



**USAID**  
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# ADS Chapter 557

## Website Management and Public Information

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***This chapter has been revised in its entirety.***

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## ADS Chapter 557 – Website Management and Public Information

### 557.1 OVERVIEW

Effective Date: 03/10/2021

This chapter provides the policy for Agency information distributed to the public and details how to respond to requests from the public for information about USAID's programs and activities.

Please note:

- For policy guidance on information quality, as it relates to the public, refer to [ADS 578, Information Quality Guidelines](#).
- For policy on submission of information products to the public-facing, searchable Development Experience Clearinghouse, refer to [ADS 540, USAID Development Experience Information](#).
- For policy on submission of raw data created or obtained with USAID funding, as it relates to the public, refer to [ADS 579, USAID Development Data](#).
- For information about updated USAID privacy policy on publicly accessible websites and information technology systems, see [ADS 508, Privacy Program](#).
- For information about Freedom of Information Requests, which are handled by the Bureau for Management, Office of Management Services, Information and Records Division (M/MS/IRD), see [ADS 507, Freedom of Information Act](#).

### 557.2 PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITIES

Effective Date: 03/10/2021

**a. The Bureau for Legislative and Public Affairs, Program Management and Operations (LPA/PMO) and the Bureau for Legislative and Public Affairs, Public Engagement (LPA/PE):**

- 1) Respond to requests from the public for materials regarding the activities of USAID; and when necessary,
- 2) Contact appropriate Bureaus/Independent Offices to gather and interpret information or materials necessary to respond to the requests for information or correction, except Freedom of Information Requests, which are handled by M/MS/IRD.

**b. The Bureau for Legislative and Public Affairs, Office of Website Management (LPA/WM):**

- 1) Ensures technical operations of USAID.gov, which facilitates and expands access to USAID information for the general public;
- 2) Reviews Agency-produced or -funded materials available to the public on the Web;
- 3) Ensures that website materials are branded appropriately for public distribution and consistent with Agency policy and positions;
- 4) Maintains and updates the Agency's inventory of public websites; and
- 5) Enforces domain name violations and other guidelines and regulations applying to USAID-funded public websites.

The Bureau for Management, Office of the Chief Information Officer (M/CIO), in coordination with LPA, serves as the primary domain registrar for Agency public websites in compliance with the [.gov Domain Name Registration Process](#).

**c. Bureaus/Independent Offices (B/IOs) and Missions:**

- 1) Designate, via an email to **rheth@usaid.gov**, a U.S. Direct-Hire as the cognizant officer responsible for the review and management of material posted to Agency-funded or -produced website;
- 2) Coordinate security and privacy practices with the USAID Chief Information Security Officer (CISO);
- 3) Maintain pages in their area of responsibility to ensure that information is accurate and up-to-date, and in compliance with information quality standards; and
- 4) Designate, via an email to **rheth@usaid.gov**, a Direct-Hire Point of Contact (POC) to handle public requests for Agency information as a result of inquiries received through **OPEN@usaid.gov** and **UnsolicitedProposals@usaid.gov**.

**d. The Bureau for Management, Office of the Chief Information Officer, Information Technology Operations Division, Systems Development Branch (M/CIO/ITO/SD)**, in coordination with LPA/WM, sets standards for all USAID internet webpages; and issues surrounding the access, securing, configuration, operations, and maintenance of the USAID.gov infrastructure.

**e. The System Owner (SO)** addresses the operational interests of the user community (*i.e.*, users who require access to the information system to satisfy Mission, business, or Agency requirements) and ensures compliance with information security and privacy requirements, including maintaining the Authority to Operate (ATO).

f. The **Bureau for Management, Office of the Chief Information Officer, Information Assurance, Compliance and Risk Management Branch (M/CIO/IA/CRM)** is responsible for validating (not performing) Federal privacy and cybersecurity compliance of USAID websites.

g. The **USAID Chief Information Security Officer (CISO)** sets security standards and practices with B/IOs and Missions.

h. The **Website Governance Board**, managed by LPA, approves proposed microsites and standalone project websites, as well as rules on overall USAID external website policies and procedures. The Website Governance Board is composed of Direct-Hire members from B/IOs within USAID and receives technical assistance from other Agency organizational subject matter experts on an as-needed basis. The Board convenes virtually on a monthly basis to evaluate proposed standalone project sites (for more information, see: <https://pages.usaid.gov/LPA/website-governance-board-members>).

### 557.3 POLICY DIRECTIVES AND REQUIRED PROCEDURES

#### 557.3.1 Public Information

Effective Date: 03/10/2021

Information concerning the Agency's objectives and operations must be freely available to the public to the maximum extent practicable. Public understanding of development assistance programs is dependent upon the availability of this information and prompt and reliable response to inquiries. LPA must respond promptly to all requests for information from the public (see [ADS 578, Information Quality Guidelines](#)).

While LPA is the focal point for the preparation and release of information, there must be a continuing, comprehensive, Agency-wide commitment to produce and disseminate timely, accurate information. LPA/WM staff must promote, coordinate, and support these efforts. LPA/WM relies on the active participation of all major B/IOs in USAID in responding to the need for an informed public.

- **Response to Requests:** With the exception of FOIA requests managed by the Agency's FOIA Office, LPA must process all information requests from the public concerning foreign assistance programs of the United States and other related requests.
- **Requests for Information from other B/IOs:** When public information requests are forwarded to a B/IO for response, the B/IO should respond within five working days. LPA archives (or maintains a repository) responses collected from B/IOs and approved Agency messages to maintain consistency of overall agency messaging.

#### 557.3.2 USAID.gov External Website

Effective Date: 03/10/2021

The role of the USAID external website is to explain the Agency's programs to non-USAID audiences and house major information resources of the Agency that are available to the public.

LPA/WM directs the overall operations of the Agency public website, setting standards for content and navigation of the site. LPA/WM serves as the final reviewing and publishing authority for all materials published to USAID.gov, reviewing all content and documents posted to the external website to ensure material is appropriate for public release by conforming to the following standards:

- The content is consistent and gives clear and accurate information to the public;
- The content conforms to overall design, branding, and navigation requirements;
- The content is consistent with stated Agency public positions;
- The content contains required privacy related statements; and
- The content is accessible to all members of the public.

These operations require the close cooperation of various organizational units in the Agency. Organizational units, such as B/IOs and Missions, designate POCs to serve as content providers for the sections of the website for which they have responsibility. Content providers must submit content updates for approval via the USAID.gov external website Content Management System (CMS).

### **557.3.3 Externally-Facing Microsites on Subdomains of USAID.gov**

Effective Date: 03/10/2021

Microsites are websites owned and operated by the Agency that provides a function unavailable on the primary USAID website. Microsites reside on subdomains of usaid.gov. Agency staff producing a USAID microsite on a subdomain of USAID.gov, or substantially redesigning an existing microsite (*i.e.*, adding new capabilities or significantly altering the navigation structure and design) must notify the Website Governance Board prior to site development. To begin this process, the USAID lead for the new site must fill out this form: <https://pages.usaid.gov/LPA/forms/creation-new-website-modification-existing-website-request-form>.

The Website Governance Board will review the initial website proposal to ensure that the proposed site is an appropriate use of Agency funding and staffing resources and does not duplicate capabilities that exist on current USAID websites. M/CIO and LPA/WM staff will conduct a privacy, accessibility, and security review of microsites that receive initial approval from the Website Governance Board to ensure compliance with applicable Federal, USAID, and security and accessibility laws, policies, and regulations.

All information collected from or posted to microsites on USAID.gov subdomains (excluding machine readable data sets and data provided in response to a FOIA) must comply with:

1. Standards set by the [W3C Web Accessibility Initiative](#);
2. USAID and Federal Government requirements, as outlined in [OMB M 17-06, Policies for Federal Agency Public Websites and Digital Services](#);
3. [OMB Memorandum on Social Media, Web-Based Interactive Technologies, and the Paperwork Reduction Act](#);
4. [OMB M-10-22 Guidance for Online Use of Web Measurement and Customization Technologies](#);
5. [OMB M-10-23 Guidance for Agency Use of Third-Party Websites and Applications](#);
6. Website Privacy Policy and security statement regulations, as outlined in [OMB Memorandum M-03-22](#);
7. USAID website branding standards on Agency-funded or -produced websites, as outlined in Agency branding standards at: <https://www.usaid.gov/branding>; and
8. USAID Section 508 and accessibility standards on Agency-funded or -produced websites, as outlined in [ADS Chapter 551, Section 508 and Accessibility](#).

LPA/WM, in coordination with M/CIO/ITO/SD, must set standards for appropriate and supported coding for all pages before posting.

LPA/WM maintains the Agency's inventory of public websites and serves (in coordination with M/CIO) as a domain registrar for Agency public websites. LPA/WM, in coordination with M/CIO, also distributes subdomains of the USAID.gov domain, and enforces domain name violations and other guidelines and regulations applying to USAID-financed public websites.

M/CIO/ITO/SD determines, configures, and maintains the USAID/Washington website infrastructure.

LPA/WM staff, in consultation with the Office of General Counsel (GC), and the appropriate geographic or technical Bureau, may require the immediate shutdown of any USAID website using a domain name that is not in compliance with this ADS chapter. Additionally, LPA/WM may require the retirement, when it is in the best interest

of the Agency, of any approved domain name and any USAID-owned domain name that has previously been granted a waiver.

### **557.3.3.1 USAID Websites and .gov Domains**

Effective Date: 03/10/2021

In accordance with the [Policies for Federal Agency Public Websites and Digital Services](#), USAID must only use an approved .gov domain for its official public-facing websites.

### **557.3.4 Standalone Project Websites**

Effective Date: 03/10/2021

A standalone project website is a website developed for a project in order to meet project deliverables or assist with project implementation, hosted on a separate server and/or domain from [usaid.gov](#) or an implementing partner's corporate site. USAID projects often result in the creation of a standalone project website to assist with project implementation, facilitate communication with project beneficiaries, or disseminate information to the public as a deliverable of the project. Standalone project websites should be narrow in scope, providing the capabilities necessary to achieve project goals without replicating the functionality of official USAID websites.

For the purposes of this section, "official Agency information" is defined as narrative, graphics, multimedia, or other information that seeks to provide an understanding of Agency goals, objectives, results, operations, or organization above the project-specific level and/or speaks authoritatively on behalf of the Agency or the United States Government. LPA/WM will determine exceptions, as explained in section **557.3.4.3**, on a case-by-case basis.

To alleviate possible duplication, unless required as a project deliverable, standalone project websites must not, for example:

- Provide general or detailed descriptions of Agency activities or projects intended to educate the public about Agency goals, objectives, or operations above the level of that specific project;
- Provide Agency policy or official guidance;
- Disseminate "success stories" or other material that describe in non-technical terms for a general audience the results of Agency-financed projects; or
- Disseminate any information related to Agency budget allocations, Agency administrative processes, or other aspects of Agency operations or organization beyond what is necessary for project implementation.



Project contracting and assistance officers in coordination with relevant B/IO communicators must periodically review their project websites to ensure compliance with the above.

#### **557.3.4.1 Project Websites Financed Under Acquisition Instruments**

Effective Date: 03/10/2021

Websites produced under acquisition instruments to achieve project implementation goals must be branded with the USAID logo and marked appropriately on the index page of the site and every major entry point to the website with a disclaimer that states:

"The information provided on this website is not official U.S. Government information and does not represent the views or positions of the U.S. Agency for International Development or the U.S. Government."

The Website Governance Board must approve project websites produced under USAID-financed contracts prior to site development. Sites financed under acquisition instruments that have been approved by the Website Governance Board must comply with applicable Federal and security and accessibility laws, policies, and regulations as outlined in [M-17-06 Policies for Federal Agency Public Websites and Digital Services](#). Additional information about the Website Governance Board's approval process can be found here: <https://pages.usaid.gov/LPA/website-governance-board> and <https://pages.usaid.gov/LPA/website-governance-board-approval-procedures>.

#### **557.3.4.2 Websites Financed Under Assistance Instruments**

Effective Date: 03/10/2021

USAID staff must ensure that websites produced under USAID-financed assistance instruments comply with USAID branding guidelines for assistance instruments ([Branding Guidelines](#)). As provided in this ADS chapter, the Website Governance Board must be notified of the proposed website as far in advance of the site's launch as possible.

LPA/WM must review and approve sites produced under assistance instruments to ensure compliance with Section 508 Accessibility requirements, as detailed in [ADS 551](#).

USAID staff must ensure that websites produced under USAID-financed assistance instruments and fall outside the scope of section **557.3.4** do not reside on a .gov domain. The site must be marked appropriately on the index page of the site and every major entry point to the website with a disclaimer that states:

"The information provided on this website is not official U.S. Government information and does not represent the views or positions of the U.S. Agency for International Development or the U.S. Government."

**557.3.4.3 USAID Websites and .gov Domains Exceptions**

Effective Date: 03/10/2021

Exceptions to section **557.3.4** are possible only if the website provides support to and disseminates official Agency information about U.S. Government-financed projects or programs that cross Agency jurisdictions or have an urgent and compelling need not to be associated directly with USAID.

When exceptions are made for websites that cross Agency jurisdictions for programmatic purposes and are agreed to by the involved parties, the website must reside on an LPA-approved .gov domain. Only the USAID Administrator may approve official government information residing on a non-.gov domain. LPA must be informed of the URLs of these websites before the website is launched.

**557.4 MANDATORY REFERENCES****557.4.1 External Mandatory References**

Effective Date: 03/10/2021

- a. [E.O. 13642, Making Open and Machine Readable the New Default for Government Information](#)
- b. [Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended](#)
- c. [Foreign Transparency and Accountability Act of 2016](#)
- d. [OMB Bulletin 12-01, Guidance on Collection of U.S. Foreign Assistance Data](#)
- e. [OMB Circular A-130, Managing Information as a Strategic Resource](#)
- f. [OMB M-10-22 Guidance for Online Use of Web Measurement and Customization Technologies](#)
- g. [OMB M-10-23 Guidance for Agency Use of Third-Party Websites and Applications](#)
- h. [OMB M-11-02, Sharing Data While Protecting Privacy](#)
- i. [OMB M-17-06 Policies for Federal Agency Public Websites and Digital Services](#)
- j. [OMB Memorandum 03-22](#)
- k. [OMB Memorandum on Social Media, Web-Based Interactive Technologies, and the Paperwork Reduction Act](#)

- l. [OMB Open Data Policy, M-13-13, Managing Information as an Asset](#)
- m. [W3C Web Accessibility Initiative](#)

**557.4.2 Internal Mandatory References**

Effective Date: 03/10/2021

- a. [ADS 302mas, Special Contract Requirements](#)
- b. [ADS 508, USAID Privacy Program](#)
- c. [ADS 540, USAID Development Experience Information](#)
- d. [ADS 545, Information Systems Security](#)
- e. [ADS 551, Section 508 and Accessibility](#)
- f. [ADS 578, Information Quality Guidelines](#)
- g. [ADS 579, USAID Development Data](#)
- h. [Website Approval Procedures \(Internal only\)](#)

**557.5 ADDITIONAL HELP**

Effective Date: 03/10/2021

There are no Additional Help documents for this chapter.

**557.6 DEFINITIONS**

Effective Date: 03/10/2021

See the [ADS Glossary](#) for all ADS terms and definitions.

**Accessibility**

All U.S. government websites and government-funded websites (funded under acquisition and assistance agreements) must comply with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act to ensure that content is accessible to visitors with disabilities. **(Chapter 551)**

**Domain**

On the Internet, domains are attached to an Internet Protocol (IP) address. All devices sharing a common part of the IP address are said to be in the same domain. A domain name is usaid.gov. **(Chapter 557)**

**Domain Registrar**

A domain registrar creates and hosts the records correlating to a domain name and establishes domain name standards. Each domain name is setup to point to a specific IP address. (**Chapter 557**)

### **FOIA**

The U.S. Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) is a law ensuring public access to U.S. Government records. (**Chapter 557**)

### **IP Address**

Each machine connected to the Internet has an address known as an Internet Protocol address (IP address). The IP address takes the form of four numbers separated by dots-(for example: 123.45.67.890). (**Chapter 557**)

### **Microsite**

A website owned and operated by the Agency that provides a function unavailable on the primary USAID website. Microsites reside on subdomains of usaid.gov. (**Chapter 557**)

### **Official Agency Information**

For the purposes of this chapter, official Agency information is narrative, graphics, multimedia, or other information that seeks to provide an understanding of Agency goals, objectives, results, operations, or organization above the project-specific level and/or speaks authoritatively on behalf of the Agency or the United States Government. (**Chapter 557**)

### **Project**

A set of complementary activities, over an established timeline and budget, intended to achieve a discrete development result, often aligned with an Intermediate Result (IR) in the CDCS Results Framework. Taken together, a Mission's suite of project designs provides the operational plans for achieving the objectives in its CDCS or other applicable strategic plan. (**Chapter [201](#) and 557**)

### **Standalone Project Website**

A website developed for a project in order to meet project deliverables or assist with project implementation, hosted on a separate server and/or domain from usaid.gov or an implementing partner's corporate site. (**Chapter 557**)

### **Subdomains**

A domain often representing an administrative or other organizational subgroup within a second-level domain (for example, "egypt.usaid.gov" is a subdomain of "usaid.gov"). (**Chapter 557**)

### **Website Governance Board**

The Website Governance Board, managed by LPA, is responsible for approving proposed microsites and standalone project websites, as well as ruling on overall USAID external website policies and procedures. (**Chapter 557**)

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