



Integrated Country Strategy Quick Start Guide for Revising ICS



Managing for Results

Note: This guide should help ICS coordinators quickly and efficiently figure how to revise an [ICS](#). We've embedded links to more comprehensive materials in the text of this guide. Please contact us at ICS@state.gov if you have any questions.

What is the Integrated Country Strategy? All Missions have created an ICS which is located [here](#). Missions revise their ICS every three years according to the [ICS guidance](#). The ICS is Mission-driven, cleared by the Chief of Mission and:

- Articulates Mission Goals and Objectives through a coordinated planning effort among all USG agencies in country.
- Creates a frame that flows into later planning/budgeting documents.
- Serves as a tool to better coordinate activities throughout the Mission and to integrate the Regional Bureau's priorities.

What is in the Integrated Country Strategy? The ICS contains four things: (1) a snapshot of the [country context](#) that Mission will be operating in over the next three years, (2) an outline of long term and three to five year end states the Mission wants to focus on called [Mission Goals](#) and [Mission Objectives](#) and Management Objectives, (3) a broad implementation plan called an [Action Plan](#), and (4) a statement summarizing the Chief of Mission's Priorities as outlined in the strategy. An illustrative outline of the ICS is below.





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What are the suggested steps to develop an Integrated Country Strategy? Though you may have developed the ICS in a previous assignment we strongly suggest that you attend one of the [ICS webinar briefs](#). During the webinar we can quickly tell you what you need to get started. At a minimum you should also read pages 6-11 of the [ICS Guidance](#) which formally defines the different components. We recommend the following steps. And before you start remember to use [this template](#).

1. Review [past strategy](#) and begin developing [Country Context](#) and defining key issues;
2. Leadership validates/revises [Mission Goals](#) from previous strategy;
3. Finish Context and Revise/Draft Objectives (should involve a group discussion.)
4. Working groups develop Action Plans; and
5. Leadership drafts [COM Priorities Statement](#)

Group discussion on the strategy is always preferred, but if the Mission is time limited we suggest that the Context and Objectives be developed during one to two short group sessions since they cut across sections, and Action Plans offline in working groups. A sample agenda for a group discussion is [linked here](#).

How does the Feedback and Submission Process work? There are two points in the [ICS Schedule](#) where you have to submit documents for feedback:

- **Five weeks from ICS Launch:** You must submit the bulleted Country Context, Goals and Objectives outline. The ICS Support Team and Regional Bureaus will provide you comments on these outlines within three business days.
- **Ten Weeks from ICS Launch:** You will submit the full draft of the strategy to the ICS Support Team. The ICS Support Team will distribute the draft for [review](#) in Washington by bureaus and interagency partners. Bureaus and agencies will have three weeks to review drafts and each submit consolidated comments on a [single feedback form](#) to the ICS Support Team. The ICS Support Team will forward all comments to you at the conclusion of the review period. You then have three weeks to incorporate comments and submit the final ICS to ICS@state.gov. The final revised ICS will be posted [here](#).

Missions have noted that front office clearance is one of the more time consuming parts of the ICS process. We suggest Missions build in extra time for front office clearance as they develop a schedule for the ICS process.

Questions? Contact us at ICS@state.gov

http://diplopedia.state.gov/index.php?title=Integrated_Country_Strategy