



**USAID**  
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# ADS Chapter 557

## Public Information

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**ADS 557 – Public Information**

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## ADS Chapter 557 – Public Information

### 557.1 OVERVIEW

Effective date: 01/01/2006

This chapter provides the policy directives 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.

### 557.2 PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITIES

Effective date: 01/01/2006

**a. The Bureau for Legislative and Public Affairs/Public Information, Production and Online Services (LPA/PIPOS) is responsible for the following:**

- (1) Responding to and/or referring all inquiries and requests from the public for materials regarding the activities of USAID (except Freedom of Information Requests, which are handled by the Bureau for Management, Office of Administrative Services, Information and Records Division (M/AS/IRD)) to other Bureaus, and when necessary, contacting appropriate Bureaus/Offices to gather and interpret information or materials necessary to respond to the requests for information.
- (2) The operations of the USAID Information Center, which facilitates and expands access to USAID information for the general public.
- (3) Review of Agency-produced or -funded materials available to the public on the World Wide Web.
- (4) Designating a directory structure and design, navigation and other standards as outlined on [xWeb](#) to be used on all materials posted to the Agency's external Web site.
- (5) Ensuring that Web site materials are an appropriate style for public distribution and ensuring consistency with Agency policy and positions.
- (6) Maintaining the Agency's inventory of public Web sites.
- (7) Serving as [domain](#) registrar for Agency public Web sites.
- (8) Distributing [subdomains](#) of the USAID.gov domain.
- (9) Enforcing domain name violations and other guidelines and regulations applying to USAID-financed public Web sites.

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- b. Bureaus/Offices, and Missions** are responsible for the following:
- (1) Designating a U.S. Direct Hire as the cognizant officer responsible for the material posted to Agency-funded or -produced Web sites.
  - (2) Coordinating server security practices with the USAID Chief Information Security Officer (CISO).
- c. The Bureau for Management, Office of Information Resources Management, Enabling Technologies & Integration, Web Services (M/IRM/ETI/WS)** is responsible for the following:
- (1) M/IRM/ETI/WS, in coordination with LPA/PIPOS, sets standards for all USAID internet web pages.
  - (2) M/IRM/ETI/WS is responsible for issues surrounding the access, securing, configuration, operations, and maintenance of the servers that comprise the Agency's external Web presence.
- d. USAID Chief Information Security Officer (CISO)** is responsible for coordinating server security practices with Bureaus/Offices and Missions.

### **557.3 POLICY DIRECTIVES AND REQUIRED PROCEDURES**

Effective date: 01/01/2006

The statements contained within the 557.3 section of this ADS chapter are the official Agency policy directives and required procedures.

#### **\*557.3.1 Public Information** Effective date: 01/01/2006

It is USAID policy that information concerning its objectives and operations must be freely available to the public to the maximum extent practicable. Because public understanding of development assistance programs is dependent upon the availability of this information and prompt and reliable response to inquiries, the Bureau for Legislative and Public Affairs (LPA) must respond promptly to all requests for information from the public and perform other functions in order to educate the public on foreign assistance activities.

While the Public Information, Publications and Online Services (PIPOS) staff within LPA is the focal point for the preparation and release of information, there must be a continuing, comprehensive, Agency-wide concern for producing and disseminating timely, accurate information. LPA/PIPOS staff must stimulate, program, and coordinate these efforts, but must rely on the active participation of all major Offices and officers in USAID in responding to the need for an informed public.

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- **Response to Requests:** With the exception of Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests, LPA must process all information requests from the general public concerning foreign assistance programs of the United States and other related requests.
- **Requests for Information from Other Bureaus/Offices:** Since some public information requests require LPA to contact another Bureau/Office to obtain information necessary to draft a response to the inquiry, Bureaus/Offices contacted must attempt to respond within two working days to such requests. If it is determined that the person seeking information must have direct contact with a source within the Agency, the individual in question must attempt to respond to the outside caller within one working day. (The telephone number for this service is (202) 712-4810; the public e-mail address is [pinquiries@usaid.gov](mailto:pinquiries@usaid.gov).)

\*Note: For information about updated USAID privacy policy on publicly accessible Web sites and Information Technology Systems, see [Mandatory Reference 557mac, Updated Privacy Policy for USAID Information Technology Systems, Including Publicly Accessible Web Sites](#).

### **557.3.2 Information Center**

Effective date: 01/01/2006

The Information Center staff within LPA/PIPOS must direct the overall operations of the USAID Information Center.

The operations of LPA/PIPOS require the close cooperation of various organizational units within the Agency.

The Information Center staff must explain the Agency's assistance programs to non-USAID audiences and house other major information resources of the Agency that are generally available to the public.

Other Bureaus/Offices located within the Information Center or using Information Center facilities must closely coordinate activities and seek guidance and direction from LPA.

### **557.3.3 Information Posted to the Web**

Effective date: 01/01/2006

Information posted to the Web is readily available to the general public. As part of LPA/PIPOS responsibility, such materials must be submitted to and reviewed by LPA/PIPOS prior to posting to the Web site.

LPA/PIPOS must be notified of the URL of a USAID-produced or -financed Web site as far in advance of the site's launch as possible. In many cases, LPA/PIPOS will need to do a thorough review of the Web site to ensure its compliance with applicable Federal,

\*An asterisk and yellow highlight indicates that the adjacent information is new for this chapter or substantively revised. 5

USAID, and security and accessibility laws, policies, and regulations, as outlined at: [http://www.usaid.gov/info\\_technology/xweb/](http://www.usaid.gov/info_technology/xweb/).

The Bureau for Legislative and Public Affairs/Public Information, Production and Online Services (LPA/PIPOS) must conduct a review of information posted to Agency-funded or -produced Web sites as to the compliance with:

- 1) Standards set by the W3C Web Accessibility Initiative (<http://www.w3.org/WAI/>).
- 2) USAID and Federal Government requirements, as outlined on XWeb ([http://www.usaid.gov/info\\_technology/xweb/](http://www.usaid.gov/info_technology/xweb/)).
- 3) Web site Privacy Policy and security statement regulations, as outlined in OMB Memorandum M-03-22.
- 4) USAID Web site branding standards on Agency-funded or -produced Web sites, as outlined on XWeb.

Information posted to Agency-funded or -produced Web sites must be in compliance with the above four standards.

Most materials posted to the USAID internet Web site are available to the general public. Materials financed by the Agency must be reviewed by LPA prior to posting to the Web. LPA must coordinate this review with the Bureau for Management, Office of Information Resources Management, Enabling Technologies & Integration, Web Services (M/IRM/ETI/WS) and ensure that materials presented on the Web:

- Are of consistent quality and accessibility;
- Provide clear and accurate information to the general public;
- Conform to overall design, branding, and navigation requirements;
- Are consistent with stated Agency public positions;
- Contain the required privacy related statements; and
- Meet other requirements as outlined on XWeb.

M/IRM/ETI/WS, in coordination with LPA/PIPOS, must set standards for all pages before posting for appropriate and supported coding.

LPA/PIPOS maintains the Agency's inventory of public Web sites and serves as a [domain registrar](#) for Agency public Web sites. LPA/PIPOS also distributes subdomains

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of the USAID.gov domain, and enforces domain name violations and other guidelines and regulations applying to USAID-financed public Web sites.

The Bureau for Management, Office of Information Resources Management, Enabling Technologies & Integration, Web Services (M/IRM/ETI/WS) determines, configures, and maintains the operating systems and software packages on the USAID/Washington external Web server, and, as such, determines the technologies that can be used on Web sites hosted on USAID/Washington external Web servers.

LPA/PIPOS staff, in consultation with the Office of the General Counsel (GC) and the appropriate geographic or technical Bureau, may require the immediate shutdown of any USAID Web site using a domain name that is not in compliance with this chapter. Additionally, LPA/PIPOS 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.

#### **557.3.4 USAID Web sites and .gov Domains**

Effective date: 01/01/2006

In accordance with the [OMB Memorandum 05-04, Policies for Federal Agency Public Websites](#), as of December 31, 2005, Web pages containing official U.S. Government information or which conduct transactions or other business related actions on behalf of the Agency must reside on .gov domains.

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. For the purposes of this section, the term "project" will have the same meaning as it does in ADS chapters 200-203. Exceptions, as explained on 557.3.4.3, will be determined on a case-by-case basis by LPA/PIPOS.

#### **Missions**

In general, USAID Mission Web sites should be maintained on USAID/Washington servers ([www.usaid.gov](http://www.usaid.gov)). USAID Mission Web sites that cannot (for technical reasons or for administration issues) reside on USAID/Washington servers must use a subdomain of usaid.gov. In these instances, Missions must contact LPA/PIPOS via [lpa.uploads@info.usaid.gov](mailto:lpa.uploads@info.usaid.gov) to request the allocation of a subdomain.

Subdomains allocated to USAID missions must follow this format: countryname.usaid.gov. There are no exceptions to this naming scheme.

Missions wishing to host Web sites on a non-USAID controlled server must follow all the guidelines provided at [http://www.usaid.gov/info\\_technology/xweb/mission\\_remote.html](http://www.usaid.gov/info_technology/xweb/mission_remote.html) and also

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coordinate server security practices with the USAID Chief Information Security Officer (CISO).

#### **557.3.4.1 Web sites Financed Under Acquisition Instruments**

Effective date: 01/01/2006

Web sites produced under USAID-financed acquisition instruments to achieve project implementation goals not covered in 557.3.4 and that DO NOT speak authoritatively on behalf of the Agency or the U.S. Government must not reside on .gov domains.

Web sites produced under acquisition instruments 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.

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

"The information provided on this Web site 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."

However, as is currently the case, Web sites produced under USAID-financed contracts must comply with applicable Federal, USAID, and security and accessibility laws, policies, and regulations as outlined at:

[http://www.usaid.gov/info\\_technology/xweb/contracts.html](http://www.usaid.gov/info_technology/xweb/contracts.html)

#### **557.3.4.2 Web sites Financed Under Assistance Instruments**

Effective date: 01/01/2006

Web sites that are produced under USAID-financed assistance instruments and fall outside the scope of 557.3.4 must comply only with USAID branding guidelines for assistance instruments (<http://www.usaid.gov/branding/assistance.html>). As provided in this chapter, LPA/PIPOS must be notified of the URL as far in advance of the site's launch as possible.

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Web sites that are produced under USAID-financed assistance instruments and fall outside the scope of 557.3.4 must 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 Web site with a disclaimer that states:

"The information provided on this Web site 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 Web sites and .gov Domains Exceptions**

Effective date: 01/01/2006

Exceptions to ADS 557.3.4 are possible only if

- the Web site provides support to and disseminates official Agency information about U.S. Government-financed projects or programs that cross Agency jurisdictions (for example, <http://www.fightingmalaria.gov/>),
- or have a urgent and compelling need not to be associated directly with USAID.

When exceptions are made for Web sites that cross Agency jurisdictions, the Web site must reside on an LPA-approved .gov domain. Only the USAID Administrator may approve official government information residing on a non-.gov domain. LPA/PIPOS must be informed of the URLs of these Web sites before the Web site is launched.

### **557.3.5 Privacy Policy for USAID Publicly Accessible Web sites**

Effective date: 01/01/2006

OMB Memorandum 03-22 provides guidance to agencies on implementing the privacy provisions of the E-Government Act of 2002, which was signed by the President on December 17, 2002 and became effective on April 17, 2003.

Every Agency-funded and -produced Web site must post a privacy policy on the site and translate the privacy policy into a standardized machine-readable format. The Platform for Privacy Preferences (P3P) xml code for the USAID external Web site can be used as a model for machine-readable privacy policies. Further explanation of Privacy Policy requirements and P3P can be found on XWeb ([http://www.usaid.gov/info\\_technology/xweb/privacy.html](http://www.usaid.gov/info_technology/xweb/privacy.html)).

All Agency officers or Cognizant Technical Officers responsible for the management or funding (through contract mechanisms) of Agency Web sites must ensure that analysis is done to determine what information is being collected and tailor privacy policy or policies accordingly.

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**\*557.4 MANDATORY REFERENCES**

Effective date: 01/01/2006

**557.4.1 External Mandatory Reference**

Effective date: 01/01/2006

- a. [OMB Memorandum 03-22 and its four attachments A, B, C, and D:](#)
- b. [OMB Memorandum 05-04, Policies for Federal Agency Public Websites](#)
- c. [Foreign Assistance Act of 1961](#), as amended

**\*557.4.2 Internal Mandatory References**

Effective date: 01/01/2006

- a. XWeb: [http://www.usaid.gov/info\\_technology/xweb/](http://www.usaid.gov/info_technology/xweb/)
- b. W3C Web Accessibility Initiative: <http://www.w3.org/WAI/>
- \*c. [557mac, Updated Privacy Policy for USAID Information Technology Systems, Including Publicly Accessible Web Sites](#)

**557.4.3 Mandatory Forms**

Effective date: 01/01/2006

**557.5 ADDITIONAL HELP**

Effective date: 01/01/2006

**557.5.1 Optional Forms**

Effective date: 01/01/2006

**557.6 DEFINITIONS**

Effective date: 01/01/2006

**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.

**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.

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**FOIA**

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

**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).

**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.

**P3P**

The Platform for Privacy Preferences Project (P3P) enables Web sites to express their privacy practices in a standard format that can be retrieved automatically and interpreted easily by user agents. P3P user agents will allow users to be informed of site practices (in both machine- and human-readable formats) and to automate decision-making based on these practices when appropriate. Thus users need not read the privacy policies at every site they visit.

**Project**

A project should be considered one of several possible types of activities that contribute to a given result or set of results. It is a structured undertaking (often involving considerable money, personnel and equipment) of limited duration that is developed through various administrative, analytical, and approval processes in order to achieve a tangible objective (such as school construction project, adult literacy project). Note: The current term is defined differently than before 1995.

**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".

**XWeb**

A website created and maintained by LPA/PIPOS to assist USAID Web site content providers navigate the technical and content requirements of USAID and the Federal Government.

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