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# ADS Chapter 501

## The Automated Directives System (ADS)

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Functional Series 500 – Management Services  
 ADS 501 – The Automated Directives System (ADS)  
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**Table of Contents**

<b><u>*501.1</u></b>	<b><u>OVERVIEW</u></b> .....	<b><u>4</u></b>
<b><u>*501.2</u></b>	<b><u>PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITIES</u></b> .....	<b><u>4</u></b>
<b><u>501.3</u></b>	<b><u>POLICY DIRECTIVES AND REQUIRED PROCEDURES</u></b> ....	<b><u>5</u></b>
<b><u>*501.3.1</u></b>	<b><u>Structure and Content of the ADS</u></b> .....	<b><u>5</u></b>
<b><u>501.3.1.1</u></b>	<b><u>Mandatory and Non-Mandatory Guidance in the ADS</u></b> .....	<b><u>5</u></b>
<b><u>*501.3.2</u></b>	<b><u>Creating and Revising ADS Material</u></b> .....	<b><u>6</u></b>
<b><u>*501.3.2.1</u></b>	<b><u>Consultation on ADS Material</u></b> .....	<b><u>7</u></b>
<b><u>501.3.3</u></b>	<b><u>The ADS Clearance Process</u></b> .....	<b><u>7</u></b>
<b><u>501.3.3.1</u></b>	<b><u>Designation of Clearing Officials</u></b> .....	<b><u>7</u></b>
<b><u>*501.3.3.2</u></b>	<b><u>Request for Clearance</u></b> .....	<b><u>8</u></b>
<b><u>*501.3.3.3</u></b>	<b><u>Timeframe for Clearance Responses</u></b> .....	<b><u>8</u></b>
<b><u>*501.3.3.4</u></b>	<b><u>Substantive and Non-Substantive Comments</u></b> .....	<b><u>9</u></b>
<b><u>501.3.3.5</u></b>	<b><u>Re-Clearance</u></b> .....	<b><u>9</u></b>
<b><u>*501.3.3.6</u></b>	<b><u>Resolving Differences During the Clearance Process</u></b> .....	<b><u>10</u></b>
<b><u>501.3.3.7</u></b>	<b><u>Documentation</u></b> .....	<b><u>10</u></b>
<b><u>*501.3.3.8</u></b>	<b><u>Exceptions to the ADS Clearance Process</u></b> .....	<b><u>10</u></b>
<b><u>501.3.4</u></b>	<b><u>Issuance of ADS Material</u></b> .....	<b><u>11</u></b>
<b><u>*501.3.5</u></b>	<b><u>Maintaining ADS Material</u></b> .....	<b><u>12</u></b>
<b><u>*501.3.6</u></b>	<b><u>Annual ADS Certification and Workplan</u></b> .....	<b><u>12</u></b>
<b><u>*501.3.7</u></b>	<b><u>ADS Intranet Web Site</u></b> .....	<b><u>13</u></b>
<b><u>501.4</u></b>	<b><u>MANDATORY REFERENCES</u></b> .....	<b><u>13</u></b>
<b><u>501.4.1</u></b>	<b><u>External Mandatory References</u></b> .....	<b><u>13</u></b>
<b><u>501.4.2</u></b>	<b><u>Internal Mandatory References</u></b> .....	<b><u>13</u></b>
<b><u>501.4.3</u></b>	<b><u>Mandatory Forms</u></b> .....	<b><u>14</u></b>

*\*An asterisk indicates that the adjacent information is new or substantively revised.*

<u><b>*501.5</b></u>	<u><b>ADDITIONAL HELP</b></u> .....	<u><b>14</b></u>
<u><b>501.6</b></u>	<u><b>DEFINITIONS</b></u> .....	<u><b>14</b></u>

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## ADS 501 – The Automated Directives System (ADS)

### \*501.1

#### OVERVIEW

Effective Date: 08/03/2012

Every Federal agency is required to make and preserve records of its policies and procedures and to adequately document the information through effective directives management (44 USC, Section 3101 and 36 CFR Section 1222). The Automated Directives System (ADS) is USAID's directives program. The ADS contains the organization and functions of USAID, along with the policies and essential procedures that guide the Agency's programs and operations. It is intended to provide the information that employees need to carry out their responsibilities and to achieve Agency goals, consistent with applicable laws, regulations, and policy decisions. This chapter provides the policies and procedures for the development and maintenance of material contained in the ADS.

The ADS does not establish requirements for USAID contractors and grantees. In accordance with the Administrative Procedures Act (APA, 5 U.S.C. Subchapter II, at <http://www.archives.gov/federal-register/laws/administrative-procedure/>) it may be necessary to engage in rulemaking when the Agency is considering a regulation that will affect the rights and interests of outside parties. See [ADS 156, Agency Rulemaking](#).

### \*501.2

#### PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITIES

Effective Date: 08/03/2012

The following Bureaus/Independent Offices (B/IOs) have primary responsibility for specific policy directives and required procedures within this chapter:

**a. The Bureau for Management, Office of Management Policy, Budget and Performance, Policy Division (M/MPBP/POL) ADS and Notices Team:**

- (1) Provides oversight and guidance for the development and dissemination of Agency policies and procedures,
- (2) Administers the ADS and the Agency's Notices system, and
- (3) Administers the ADS Intranet and Internet Web site.

**b. ADS Points of Contact (POC)** work with M/MPBP/POL to create and maintain ADS material within their notional areas of responsibility.

**c. ADS Clearing Officials** review new and substantively revised ADS material and provide comments and clearance on behalf of their Bureau/Independent Office (B/IO).

**d. USAID employees** are responsible for complying with the policy directives and required procedures identified in the ADS and notices.

\*An asterisk indicates that the adjacent information is new or substantively revised.

## 501.3 POLICY DIRECTIVES AND REQUIRED PROCEDURES

### \*501.3.1 Structure and Content of the ADS

Effective Date: 08/03/2012

The ADS is organized into the following six functional series that cover Agency programming and management operations:

- Series 100: Agency Organization and Legal Affairs
- Series 200: Programming
- Series 300: Acquisition and Assistance
- Series 400: Human Resources
- Series 500: Management Services
- Series 600: Budget and Finance

Each functional series contains chapters organized by subject matter. These chapters are continuously updated to align USAID's policies with the latest Federal regulations, Administrator policy statements, and other overarching guidance.

- (1) **ADS Chapters.** Each ADS chapter includes policy directives and required procedures, as well as explanatory information on specific topics. The ADS chapter structure contains six sections: Overview, Primary Responsibilities, Policy Directives and Required Procedures, Mandatory References, Additional Help, and Definitions. (See the [ADS Chapter Template](#) for more details on these sections.)
- (2) **Policy Notices.** Policy notices can be issued in the form of general notices, Executive Messages, and Administrator Notices. All policy notices are incorporated into the ADS within two weeks. Executive Messages and Administrator Notices containing policy are also incorporated into the ADS within two weeks. The policy may be incorporated in an existing chapter, as a mandatory reference for a chapter, or in another ADS document. For more information on where notices have been incorporated in the ADS, please contact the M/MPBP/POL ADS and Notices team at [ads@usaid.gov](mailto:ads@usaid.gov).

#### 501.3.1.1 Mandatory and Non-Mandatory Guidance in the ADS

Effective Date: 08/03/2012

The ADS contains both mandatory policy and non-mandatory guidance. The **mandatory policy** encompasses two broad categories (1) policies that the Agency has identified as necessary for the proper conduct of its business and (2) required procedures which identify more detailed courses of action that must be followed. Every employee must comply with mandatory guidance. The mandatory guidance includes:

\*An asterisk indicates that the adjacent information is new or substantively revised.

- Policies and required procedures contained in ADS chapters,
- Policy updates issued in notices, and
- External and internal mandatory references.

Mandatory guidance in the ADS is kept to a minimum, preserving operational flexibility to the extent consistent with law and regulation, sound policy principles, and management practices. **Non-mandatory** guidance is intended to help employees carry out their duties. While strongly encouraged to review and consider such guidance, employees are not required to follow it. The non-mandatory guidance includes additional help documents and optional forms.

**\*501.3.2**      **Creating and Revising ADS Material**  
Effective Date: 08/03/2012

Management officials must designate qualified Points of Contact (POC) in their B/IO to create and revise ADS material in consultation with M/MPBP/POL. A qualified POC is a subject matter expert (SME) or someone who can interview the SME and write the ADS material.

In accordance with the [Plain Writing Act of 2010](#), USAID's policies must be simple and easy to understand, with the goal of minimizing the potential for uncertainty and litigation arising from such uncertainty.

The POCs writing ADS material must communicate clearly to Agency employees using plain language. The goal is for employees to find what they need on the subject, understand what they find, and use what they find to meet their needs. When writing, POCs must:

- a. Use the ADS standard format outlined in the [ADS Style Guide](#);
- b. Review the questions outlined in [How to Create and Change Agency Policy](#);
- c. Know and understand the requirements, applicable laws, regulations and policy decisions impacting the subject matter (The weekly [Policy Alert](#) provides a synopsis of new and revised external policies);
- d. Know the extent of their authority;
- e. Apply the Agency's operational principles where applicable (see [ADS 200.3.1](#));
- f. Ensure that material is well organized and that content is comprehensive;

*\*An asterisk indicates that the adjacent information is new or substantively revised.*

- g. Use active rather than passive voice;
- h. Be concise.

Before revising ADS material, POCs must request the most current version of the ADS chapter or reference from the M/MPBP/POL ADS and Notices Team. This ensures that POCs are revising the correct version of ADS materials, limiting version control among reviewers. POCs must send new or revised material to the M/MPBP/POL ADS and Notices Team at [ads@usaid.gov](mailto:ads@usaid.gov) for an initial review and editing before it is released for Agency comment. An editor will be assigned to review the material for plain language, content, grammar, format, and other considerations. The goal is to issue ADS material in final in less than 30 calendar days. Minimal changes or conforming amendments will usually be issued in fewer days. (See [Customer Service Standards](#))

See the [How to Create and Change Agency Policy](#) and [The ADS Style Guide](#) for more information on writing ADS material.

#### **\*501.3.2.1 Consultation on ADS Material**

Effective Date: 08/03/2012

POCs are encouraged to consult with staff in the B/IOs that may be affected by the new or revised ADS material before the clearance process. This potentially eliminates an overwhelming number of comments in the clearance process. If a POC decides to do the consultation, they should highlight the material that is new and give the reviewing B/IO a deadline for giving feedback. This deadline should be no more than five business days. If the reviewing B/IO does not give feedback by the deadline, the POC should forward the ADS material to the M/MPBP/POL ADS and Notices Team for editing.

#### **501.3.3 The ADS Clearance Process**

Effective Date: 08/03/2012

Agency clearance must be requested for all new or substantively revised ADS material unless the material meets the exception criteria outlined in **501.3.3.8**. ADS material includes chapters, references, definitions, acquisition and assistance policy directives (AAPDs), and policy notices. ADS Clearing Officials review ADS material, for compliance/conformity with policies and practices that have broad applicability within the Agency or specific applicability to a functional responsibility of the B/IO, and provide comments and/or clearance.

##### **501.3.3.1 Designation of Clearing Officials**

Effective Date: 08/03/2012

Each B/IO must designate one Clearing Official to provide clearance on behalf of the B/IO for ADS material. During the ADS clearance period, the M/MPBP/POL ADS and Notices Team will only accept comments from the Authorized Clearing Official for a B/IO

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(see [Clearance List for ADS Material](#)), unless the official designates in writing a different individual to provide comments/clearance on his or her behalf. When the designated official is away from the office for three or more days, an alternate Clearing Official must be designated to provide comments on behalf of the B/IO. The ADS Clearing Official must send the designation to [ads@usaid.gov](mailto:ads@usaid.gov).

Please note that Authorized Clearing Officials may only designate **one** person to review ADS material and clear on their behalf. This eliminates conflicting views between multiple reviewers.

### **\*501.3.3.2 Request for Clearance**

Effective Date: 08/03/3012

The M/MPBP/POL ADS and Notices Team, in collaboration with POCs, e-mail clearance requests from the ADS Mailbox ([ads@usaid.gov](mailto:ads@usaid.gov)), to the Clearing Officials listed in the mandatory reference, [Clearance List for ADS Material](#). Clearing Officials listed under “Always Required” must be given an opportunity to clear on all ADS material within the allotted timeframe. Clearing Officials listed as “Sometimes Required” provide clearance only on material that relates to specific topics or areas of responsibility. The M/MPBP/POL ADS and Notices team will send the material to the appropriate Clearing Officials. The Clearing Officials have the following five options:

- Advise that they clear the material;
- Advise that they do not clear until their **substantive** comments are resolved (they must include their comments and clearly indicate that they are substantive);
- Advise that they clear the material and are including **non-substantive** comments or suggestions for the author’s consideration;
- Advise that clearance by that B/IO is not required or is not applicable.

For more information on substantive versus a non-substantive comment, please see section **501.3.3.4**.

### **\*501.3.3.3 Timeframe for Clearance Responses**

Effective Date: 08/03/2012

Clearing Officials have 10 business days to respond to ADS clearance requests. Responses must be provided in full within the 10 day period. The M/MPBP/POL ADS and Notices Team sends material for clearance via e-mail with a read receipt request. If the ADS and Notices Team does not receive a read receipt, the team must follow up via e-mail with the Clearing Official to ensure that the clearance e-mail was received. (Please see [The ADS Clearance Process](#)). If a Clearing Official or designated back-up does not respond within the comment deadline, their B/IO forfeits its right to comment on the material.

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Clearing Officials may request additional time, no longer than five business days, to review ADS material. It is at the discretion of M/MPBP/POL to grant extensions. M/MPBP/POL will not accept comments after the deadline period unless an extension was approved. For more information on this process, see [The ADS Clearance Process](#).

#### **\*501.3.3.4 Substantive and Non-Substantive Comments**

Effective Date: 08/03/2012

Clearing Officials review ADS material for Agency compliance/conformity with policies and practices that have broad impact on the entire Agency or specific applicability to a functional responsibility of the B/IO. Clearing Officials are encouraged to use Track Changes to submit their comments or to put the comments in an email.

Substantive comments alter the **meaning or intent** of the document. If a clearing official requests a change to what people are required to do or how they are required to do it or points out conflicting information or inconsistencies, it is a substantive comment. The following are examples of what would be considered a substantive comment:

- Changing the tasks in a procedure or changing the responsible party,
- When a policy conflicts with a current policy or inaccurately reflects a current practice, or
- When a policy might have an adverse effect on budget, staffing, or customers.

Non-Substantive comments are editorial or provide clarification for already existing policy. If a clearing official requests a change in the way information is presented, rather than the content, it is a non-substantive comment. One example would be suggesting a rewording for clarity.

The M/MPBP/POL ADS and Notices Team, in coordination with the POCs, must address or incorporate all substantive comments before moving forward with issuance. POCs can choose whether to adopt non-substantive comments. If questionable, the ADS and Notices Team will determine whether a comment is substantive or non-substantive.

#### **501.3.3.5 Re-Clearance**

Effective Date: 08/03/2012

ADS chapters or references that are substantively revised as a result of clearance comments must be re-circulated to the Clearing Officials, along with an explanation or notation of the changes unless the change meets one of the exceptions outlined in **501.3.3.8**. The M/MPBP/POL ADS and Notices Team will provide up to five business

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days for the Clearing Officials to respond to the revised material. **The timeframe for reclearance may be shorter if circumstances warrant greater urgency.** Clearing Officials must only provide comments on the material that has changed. Clearing Officials can not use the re-clearance period to comment on the entire document or on material that has not changed since the original clearance request. (For more information, please see **The ADS Clearance Process.**)

**\*501.3.3.6 Resolving Differences During the Clearance Process**

Effective Date: 08/03/2012

The M/MPBP/POL ADS and Notices Team facilitates the clearance process and all clearance correspondence between the POCs and the Clearing Officials. The ADS and Notices Team must make every effort to resolve all substantive issues that arise during the ADS comment period within five calendar days after comments are received. M/MPBP/POL will not proceed to publication without resolution of all substantive clearance comments. If the M/MPBP/POL ADS and Notices Team, in coordination with the POC and Clearing Official, are unable to reach resolution, they must immediately elevate the issues within the B/IOs to the level necessary to reach resolution. If resolution is not reached within the operating units, M/MPBP/POL will serve as a mediator in resolving the issue. **If necessary, the issue will be elevated to the Deputy Director of M/MPBP. If not resolved at this level, the issue will be elevated to the Assistant Administrator for Management.**

If an issue remains unresolved after 30 calendar days, M/MPBP/POL will schedule a meeting with the Agency Counselor and present the issue to him/her for arbitration. Both the POC and Clearing Official may request that their respective Director, DAA, or AA represent them at arbitration. The Agency Counselor will use all resources necessary to make a decision, including consultation with the Administrator and Deputy Administrator as needed. The Agency Counselor will make every effort to reach a decision within 15 business days of hearing the case. The Agency Counselor's decision is final.

**501.3.3.7 Documentation**

Effective Date: 08/03/2012

M/MPBP/POL, in consultation with POCs, must maintain documentation (e-mail or memo) from all parties to demonstrate that final resolution of comments occurred. The M/MPBP/POL ADS and Notices Team must maintain documentation showing all comments received and responses and must include these documents in the approval package for issuance of the ADS material. ADS POCs should document the source and purpose of all substantive changes when making revisions to the ADS (See [The ADS Process](#) for more information).

**\*501.3.3.8 Exceptions to the ADS Clearance Process**

Effective Date: 08/03/2012

*\*An asterisk indicates that the adjacent information is new or substantively revised.*

Agency-wide clearance is not required for ADS material that meets the following exceptions:

- **Conforming Amendment:** ADS material that is changed to conform with existing policy, Administrator decisions, or new/revised Federal mandates, such as material that:
  - Incorporates new or revised external regulations. This does not include the creation of new or revised USAID procedures to implement the regulation;
  - Complies with policy already contained in other ADS chapters or internal mandatory references; and/or
  - Incorporates written policy issued by the Administrator or Deputy Administrator. This does not include the creation of new or revised USAID procedures to implement the policy;
- ADS material that is subjected to high level Agency review or undergo a more limited clearance process due to the nature of the material, including:
  - **Management Operations Council (MOC) policy decisions;**
  - ADS 101, Agency Programs and Functions;
  - ADS 103, Delegations of Authority;
  - Changes to Bureau/Independent Office symbols or acronyms;
  - USAID Forms;
  - Acquisition and Assistance Policy Directives (AAPDs) that provide interim policy and procedures of an urgent and compelling nature;
  - Office of Human Resources (OHR) ADS material;
  - ADS 501 reference, ADS Chapters and Point of Contact List;
  - **ADS Chapters 501 and 504;** and
  - ADS 504 reference, Authorized Senders for Agency Notices.

#### **501.3.4 Issuance of ADS Material**

Effective Date: 08/03/2012

The M/MPPB/POL ADS and Notices Team prepares the final package for issuance once ADS material has received full Agency clearance. The final package includes the revised ADS material (e.g. ADS Chapter or Reference), clearance documentation, a policy notice announcing the new or revised material, and a 3-252 form.

The following steps occur in preparing ADS material for issuance:

- a. The ADS and Notices team reviews the final chapter or reference for style, format, punctuation, and grammar, and ensures that all hyperlinks are accurate and functional.

*\*An asterisk indicates that the adjacent information is new or substantively revised.*

- b. The ADS and Notices team prepares the Policy Notice and the 3-252 form for signature.
- c. A B/IO management official at the division chief level or above must review the final ADS Chapter or Reference and sign the 3-252 form.
- d. M/MPBP/POL reviews and approves final ADS material for issuance.
- e. The Policy Notice and attachments are released through the Agency notice distribution system. In conjunction with the issuance of the policy notice, the ADS and Notices Team posts the new or revised ADS material on the ADS Intranet.

If ADS material meets the criteria for a conforming amendment as outlined in **501.3.3.8**, the POC must send the policy to the ADS and Notices Team for review, complete the first page of a 3-252 form, attach supporting documentation (e.g., memorandum signed by the Administrator), and provide an electronic copy of the Policy Notice and any attachments.

Additional help documents do not require Agency clearance, but POCs must send them to the ADS and Notices Team for review before issuance and complete the first page of a 3-252 form.

Please see [The ADS Clearance Process](#) for complete details.

**\*501.3.5**      **Maintaining ADS Material**  
Effective Date: 08/03/2012

POCs responsible for ADS material must regularly review their ADS chapters and references and modify the material where required to ensure that it is current and consistent with laws and regulations, and management practices. This includes determining when material is no longer relevant or necessary and can be archived. The ADS and Notices Team will incorporate new or revised directives issued through Policy Notices within two weeks.

**\*501.3.6**      **Annual ADS Certification and Workplan**  
Effective Date: 08/03/2012

In order to certify ADS material on an annual basis, M/MPBP/POL has created an ADS Work Plan for each B/IO responsible for ADS material. The ADS Work Plans ensure that ADS materials remain current. The work plans include all of the chapters that the B/IO is responsible for along with their current status and timelines for revisions, if necessary. M/MPBP/POL will conduct meetings as necessary throughout the year with each B/IO to review their ADS Work Plan to ensure that it is current.

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**\*501.3.7 ADS Intranet Web Site**

Effective date: 08/03/2012

The ADS Intranet Web site is the official repository for ADS material. The Intranet houses current PDF and Word versions of ADS chapters and mandatory references. Any ADS material posted on Bureau/Independent Office Web sites must be hyperlinked to the official document on the ADS Intranet. B/IOs must not post draft ADS material to other Web sites without contacting M/MPBP/POL for approval.

**501.4 MANDATORY REFERENCES****501.4.1 External Mandatory References**

Effective Date: 08/03/2012

- a. [44 USC, sec 3101, Records Management by Agency Heads](#)
- b. [36 CFR 1194, Electronic and Information Technology Accessibility Standards](#)
- c. [36 CFR 1222, Directives documenting agency programs, policies, and procedures](#)
- d. [Executive Order 12861, Elimination of One-Half of Executive Branch Internal Regulations](#)
- e. [Guidance on Implementing Plain Language, July 29, 1998](#)
- f. [Presidential Memorandum on Plain Language, June 1, 1998](#)

**501.4.2 Internal Mandatory References**

Effective Date: 08/03/2012

- a. [ADS 501maa, ADS Chapters and Points of Contact List](#)
- b. [ADS 501mab, Clearance List for ADS Material](#)
- c. [ADS 501mac, ADS Style Guide](#)
- d. [ADS 501mad, USAID-Federal Regulations for Web Accessibility](#)
- e. [ADS 501mae, ADS Clearance Process](#)
- f. [ADS 501mah, Customer Service Standards](#)
- g. [ADS 504, Agency Notices](#)

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**501.4.3 Mandatory Forms**  
Effective Date: 08/03/2012

a. [AID Form 3-252, USAID Directives System - Issuance Request](#)

**\*501.5 ADDITIONAL HELP**  
Effective Date: 08/03/2012

a. <http://www.plainlanguage.gov/>

**\*b. [ADS Chapter Template](#)**

**\*c. [How to Create and Change Agency Policy](#)**

d. [Sample Policy Notice Issuing a New or Revised ADS Chapter](#)

**501.6 DEFINITIONS**  
Effective Date: 08/03/2012

**additional help**

An additional help document provides non-mandatory guidance intended to clarify Agency policy and its application contained in the Automated Directives System (ADS). For example, these may include "how-to" guidelines and non-mandatory reference material created internally or externally. These documents may repeat policy, but do not contain new policy. Additional help documents are optional reading. (**Chapter 501**)

**authority**

An Authority is the legally binding instrument that authorizes or contains the policy directives and required procedures issued as USAID direction. These instruments include: laws, regulations, Executive Orders, court decisions, and rulings by Federal Authorities. "Authority" refers to the legal ability or power to give commands, enforce compliance, or make decisions. (**Chapter 501**)

**Automated Directives System (ADS)**

The ADS is USAID's directives program. It contains (1) USAID internal policy directives and required procedures; (2) external regulations applicable to USAID; and (3) non-mandatory guidance to help employees interpret and properly apply internal and external mandatory guidance. (**Chapter 501**)

**Clearing Official**

A Clearing Official is a designated person in a specific Bureau/Independent Office obligated to review and clear on Automated Directives System (ADS) material. (**Chapter 501**)

**conforming amendment**

Policy that does not require Automated Directives System (ADS) comments because it alters ADS material in one of the following four ways:

*\*An asterisk indicates that the adjacent information is new or substantively revised.*

- Incorporates new or revised external regulations only. This does not include the creation of new or revised USAID procedures to implement the regulation;
- Complies with policy already contained in other Automated Directives System (ADS) chapters or internal mandatory references;
- Incorporates written policy issued by the Administrator; or
- Amends or adds one Bureau/Independent Office's procedures that do not have a substantial impact on any other Agency Bureau/Independent Office (**Chapter 501**)

**directive**

A written instruction communicating policy directives and/or required procedures. These instructions may be in the form of the following: orders, regulations, bulletins, circulars, handbooks, manuals, notices, numbered memoranda, and similar issuances. (**Chapter 501**)

**directives management program**

The directives management program provides Agency personnel with the means to document and convey Agency policy directives and required procedures to users through written instructions. (**Chapter 501**)

**editorial changes**

Editorial changes are simple clarifications that **do not** alter the substantive meaning of the Automated Directives System (ADS) material. Editorial changes include: punctuation changes, grammar corrections, reordering existing material and adding headers for ease of use, updates to Bureau/Independent Office symbols, address and name changes, and hyperlink additions. (**Chapter 501**)

**effective dates**

Effective dates are inserted when specific policy directives or required procedures within an Automated Directives System (ADS) chapter or internally created reference become effective. Effective dates only change when substantive modifications are made within the document. (**Chapter 501**)

**functional series**

Automated Directives System (ADS) chapters are grouped according to the Agency's functions. These groups of chapters are called functional series. (**Chapter 501**)

**guidance**

Guidance is a general term that includes: policy directives and required procedures, rules, regulations, advice, and other information relevant to the conduct of USAID business. The critical distinction is between mandatory and non-mandatory guidance,

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as defined below. A particular document may contain both mandatory and non-mandatory guidance.

**a. mandatory guidance**

Guidance specifying *required* actions and behavior on the part of Agency employees and operating units, signified by phrases like "must," "must not," "is required," or the equivalent. Employees are held accountable for adherence to mandatory guidance, and must comply with it unless an exception is made in accordance with established procedures. Policy directives – mandatory guidance contained in documents prepared according to Automated Directives System (ADS) procedures – are clearly identified as mandatory. A document written before the initiation of the ADS may also contain mandatory guidance that remains in force, in which case it is classified as an internal mandatory reference.

**b. non-mandatory guidance**

Guidance intended to assist employees in carrying out their duties, but does not specify required actions and behavior. Employees are strongly encouraged to review and consider such guidance. (**Chapter 501**)

**hyperlink**

A hyperlink is specially marked underlined and blue-colored text that you click on to move from one place in a document to another file, another location in the same document, or a Web page. (**Chapter 501**)

**Management Official**

For the purposes of ADS Chapter 501, a Management Official is a Division Chief, Director, AA, or someone delegated by the Division Chief, Director, or AA to sign the USAID Directives Issuance Request Form (AID 3-252), and who has oversight Authority for the Automated Directives System (ADS) material. (**Chapter 501**)

**mandatory references**

Mandatory references comprise relevant U.S. Government regulations created and published outside USAID, as well as documents containing mandatory guidance that have been created within USAID. These references are cited and hyperlinked in Automated Directives System (ADS) chapters.

**a. External Mandatory Reference**

External mandatory references are relevant Federal statutes, Executive Orders, and other externally published regulations. They may also contain USAID-specific regulations.

**b. Internal Mandatory Reference**

An internal mandatory reference is a document created and published within the Agency that contains mandatory guidance (often accompanied by additional, non-mandatory guidance), but does not have to be created in ADS chapter format. Adherence to all mandatory guidance contained in internal mandatory

*\*An asterisk indicates that the adjacent information is new or substantively revised.*

references is required by those to whom the reference is applicable. (**Chapter 501**)

**origination date**

The origination date is the date that the requesting official signed the AID Form 3-252 for the original Automated Directives System (ADS) chapter or reference. This is not necessarily the first effective date for the chapter or reference. (**Chapter 501**)

**overview**

The Overview is the first section of an Automated Directives System (ADS) chapter. It introduces the chapter and may include a brief purpose, overview, objective, and applicability. (**Chapter 501**)

**Point of Contact (POC)**

The individual designated by a B/IO to be the liaison with M/MPBP/POL on ADS material and to serve as the subject matter expert (SME) and/or author of ADS material. (**Chapter 501**)

**plain language**

As defined by the Plain Language Action and Information Network (PLAIN), plain language is writing that your reader can understand the first time he or she reads it. It doesn't mean writing for a certain grade level – it means organizing and writing for your reader. Writing in plain language saves time and money for writers and readers. Writing in plain language includes using common, everyday words, short sentences, active voice, and, when appropriate, addressing the reader directly by using the pronoun "you." (**Chapter 501**)

**policy**

USAID policy includes both mandatory guidance (policy directives and required procedures and internal mandatory references), as well as broader official statements of Agency goals, guiding principles, and views on development challenges and best practices in addressing those challenges. (**Chapter 501**)

**policy directive**

A clear, concise statement of mandatory guidance that the Agency has adopted to guide the conduct of its business. Policy directives are found in documents prepared according to Automated Directives System (ADS) procedures. (**Chapter 501**)

**policy notice**

A notice, issued as part of the nightly notices to all USAID employees that includes both mandatory guidance and required procedures, and may include broader official statements of Agency goals, guiding principles, and views on development challenges and best practices in addressing those challenges. USAID turns all policy notices into internal mandatory references and includes them in the Automated Directives System (ADS) until they are either incorporated in an ADS chapter or cancelled. (**Chapter 501**)

*\*An asterisk indicates that the adjacent information is new or substantively revised.*

**primary responsibilities**

The Primary Responsibilities section of an Automated Directives System (ADS) chapter is a list of the Bureaus/Independent Offices /officials (titles, not names) with the key responsibilities for acting upon the policy directives and required procedures in the chapter. This section does not include (1) all Bureaus/Independent Offices that are affected by the chapter, (2) position descriptions, or (3) policy directives and required procedures. **(Chapter 501)**

**procedure**

A document that defines a mandatory course of action or steps that must be followed in order to complete a specific task. **(Chapter 501)**

**regulation**

An agency statement of general applicability and future effect, that the agency intends to have the force and effect of law, that is designed to implement, interpret, or prescribe law or policy or to describe the procedure or practice requirements of an agency. **(Chapter 501)**

**required procedures**

Required procedures are detailed courses of action that the Agency must follow to comply with policy directives (both external and internal). **(Chapter 501)**

**revision date**

The date that Automated Directives System (ADS) chapters, internal mandatory references, or additional help documents are finalized for distribution. This is not an effective date. The date appears in the lower right corner of the cover page in an ADS chapter or internal reference. **(Chapter 501)**

**substantive changes**

Substantive changes alter the meaning or intent of the policy directive or required procedure. If you change what people are required to do or how they are required to do it, you are making a substantive change. **(Chapter 501)**

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