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# Handbook for Finding USAID Information

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This is a guide to finding USAID information. It provides tips on how to find information and documentation from USAID without filing a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request and how to file a FOIA request if one is necessary.

Lots of USAID's information and documents are available to the public free-of-charge. If you need USAID documents, don't automatically think that you have to file a FOIA request. FOIA requests can be time-consuming and costly. The documents that you need may be available through non-FOIA means, especially through USAID's website.

We hope that you find this guide helpful. We welcome your feedback and suggestions. Comments can be sent to Joanne Paskar, USAID, Information and Records Division, Rm. 2.7C RRB, Washington, DC 20523-2701 or [jpaskar@usaid.gov](mailto:jpaskar@usaid.gov).

## IMPORTANT SOURCES OF USAID INFORMATION

### USAID's Website.

The USAID website is one of your most important tools for finding and obtaining information on USAID. Do you need the telephone number for a USAID official? Do you want a listing of our Agency's "small purchases" credit cards holders? Do you want to know who has contracts with USAID? Do you need design and evaluation documents for health projects? You can find such information on USAID's website. The website contains a wealth of information on USAID's organization, regulations, goals, and programs. You can locate many Agency program, project, and technical documents. Many of those documents can be accessed on-line. Many of the USAID databases are available to the public via the website. USAID's website can be found at <http://www.usaid.gov>.

### USAID Public Information Center Staff

USAID's Public Information Center (PIC) staff processes non-FOIA information requests from the general public concerning USAID's foreign assistance programs. This team of knowledgeable information specialists can point you to the sources that have the information that you need. The PIC posts a "Most Frequently Asked Questions" site at <http://www.usaid.gov/about>. If you need directory information, call (202) 712-0000. If you have a question about our Agency, call (202) 712-4810.

## **USAID Library**

The USAID Library's collection focuses on development assistance. Areas of emphasis include health and populations, women in development, economics and finances, democracy, trade and private sector development. It houses more than 10,000 commercially available titles and more than 450 journals. The non-USAID collection is indexed in its Online Catalog at <http://library.info.usaid.gov>. The Library has a collection of pre-1996 USAID technical and project documents on microfiche and complete sets of major USAID program documents, including the "Congressional Presentations." Interlibrary loan service is available for many items in the collection.

The Library's location, telephone number and hours are  
USAID Library  
Ronald Reagan Building  
1300 Pennsylvania Ave. NW  
Room M.01-010 (Mezzanine Level)  
Washington, DC 20523  
(202) 712-0579  
Hours: 9:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, excluding Federal holidays

## **USAID Databases**

Here are the major USAID databases that are accessible to the public. A listing of additional databases not accessible to the public is available on USAID's FOIA website, <http://www.usaid.gov/about/about/foia/databases.html>.

### **Acquisition and Assistance Database (A&A)**

This database is used to record and transact procurement actions from the inception of a procurement request to the issuance of the award. It is linked to the NMS Database. The public has limited access to information about current contracts, cooperative agreements and grants through the USAID website at <http://gemini.info.usaid.gov/yellowbook/>.

### **Development Experience System (DEXS)**

DEXS is a bibliographic database that contains records for over 100,000 USAID technical, program, and project design and evaluation documents. There are abstracts for some of the documents. Electronic versions of many of the documents are available through the database. The public may access DEXS through USAID's website at <http://www.dec.org/>.

### **Development Information Services - Statistics (DIS Stats)**

DIS Stats is a database maintained by the Statistical Unit of USAID's Development Information Services (DIS). This database contains economic and social data on

developing countries. The data is collected from U.S. governmental, international and non-governmental organizations. The public has partial access through USAID's website to DIS data through the LAC Databook (<http://www.usaid.gov/regions/lac>) and the Global Education Database (GED) ([http://www.usaid.gov/educ\\_training/ged\\_download.html](http://www.usaid.gov/educ_training/ged_download.html)) . The database also contains historical loan and grant data compiled by U.S. governmental and international organizations. Data from this database is used to produce the annual "USAID Congressional Presentation" (<http://www.usaid.gov/pubs/cbj2002>) and the publication, "U.S. Overseas Loans and Grants and Assistance from Other International Organizations" (<http://quesdb.cdie.org/gbk/index.html>).

### **Global Education Database (GED)**

GED contains international education statistics compiled from the UNESCO Institute of Statistics and from USAID's Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS). DHS is a USAID program that conducts full-scale household surveys in developing countries. There are 145 UNESCO indicators and 62 DHS indicators. The public may access GED through USAID's website at [http://www.usaid.gov/educ\\_training/ged\\_download.html](http://www.usaid.gov/educ_training/ged_download.html).

### **LAC Databook**

This database is a component of the DIS Stats Database. It contains socio-economic data on countries in the Latin America and Caribbean region. The public can access this database through USAID's website at <http://www.usaid.gov/regions/lac>.

### **Projects Database**

The Projects Database is maintained by USAID's Center for Development Information and Evaluation (CDIE). It contains abstracts of USAID past and current projects and information on technical and project reports related to the projects. The public has access to this database through the USAID website at [http://www.dec.org/partners/dexs\\_public/projects.cfm](http://www.dec.org/partners/dexs_public/projects.cfm).

### **R4 Database**

The R4 Database is maintained by USAID's Center for Development Information and Evaluation (CDIE). It provides access to USAID R4 data and documentation. The public may access this database through USAID's website at <http://www.dec.org/partners/r4>.

### **Trade Capacity Building Database**

This database provides access to the full set of survey data gathered from a 2001 survey of programs and activities that promote trade-related capacity building in development countries and transition economies. The public can access this

database through the USAID website at <http://quesdb.cdie.org/tcb/index.html>.

## **Vendor Database**

The Vendor Database is maintained by USAID's Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization, OSDDBU. United States small businesses, small disadvantaged businesses, women-owned small businesses, HUBZone small businesses and service-disabled Veteran-owned small businesses can register their companies for future procurements through this database at [http://www.usaid.gov/procurement\\_bus\\_opp/osdbu/](http://www.usaid.gov/procurement_bus_opp/osdbu/).

## **The Freedom of Information Act**

The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), 5 U.S.C.552, is a law that gives a person the right to obtain federal agency records unless the records (or parts of the records) are protected from disclosure by any of the nine exemptions or three exclusions contained in the FOIA.

USAID's FOIA regulations appear in ADS 507 and 22 CFR Section 212. These regulations may be accessed through the USAID FOIA website, <http://www.usaid.gov/about/about/foia/>. You may also obtain a copy of our regulations from the USAID FOIA office.

## **Tips on Filing a FOIA Request**

Your FOIA request must be submitted in writing. It should be mailed to the address below. Please mark your envelope and letter with the notation, "FOIA REQUEST."

USAID  
Information & Records Division  
Room 2.07C  
Washington, DC 20523-2701

You may fax your request to the FOIA Office at (202) 216-3070. If you fax your request, you normally do not have to mail us the original copy. If our FOIA Specialists need the original copy, they will contact you.

Requests should be as specific as possible. If you need help in formulating your request, you may call our FOIA Staff at (202) 712-0960. You can find tips on formulating your request on the USAID FOIA website, <http://www.usaid.gov/about/about/foia/howto.html>.

Please remember to include in your request letter a phone number that the FOIA Staff can use if they have questions about your request.

Under certain conditions you may be entitled to have your request processed on an

expedited basis. Expedited processing can be requested when the failure to obtain the requested records on an expedited basis could reasonably be expected to pose an imminent threat to the life or physical safety of an individual. Expedited processing can be granted if the requester is a person primarily engaged in disseminating information to the public and the information is urgently needed to inform the public concerning an actual or alleged public activity. Your request for expedited processing must be accompanied by an explanation setting forth the reasons why your request should be expedited and a certification that the reasons given are true and correct. We will notify you of our decision on the granting of expedited processing within ten days after receiving your request.

## **FOIA Fees**

The FOIA allows agencies to charge requesters for FOIA search, review, copying, and special services such as courier deliveries. There are four government-wide requester categories: Commercial Use Requesters, Educational and Non-Commercial Scientific Institutional Requesters, Representatives of the News Media, and All Others Requesters.

Commercial Use Requesters are charged fees that recover the full direct costs of searching for, reviewing, and duplicating the records sought.

Educational and Non-Commercial Scientific Institutional Requesters are charged only for copying charges after the receipt of 100 free pages of copying.

Representatives of the News Media are charged only for copying charges after the receipt of 100 free pages of copying.

All Others Requester are requesters who do not fit into any of the other categories. These requesters are not charged for review time. They receive two hours of free search time and 100 free pages of copying. All additional search time and copying is subject to fees.

USAID's FOIA processing fees are listed on its FOIA website, <http://www.usaid.gov/about/about/foia/feenwaiv.html>. You may also call the USAID FOIA Staff.

USAID may waive processing fees, in whole or in part, if "Disclosure of the information is in the public interest because it is likely to contribute significantly to public understanding of the operations or activities of the government and is not primarily in the commercial interest of the requester." In certain circumstances, we may request advance payment of fees.

## **USAID's Electronic Reading Room and Public Reading Room**

USAID's Electronic Reading Room can be accessed at

<http://www.usaid.gov/about/about/foia/elrerm.html>. You can find more detailed information on formulating your request and our fees on the website. Our Annual FOIA Reports, FOIA regulations, our "frequently requested documents," and links to important sources of USAID information and documentation are there also.

The USAID FOIA Public Reading Room is located within USAID's Public Information Center (PIC). The Center's location, telephone number, and hours are listed below.

Public Information Center  
Ronald Reagan Building  
1300 Pennsylvania Ave. NW  
Room M.01 (Mezzanine Level)  
Washington, DC 20523  
(202) 712-4810

Hours of Operation are from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except for Federal holidays

The PIC staff will assist you with on-line access to our "public reading room" materials - Agency regulations, information on our Agency's organization, and FOIA information.

### **Privacy Act Requests**

The Privacy Act, 5 U.S.C. 552a, allows U.S. citizens and aliens lawfully admitted for permanent U.S. residence to access records about themselves that are maintained in a Privacy Act "systems of records." A Privacy Act "system of record" is a group of records from which information is retrieved by the names of individuals or by some identifying number, symbol, or identifying particular assigned to the individual.

Your Privacy Act request must be in writing and sent to the same address as FOIA requests (above). Sorry, we cannot accept faxed Privacy Act requests.

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