



Managing for Results

# Integrated Country Strategy

## Frequently Asked Questions



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### ***1. When do I revise the ICS?***

The ICS documents are revised every three years following the submission of the final Joint Regional Strategy. A cable will signal the launch of the process. A timeline is [linked here](#).



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### ***2. What years are covered by the ICS?***

The planning period addressed in the ICS is three years from the date of final submission.

### ***3. Where can I go for additional information?***

Training materials, an ICS model, and a step-by-step guide to assist Missions with ICS planning are available [online](#). The Office of U.S. Foreign Assistance Resources (F) and the Bureau of Budget and Planning (BP) are jointly coordinating the ICS process with Regional Bureaus. Questions pertaining to the ICS may be directed to [ICS@state.gov](mailto:ICS@state.gov).

### ***4. Does the ICS require a software application?***

No. Please use Microsoft Word to complete your ICS. A draft [template](#) is available at [http://diplpedia.state.gov/index.php?title=Integrated\\_Country\\_Strategy](http://diplpedia.state.gov/index.php?title=Integrated_Country_Strategy).

### ***5. What is the relationship between the ICS and the MRR?***

The ICS is a planning document that frames and informs the Mission Resource Request (MRR). The MRR focuses on resources required to implement the priorities outlined in the ICS. Mission Objectives in the ICS will become the building blocks for resource requests in the MRR. All foreign assistance funding will need to be linked to a Mission Objective.

### ***6. How will the JRS inform the ICS?***

The Joint Regional Strategy (JRS) informs Mission level planning in the ICS. Mission Goals in the ICS may be based on or taken directly from the JRS Goals or JRS Objectives. The Mission Goals serve as a link to connect the more specific Mission Objectives to the broader Regional Strategy.

### ***7. Who from the Mission should be involved in the development of the ICS?***

As expressed in the QDDR, the intent is that strategic planning reflects a “whole of government” approach to guide US Government activities in the country over the three-year period the plan covers. The development of the ICS involves all agencies in the country under Chief of Mission authority, both in the Embassy and in Constituent Posts. Typically those agencies constitute the Mission Country Team.

### ***8. Will bureaus be involved in the ICS strategy?***

Yes. Bureaus will have the opportunity to provide input and comment on the ICS where they have equities. In addition, Regional Bureaus are also expected to help coordinate roll-out and review of the ICS process. However, the bulk of the process is carried out at the Mission-level and is not intended to have regular input from the Bureaus.

### ***9. Is there a required page length? Are we required to write narratives in paragraph-form?***

No. With the exception of the short Mission Objective Justification, the Management Considerations and the Chief of Mission Priorities statement, Missions should avoid using paragraph form narratives. The



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page limits are suggested to emphasize to missions that they should document only what is necessary. There is significant flexibility for page limits.

### ***10. How does the ICS relate to the PPR and other reporting processes?***

Managing for results begins with the planning stage and is carried forward through monitoring and evaluation during and after project implementation. For Foreign Assistance, indicators and milestones established in the ICS will set the stage for OUs to report critical aspects of progress towards their Mission Objectives in the Performance Plan and Report (PPR).

### ***11. How many Management Objectives should I have?***

There is no maximum or minimum number of Enabling Objectives. The number of Enabling Objectives is determined through an analysis of the existing management platform for carrying out Mission activities and programs, and what achievable enhancements and improvements over the time frame of the ICS would increase Mission operational effectiveness and efficiency in pursuit of Mission Goals and Objectives.

### ***12. Do I have to do a Security Assessment (Annex B)?***

Missions with a strong security component may determine that they can benefit from conducting a Security Sector Assessment in the preparation stage of the ICS. It should be conducted at the discretion of the Chief of Mission, in consultation with the State Regional Assistant Secretary and the USAID Regional Assistant Administrator, or as directed by other senior State/USAID leadership. Missions that are specifically recommended to conduct a Security and Justice Sector Assessment will be notified at the beginning of their ICS process. Missions should consider conducting a Security Sector Assessment if one or more of the following conditions apply:

- the security environment of the host nation is of significant importance to the security of the United States;
- U.S. assistance could benefit from improved coordination and sequencing;
- past U.S. assistance has not led to the emergence of self-sustaining host nation capabilities;
- a regional approach is needed (e.g., to address transnational and/or border issues); or
- the host nation is experiencing a moment of transition (e.g., to/from conflict, to/from autocracy)

### ***13. What is the Presidential Policy Directive (PPD) 23 on Security Sector Assistance (SSA) and how does it relate to the Integrated Country Strategy (ICS)?***

Presidential Policy Directive (PPD) 23 on Security Sector Assistance (SSA) reinforces State leadership on interagency SSA efforts and identifies the ICS as the core organizing tool for security sector planning. Specifically for SSA, the ICS:

- Provides prioritized SSA-related objectives and the foundation for determining annual resource requirements and justifications that facilitate budget trade-offs to achieve those objectives



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- Enables SSA decisions to be made at lower levels when priorities compete
- Links Mission goals and objectives to higher level strategies; and,
- Provides COMs with a mechanism for coordinating USG actions to address SSA challenges and opportunities in a country.

### ***14. How are SSA Agency contributions captured in the ICS and what is their role in the Review process?***

In-country representatives are the primary conduit for SSA agencies to contribute to ICS development and should be included in the deliberation process. For agencies without a country presence, the [ICS Support Team](#) will consolidate and transmit all SSA Agency inputs for the Mission’s consideration. The [ICS Support Team](#) will also forward draft ICS documents to SSA agencies for review/comment and then consolidate and transmit all comments to the Mission for consideration.

Mission Objectives are designed to capture the collective resources and efforts of all SSA stakeholders into a few, resource-informed, overarching priorities. However, SSA stakeholders should not expect Missions to produce stand alone SSA MOs that capture individual agency equities.

If a Mission follows the ICS guidance of creating an interagency plan that reflects and prioritizes the shared, whole-of-government objectives of the Mission, those objectives should fulfill the requirements outlined in the PPD. Below are suggested tips to incorporate PPD requirements into the ICS.

<b>ICS Section</b>	<b>Implementation Tips</b>
<b>COM Priorities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• COMs may wish to reference how security priorities link to broader goals of PPD 23 and/or regional approaches to security as well as articulating the common USG understanding of the security environment and the strategic importance of security sector issues within the bilateral relationship.</li> </ul>
<b>Country Context</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specify the assumptions, challenges, opportunities, and risks associated with addressing security issues. Optional Security sector assessments may help identify assumptions, challenges, opportunities and risks.</li> </ul>
<b>Missions Objectives and Justification</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MOs should consider inputs and reflect shared priorities of all SSA agencies and be informed by context analysis and security sector assessments if available.</li> <li>• The Justification should articulate how work on the MO will address in-country security challenges and opportunities.</li> </ul>



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### ***15. Why are CDCS Development Objectives developed outside of the ICS process? Is the CDCS an interagency process?***

USAID's CDCS, as outlined in the QDDR, is a vital planning process designed to produce strategies that prioritize and focus USAID assistance in select areas to maximize development impact based on evidence and extensive stakeholder consultations. The Development Objectives included in the CDCS serve as the basis for the annual budget formulation process for USAID-implemented resources, leading to the development of the overall USAID annual budget.

USAID missions develop the CDCS under Chief of Mission authority and in close collaboration and coordination with the State Department and other inter-agency partners. Likewise, USAID missions should participate actively in the development of the ICS including but not limited to the inclusion of CDCS development objectives. Close interagency involvement and coordination during the development of both strategies will help define synergies, inter-dependencies, and the range of objectives needed to advance overall mission goals. Missions with questions or concerns related to integration of the CDCS with the ICS should simultaneously contact their State and USAID Regional Bureaus for additional guidance.

### ***16. How does the CDCS plug into the ICS?***

CDCS Development Objectives should be included among the ICS Mission Objectives. When incorporating into the ICS, the Mission should directly insert each Development Objective, its development hypothesis. For the Action Plan section, Missions should list the Intermediate Results for that Development Objective, associated performance indicators identified in the CDCS or resulting Performance Management Plan, and a link to the CDCS, but do not need to create a new Action Plan. As appropriate, Missions can include Sub-Objectives and Action Plans for non-USAID engagement and programming that contributes to the achievement of the Development Objective.

The CDCS Development Goal may be used as one of the Mission Goals, but may be modified to reflect related programs and objectives of other agencies.

The USAID Management Requirements sections of the CDCS should inform development of the ICS Management and Operational Considerations section.

Further guidance on how to incorporate the CDCS into the ICS can be found in the [Incorporating a USAID CDCS handout](#) on Diplopedia.

### ***17. What if my Mission has development activities but is not required to complete a CDCS?***

Missions that are not required to complete a CDCS but have development activities (defined in CDCS Guidance v3; Multi-Year Planning Requirements) can choose to create a Mission Objective that focuses exclusively on development, or incorporate the development work into other cross-cutting Mission Objectives.



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### ***18. How do Missions address overlaps in the content of the CDCS Development Objectives and the ICS Mission Objectives?***

For example, a CDCS Development Objective is “enhanced economic growth from increased agriculture production” and the Economic Section is negotiating a trade agreement that will support this objective. If the trade agreement is necessary to achieve the Development Objective, then it is likely included in the CDCS and does not need to be restated independently in the ICS. However, the Mission has several ways in which to integrate engagement on the trade agreement. For example, the Economic Section could craft a separate Mission Objective that helps achieve a common goal as the CDCS Development Objective or define Sub-Objectives under the existing Development Objective.

Missions should contact the ICS Support Team or their State and USAID Regional Bureaus with specific questions related to CDCS and ICS integration.

### ***19. Is there any flexibility on the requirement to include the title of CDCS Development Objectives as written?***

The ICS is the overarching Mission strategy and the CDCS needs to fit with that vision in a way that makes sense (and certainly does not conflict with it in any way). Nevertheless, per agreement between State and USAID leadership, Missions should not adjust the CDCS Results Framework as a result of the ICS process. The ICS guidance states on page 12 under “How is an Integrated Country Strategy Reviewed and Approved?”: “Missions should not adjust the CDCS Results framework (which includes the Development Objectives) as a result of the ICS process.”

Supplemental material that describes how to incorporate specific sections of the CDCS in the ICS is [linked here](#).

### ***20. How should the ICS capture development priorities and programs of State and other USG agencies?***

Missions have flexibility in how to capture development priorities and programs of State and other non-USAID agencies not reflected in the CDCS. Just a few options include creating separate development-only Mission Objectives, integrating into other ICS Mission Objectives and referencing the CDCS, or inserting Sub-Objectives under CDCS-linked Mission Objectives.