

**Functional Series 500:
ADS Chapter 5xx: Information Quality Standards**

- 5xx.1 OVERVIEW**
- 5xx.2 PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITIES**
- 5xx.3 POLICY AND PROCEDURES**
- 5xx.4 MANDATORY REFERENCES**
 - 5xx.4.1 External Mandatory References**
 - 5xx.4.2 Internal Mandatory References**
- 5xx.5 ADDITIONAL HELP - N/A**
- 5xx.6 DEFINITIONS**

ADS Chapter 5xx – Information Quality Standards

5xx.1 OVERVIEW

This chapter contains USAID's information quality guidelines and other policies and procedures to implement the OMB Guidelines for Ensuring and Maximizing the Quality, Objectivity, Utility, and Integrity of Information Disseminated by Federal Agencies (Guidelines). The Guidelines implement section 515 of the Treasury and General Government Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2001 (Pub. L. 106-554).

5xx.2 PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITIES

- a.** The Chief Information Officer is responsible for this chapter and overall policy guidance on information quality guidelines.
- b.** [Reserved] is responsible for managing the administrative complaint and reporting systems required by the Guidelines.

5xx.3 POLICY AND PROCEDURES

The statements contained within the .3 section of this ADS chapter are the official Agency policies and corresponding essential procedures.

5xx.3.1 Information Quality

The agency has a basic performance standard of quality, objectivity, utility and integrity

for information covered by this chapter. Information quality, which includes objectivity, utility and integrity is integral to every step of the development of information covered by this chapter after October 1, 2002.

5xx.3.1 Information Covered

The primary focus of this chapter is on the dissemination of substantive information (i.e., reports, studies and summaries) rather than information about basic agency operations. This chapter applies to information (1) "disseminated", "initiated" directly, or "sponsored" by the agency; and (2) in a manner that reasonably suggests that the agency agrees with the information.

Information distributed directly by USAID is "initiated." Information is "sponsored" by USAID where USAID has directed a third-party to disseminate the information or where USAID has the authority to review and approve the information before release under the provisions of the applicable contract, grant or cooperative agreement.

5xx.3.2 Information Not Covered

This chapter does not apply to documents and information that, even though they may be disseminated by USAID, have not been adopted by USAID as representing USAID's views. In disseminating such materials, USAID assumes no responsibility for their accuracy and is simply ensuring that the public can have quicker and easier access to such materials.

5xx.3.3 Quality Standards by Category

As illustrated in the "Categories of Information" Mandatory Reference, USAID has divided its information into six categories and has the following quality standards for each category. If a particular document or product is not specifically mentioned, the USAID office responsible for its preparation shall determine the most appropriate category and accompanying standard.

5xx.3.3.1 Planning and Management Information

Covered information in this category of information will be prepared in accordance with the standards in ADS chapters 200, 201, 501, 540 and other agency guidance.

Included in this category are program policy and strategy planning documents, program reviews, development activity analyses and design and authorization documents.

5xx.3.3.2 Programs, Products and Services Information

Covered information in this category will be prepared in accordance with the standards in ADS 203, 501, 540, 557 and other applicable guidance.

Included in this category are program and development activity performance, results and evaluation reports.

5xx.3.3.3 Policy, Legislative, Regulatory Standards and Enforcement Information

Covered information in this category will be prepared in accordance with the standards in ADS 501, 557, 556 and other applicable guidance.

5xx.3.3.4 Research and Statistical Information

Scientific or statistical original or supporting data must be developed using sound statistical and research methods. If the results have been subject to formal, independent, external peer review, the information will generally be considered of acceptable objectivity.

5xx.3.3.5 General Reference Information

Information, education, and communication ("IEC") materials developed by or on behalf of the Agency will conform to the highest standards of practice developed over 25 years of work in the development field. These standards include but are not limited to conducting formative research, understanding the needs of the audience, identifying the medium used to communicate messages (e.g. radio, print, TV), drafting concepts (e.g. poster, brochure, public service announcement), field testing concept, revising, producing final product. Technical content of the materials will be drawn from existing standards of practice developed within particular sectors (e.g. business, health, governance).

5xx.3.3.6 Influential Scientific, Financial or Statistical Data

In addition to the above standards, in those cases involving "influential scientific, financial or statistical information", the analytical results must be capable of being "substantially reproduced." Replication of the original or supporting data is not required; only the analytical results.

The OMB guidelines define "influential" information as information that the agency reasonably can determine "will have or does have a clear and substantial impact on important public policies or important private sector decisions."

A "clear and substantial" impact is one that the agency is firmly convinced has a high probability of occurring. If it's merely arguable that an impact will occur, or if it is a close judgment call, then the impact is probably not clear and substantial. To determine that there is a clear and substantial impact, the agency must have greater certainty than would be the case for many ordinary factual determinations.

The impact must be on "important" public policy or private sector decisions. Even if

information has a clear and substantial impact, it is not influential if the impact is not on a public or private decision that is important to policy, economic, or other decisions.

Influential information is limited to scientific, financial, or statistical information. Other types of information, no matter how important the information may seem to be, are not covered as "influential information" under the OMB Guidelines. Also the influential standard applies to the "information" itself, not to decisions that the information may support. Even if a decision or action is itself very important, a particular piece of information supporting it may or not be "influential."

In rulemaking, influential information is scientific, financial, or statistical information that can reasonably be regarded outcome determinative with respect to one or more key issues in a significant rulemaking, as that term is defined in Executive Order 12886. The "outcome determinative" part of this standard reflects the "clear and substantial impact" language in the OMB guidelines. The reference to key issues on significant rules reflects the "important" public policy language of the guidelines.

In non-rulemaking contexts, two factors – breadth and intensity – are considered in determining whether information is influential. Every piece of disseminated information, and every decision made based on disseminated information may be important to someone. That does not mean that disseminated information used for each decision is influential, as the term is used in the guidelines.

In determining whether information is influential, USAID offices must consider whether the information affects a broad range of parties. Information that affects a broad, rather than a narrow, range of parties (e.g., an entire category of organizations, as opposed to a single company) is more likely to be influential.

USAID organizations must consider whether the information has an intense impact. Information that has a low cost or modest impact on affected parties is less likely to be influential than information that can have a very costly or crucial impact. In most cases, information that has an intense impact on a broad range of parties should be regarded as influential. Information that affects a broad range of parties, with a low-intensity impact, or information that affects a narrow range of parties, with a high-intensity impact, may or may not be influential.

Absent such designations, USAID organizations will determine whether information is influential on a case-by-case basis, using the above principles. The "influential" designation is intended to be applied to information very sparingly and it is not expected that USAID will have many instances of "influential" data.

5xx.3.x Correction Procedures

An affected person (including a group, organization, or corporation as defined by the Paperwork Reduction Act) may request the timely correction of information disseminated by USAID. The term "affected person" means anyone who may benefit or be harmed by the disseminated information.

If an affected person believes that disseminated information is not accurate, clear, complete, or unbiased, he or she may submit a written request for correction to the U.S. [reserved].

The request must

Explain how the person is affected by the information;

Contain contact information, including mailing address, fax, email, telephone number, any organizational affiliation;

Clearly indicate the specific information believed to be in error, including the name of the document containing the information, the source, e.g. USAID web page, date of issuance and a detailed description of the information to be corrected;

State specific reasons why the information is believed to be incorrect and any suggestions on how it should be corrected

Include any supporting documentation that the requestor wants considered as part of the correction process.

The request will be forwarded to the office that originated the subject information. If it is determined that a request does not reasonably describe the disseminated information source and the information the requester asserted to be incorrect, [reserved] or designee will either advise the requester what additional information is needed to identify the particular information or otherwise state why the request is insufficient.

A response to the request will be made within 60 days of receipt of the request. The 60-day response time may be extended for up to 30 more business days if necessary or appropriate. Such circumstances may include, but are not limited to, a need to: review many records identified in a single request; consult with other USAID offices or other Federal agencies having a substantial interest in the request. The acknowledgment may contain a request for additional information needed to make a determination.

The 60-day response period described above is to begin on the day the request is received. For an improperly addressed request, the 60-day response period is to begin on the latter of the day the request is received or would have been received with the reasonable exercise of diligence by the USAID. Requests shall be made in writing. The envelope and the request both should be clearly marked Information Correction Request and addressed to:

[reserved]

USAID will respond to the requestor by letter, email or fax. The response will explain the findings of the review and any actions that USAID will take in response. USAID will correct information and disseminate such corrected information only to the degree and in the manner that is appropriate for the nature and timeliness of the information involved. For example, a mass mailing and a press release might be used to correct a

widely disseminated error of wide public interest or importance whereas informal communication by letter or telephone might be used for a less widely disseminated error. Where it is determined that a request is inconsequential or trivial, no corrective action need to be taken.

The correction process is designed to address the genuine and valid needs of USAID and its constituents without disrupting agency operations. USAID, in making a determination of whether or not to correct information, may reject claims made in bad faith or without justification.

If the affected person requesting a correction does not agree with USAID's decision (including the corrective action, if any), the person may appeal to the CIO or designee in writing. The appeal should be clearly marked "CIO Information Correction Appeal" and addressed to:

Chief Information Officer
U.S. Agency for International Development
Room 6.09-030, Ronald Reagan Building
1300 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20523

The written appeal must be submitted to the CIO within 60 calendar days of the date of the denial letter. The 60-day response period described above is to begin on the day the reconsideration request is received. An improperly addressed appeal is to begin on the latter of the day the appeal is received or would have been received with the reasonable exercise of diligence by the CIO.

The CIO will notify the appellant whether his or her appeal was granted or denied and what corrective action, if any, the agency will take.

5xx.3.x Reporting Procedures

USAID will submit to OMB an annual fiscal-year report providing quantitative and qualitative information on the number and nature of correction requests received by USAID.

5xx.4 MANDATORY REFERENCES

5xx.4.1 External Mandatory References

Section 515 of the Treasury and General Government Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2001 (Pub. L. 106-554);

Office of Management and Budget's Guidelines for Ensuring and Maximizing the Quality, Objectivity, Utility, and Integrity of Information Disseminated by Federal Agencies; Republication; 67 Fed. Reg. 8452-

8460, February 22, 2002.

Office of Management and Budget Circular A-130.

5xx.4.2 Internal Mandatory References

Categories of Information

5xx.5 ADDITIONAL HELP - N/A

5xx.6 DEFINITIONS

Affected person - anyone who may benefit or be harmed by the disseminated information

Disseminate - as defined in OMB Circular A-130

Influential information - information that the agency reasonably can determine will have or does have a clear and substantial impact on important public policies or important private sector decisions.

Categories of USAID Information

Types of Disseminated Information	Generic Examples of Disseminated Information	USAID Examples	Covered	Not Covered
1. Planning and management information	Strategic plans, performance plans, operating plans, budgets and budget documentation, operating policies.	a. strategic plans, performance plans and associated documents b. Congressional presentation	X X	

Types of Disseminated Information	Generic Examples of Disseminated Information	USAID Examples	Covered	Not Covered
2. Programs, products, and services information	Information about the Agency's programs, products, and services that it provides to its customers such as what they are, who is eligible, how and where to apply for the programs or obtain the products and services. Also evaluations of specific programs and services, their outputs, and their outcomes.	a. press releases b. employment information c. procurement and assistance opportunities d. other general information on agency programs on USAID web pages, etc. e. evaluations	X X X	X X
3. Policy, legislative, regulatory, standards, and enforcement information	The agencies policies, rules and regulations, etc. Background information supporting the rules and regulations, including studies and statistical information that underpin the rules and regulations	a. Agency regulations on internal matters b. Agency regulations affecting the public	X	X
4. Research Information	Results of scientific, social scientific, economic, engineering, and strategic research conducted by or for the agency. Both basic and applied research.	Results of USAID-financed applied and basic research adopted by USAID.	X	
5. Statistical Information	Statistical information obtained from original data collections (such as censuses and surveys), administrative records, compilations of data from primary sources	USAID-financed statistical information adopted by USAID.	X	
6. General reference information	Information disseminated by the agency that helps the public in their daily activities. May be general or technical. Examples include information on good nutrition, safe handling of food, and farming practices.	USAID-financed reports under adopted by USAID	X	