Information Memorandum with PLR's Office of Strategic and Program Planning (PLR/SPP), as info-only.
- **Step 3:** The Regional Bureau Program Office POC ensures that changes discussed in the Information Memorandum are reflected in the final updated internal and external strategy documents, and shares the final versions of the strategy with the PLR/SPP Strategy Team POC. The PLR/SPP Strategy Team POC posts the updated strategy on USAID websites pursuant to the requirements in **Section 2.3** and **Section 5**.

If the OU is updating their strategy as a result of the findings of a MCST (see [ADS 201.3.2.17.B](#)), the [MCST Information Memorandum](#) satisfies the requirement to document the update. The OU must attach the updated strategy document to the MCST Information Memo.

## 2.2 Requirements for Amending Strategies

OUs amending Goal Statements, DOs, or Special Objectives must complete the following steps:

- **Step 1:** The OU amends the strategy to reflect changes to the DO(s) or Goal and obtains Mission Director/OU leadership (or designee) approval of the amendment.
- **Step 2:** The OU submits an Action Memorandum (see recommended [Strategy](#)

[Amendment Action Memorandum Template](#)) to the relevant Regional Bureau Program Office POC, with the amended strategy attached to the Action Memorandum. If the amendment to the DO has significant resource implications, the OU is also required to work with PLR/BRM to develop revised budget scenarios which must be attached to the Action Memo. In those cases, PLR/BRM must also clear the Action Memo. Significant resource implications may include, but are not limited to new earmarks or shifts in funding levels or sectors.

- **Step 3:** The Regional Bureau obtains working-level clearances from PLR/SPP, PLR/BRM, and any pillar bureau(s) significantly impacted by the amendment, as determined by the OU in consultation with the Regional Bureau Program Office.
- **Step 4:** The Regional Bureau Program Office submits the cleared Action Memorandum to the Regional Bureau AA for final approval. The Assistant to the Administrator (AtA) for PLR does not approve the amendment, but should be info-copied on the Action Memo.
- **Step 5:** The Regional Bureau Program Office ensures that changes agreed upon in the Amendment Action Memorandum are reflected in the final amended strategy and then submits the amended internal and external versions of the strategy for posting on USAID websites pursuant to the guidelines in **Section 2.3** and **Section 5**.

An MCST Information Memorandum documenting the *intention* to amend a DO does not suffice as formal documentation or approval of the amendment.

### **2.3 Requirements for Revising the Strategy to Reflect an Update/Amendment**

When a strategy is updated or amended, OUs must revise the cover page of both the internal and external versions to reflect the date of the adjustment.

#### **For updates:**

Dates: October 5, 2020 - October 5, 2025  
*Updated on: November 4, 2024*

#### **For amendments:**

Dates: October 5, 2020 - October 5, 2025  
*Amended on: November 4, 2024*

In addition, OUs must include a brief (not to exceed one page) Update/Amendment Preface within the revised document to enable readers to quickly understand the

changes. This preface must also include the page reference for where the new Results Framework appears in the strategy. Additional substantive changes should also be highlighted throughout the document. OUs are also encouraged to include an updated outline that reflects the revisions and, if needed, new page numbers.

### 3. EXTENSIONS

Per [ADS 201.3.2.19](#), under certain circumstances, an OU may extend the strategy implementation period.

There are two types of extensions:

- Extensions for **up to six months** do not require clearance or approval from USAID/W. This one-time option is a unilateral action that an OU may utilize at any time during the life of the strategy, including after a longer extension that required USAID/W approval. See **Section 3.1** for steps for completing this type of extension.
- Extensions **beyond six months** require additional justification and approval from USAID/W. Circumstances justifying this type of extension typically include, but are not limited to, major crises or breakthrough learnings that will affect the implementation timeline. Extensions for the sole purpose of aligning the strategy implementation period with that of the ICS are generally not approved. See **Section 3.2** for steps for completing this type of extension.

In most circumstances, the maximum combined duration of strategy extensions should not exceed two years (i.e., an OU with an existing six-month extension can only request an additional extension of up to 18 months). Absent compelling circumstances, extensions of a strategy for more than two years beyond the original expiration date will not be approved. An OU should notify the Regional Bureau Program Office and PLR/SPP of its plans to extend its strategy at least six months, but no more than 12 months, before its strategy expires.

#### 3.1 Steps for Completing Extensions Up to Six Months

OUs extending their strategy for up to six months must complete the following steps:

- **Step 1:** The OU determines a new end date for the strategy and documents Mission Director/OU leadership approval of the extension.
- **Step 2:** The OU submits an Information Memorandum (see recommended [Strategy Extension Information Memorandum Template](#)) to the relevant Regional Bureau Program Office POC, with the extended strategy attached. The Regional Bureau Program Office must then share the Information Memorandum with PLR/SPP, as info-only.

- **Step 3:** The Regional Bureau Program Office POC submits the internal and external versions of the extended strategy for posting on USAID websites pursuant to the requirements in **Section 3.3** and **Section 5**.

### 3.2 Steps for Completing Extensions Beyond Six Months

OUs extending their strategy beyond six months must complete the following steps:

- **Step 1:** The OU determines the new end date and submits an Action Memorandum with a justification for the extension (see recommended [Strategy Extension Action Memorandum Template](#)) to the relevant Regional Bureau Program Office POC. If the extension is a recommendation from the OU's MCST, the OU should attach the MCST Information Memorandum to the Action Memorandum.
- **Step 2:** The Regional Bureau Program Office POC circulates the Action Memorandum for clearance and co-approval by the Regional Bureau AA and the PLR AtA.
- **Step 3:** Upon approval, the OU revises the cover page to reflect the new expiration date and submits internal and external versions of the extended strategy for posting on USAID websites pursuant to the requirements in **Section 3.3** and **Section 5**.

### 3.3 Requirements for Revising the Strategy to Reflect an Extension

When a strategy is extended, OUs must revise the cover page of both the internal and external versions to reflect the original and new end dates as follows:

**If the strategy has only been extended once:**

Original Dates: April 14, 2020 - April 14, 2025  
*Extended through: October 14, 2026*

**If the strategy has been extended more than once:**

Original Dates: April 14, 2020 - April 14, 2025  
 First extension: October 14, 2026  
*Second extension: April 14, 2027*

## 4. COMBINING UPDATES/AMENDMENTS WITH EXTENSIONS

Since Missions and Country Offices have delegated authority to unilaterally update IRs and extend their strategy for up to six months, it is permissible for those OUs to

execute these changes simultaneously. To do this, the OU must submit an approved Information Memorandum (see recommended [Strategy Update Information Memorandum Template](#)) to the relevant Regional Bureau Program Office, who must then share it with PLR/SPP (for information only). If the update and extension are the outcome of a MCST, they can be documented in the [MCST Information Memorandum](#) (see [ADS 201.3.2.17.B](#)). The OU must attach the updated and extended strategy to the MCST Information Memorandum.

If an OU requires an extension beyond six months coupled with an update or amendment, it must submit an Action Memorandum (see recommended [Strategy Extension Action Memorandum Template](#)) pursuant to the steps in **Section 3.2**. Requests for updates or amendments that are combined with an extension beyond six months should be bundled into a single Action Memorandum. The MCST Information Memorandum documenting the intention to update or amend a strategy and extend it beyond six months does not suffice as formal documentation or approval of the extension.

#### **4.1 Requirements for Revising the Strategy to Reflect Combined Changes**

When a strategy is extended and updated/amended, OUs must revise the cover page of both the internal and external versions to reflect these changes:

Original Dates: April 14, 2020 - April 14, 2025  
*Updated/Amended on: August 20, 2023*  
*Extended through: April 14, 2026*

OUs must also include an Update/Amendment Preface pursuant to the requirements in **Section 2.3**.

### **5. DISSEMINATION OF INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL VERSIONS**

Once the update, amendment, or extension is approved, as described above, it must be disseminated as follows:

- **Internal Version:** OUs must submit the internal version of their revised strategy to the relevant Regional Bureau Program Office POC. Once the Regional Bureau has confirmed the changes and that the document is 508-compliant, the Regional Bureau POC must send the revised strategy to the PLR/SPP Strategy Team POC. PLR/SPP must then post the internal version on the Agency's internal websites ([ProgramNet](#) and [USAID Pages](#)). Only USAID staff can access these websites, and these internal strategies may contain information labeled as Sensitive But Unclassified (SBU).
- **External Version:** OUs must also submit a modified public version of their strategy, along with updated text for the public page where the strategy will be



posted, to the relevant Regional Bureau POC. This version must not include any SBU information. Once the Regional Bureau has confirmed SBU content has been removed and the document is 508-compliant, the Regional Bureau POC must send the external version to the PLR/SPP Strategy Team POC. PLR/SPP and PLR/Comms must then post the external version on [USAID.gov](https://www.usaid.gov). The Mission is responsible for posting the external version on the [Development Experience Clearinghouse \(DEC\)](#). The general public can access these websites, therefore strategies posted there should be unclassified. In addition, the PLR/SPP Strategy Team POC must post this external version alongside the internal version on [ProgramNet](#).

OUs must include modified cover pages pursuant to the relevant requirements in **Section 2.3** or **3.3** for all revised strategies. OUs must also ensure that their strategy complies with all of the formatting requirements described in [ADS 201mag, Section VI](#), including that it complies with [Section 508 in the Rehabilitation Act of 1973](#). See [Posting Internal and External Strategies on USAID Websites](#) for additional guidance on formatting requirements and the process for posting a strategy.

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