



# Activity Location Data

A Mandatory Reference for ADS Chapters 201 and  
579

New Edition Date: 07/31/2018  
Responsible Office: LAB/CDD  
File Name: 579mab\_073118

## OVERVIEW

Collecting, managing, and sharing Activity Location Data strengthens the Agency's ability to accomplish two priority objectives:

### a. Maximize Development Impact Effectively and Efficiently

Routine data collection and analysis are essential to applying analytic rigor to support evidence-based decision-making and managing adaptively through continuous learning ([ADS 201.3.1.2](#)). Integrating Activity Location Data collection and analysis into planning, delivering, assessing, and adapting USAID programming will help achieve greater development impact by increasing operational efficiency and improving decisions with rigorous data analysis and continuous learning.

### b. Promote Transparency, Participation, Collaboration

The value of USAID's development data is enhanced when the data is managed as an asset and made available throughout the Agency and to all other interested stakeholders, in accordance with proper protection and redaction allowable by law. Collecting, managing, and sharing Activity Location Data supports existing USAID commitments to:

- Promote cooperation and collaboration with partner country/regional government(s), civil society, the private sector, the interagency, and other donors, implementing partners, and stakeholders;
- Further the U.S. Government's commitment under the [International Aid Transparency Initiative](#) (IATI) to increase aid effectiveness and promote international accountability through enhanced aid transparency (see [ADS 579maa, Foreign Assistance Reporting and the Foreign Assistance Redaction System](#)); and
- Implement [ADS 579, USAID Development Data](#).

As a result, this mandatory reference supports the requirements and procedures outlined in both [ADS 201](#) and [ADS 579](#).

## PURPOSE

By instituting procedures for collecting, managing, and reporting Activity Location Data, this mandatory reference addresses the common challenges that currently limit Activity Location Data collection or result in low-quality data that doesn't adequately serve the Agency's programming and reporting requirements. It also strengthens the Agency's ability to fulfill the existing requirements established by [Office of Management and](#)

## [Budget Circular A-16, “Coordination of Geographic Information, and Related Spatial Data Activities”](#).

### **BACKGROUND**

An activity carries out an intervention, or set of interventions, typically through a contract, grant, or agreement with another U.S. Government agency or with the partner country government ([ADS 201.6](#)). Activity Location Data refers to data that depicts the geographic location of an activity. While [ADS Chapter 579](#) establishes the requirements, standards, roles, and responsibilities governing USAID’s development data lifecycle from collecting data to making it open and accessible, it is necessary to establish additional procedures that are specific to Activity Location Data. Therefore, the purpose of this mandatory reference is to establish the primary responsibilities and procedures regarding Activity Location Data.

### **I. Mandatory Requirements**

USAID Operating Units (OUs) will collect Activity Location Data at the most detailed geographic level appropriate for each activity they implement using one of the four Levels of Geographic Detail (see **section IV** below) defined in [ADS 579saa, USAID Data Collection and Submission Standards](#). USAID OUs will:

1. At a minimum, collect Activity Location Data at the following Level of Geographic Detail:
  - a. Sub-national activities: Administrative Unit 1 level, e.g., region, province, department (see **Frequently Ask Questions** below for administrative unit definition); and
  - b. Regional, i.e., activities implemented across multiple countries, and National-level activities: Administrative Unit 0 level (i.e., country) and represented by the latitude/longitude coordinate location of the capital city.
2. Ensure that Activity Location Data is collected and submitted according to [ADS 579saa, Geographic Data Collection and Submission Standards](#), in accordance with roles, responsibilities, and required procedures defined in [ADS 579](#) that govern the collection, management, and submission of all USAID development data. This must include verifying Activity Location Data quality (see [ADS 578, Information Quality Guidelines](#))
3. At a minimum, collect Activity Location Data to capture the location where the activity is implemented. The location of the activity’s intended beneficiaries may also be collected but is not required (see **Key Concepts** below).

4. Collect Activity Location data that excludes personally identifiable information (PII) (see [ADS 508.3.1](#) for definition of PII). For example, data such as an individual’s personal address that could be used to re-identify the individual.
5. When applicable, collect Activity Location Data using existing Agency-approved data collection and management systems that fulfill the above requirements, e.g., the Feed the Future Monitoring System.

\*Note: USAID OUs will most commonly fulfill the above by identifying the level of geographic detail at which Activity Location Data will be collected and including the corresponding Activity Location Data collection and submission requirements in the activity’s solicitation and award documents.

## II. Key Concepts for Implementation

Understanding the Activity Location Data collection and management process and several key concepts is essential to effectively performing the roles and responsibilities outlined in the **Primary Responsibilities** section below.

### A. Activity Location Data Collection and Management

The process of collecting, managing, and using Activity Location Data commonly occurs during two phases of an activity. Table 1 provides an overview of each phase. The specific roles and responsibilities within a USAID OU are outlined in the **Primary Responsibilities** section below.

**Table 1 - Activity Data Collection and Management Process Overview**

Activity Phase	What
<b>Design and Procurement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Determine level of geographic detail at which Activity Location Data will be collected.</li> <li>○ Include Activity Location Data collection and submission requirements in solicitation and award language.</li> </ul>
<b>Implementation and Post-Award</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Verify that the Activity Location Data collection and submission requirements in the award are fulfilled.</li> <li>○ Use Activity Location Data for improved programming, coordination, and communication.</li> <li>○ Assist with the data review and publishing process to ensure data is shared at the appropriate access level.</li> </ul>

## B. Key Concepts

### 1. Determining the Appropriate Level of Geographic Detail

A high level of geographic detail refers to a more exact geographic location, such as the latitude/longitude coordinates that indicate the exact site location of a building. A low level of geographic detail refers to a less exact geographic location, such as the administrative unit (e.g., district, sub-district, etc.). To standardize Activity Location Data collection, four levels of geographic detail are defined in [ADS 579saa, Geographic Data Collection and Submission Standards](#): 1) Administrative Unit Area; 2) Populated Place Location; 3) Exact Area or Line Feature; and 4) Exact Site Location (see Table 2 in the **Level of Geographic Detail** section).

The USAID OU will select one of the four levels of geographic detail that is most appropriate for an activity based on programmatic rather than administrative requirements, and include but not necessarily limited to, the following criteria:

- The level of geographic detail that is necessary to provide a meaningful unit of analysis for routine portfolio management tasks;
- The type of programming and the cost and capacity requirements for implementing partners to collect data at a certain level of geographic detail;
- Whether collecting data at a certain level of geographic detail will present data risk (see the **Managing Data Risk** section below); and
- Whether collecting data at a certain level of geographic detail will not be permissible due to insecure environments.

### 2. ADS 579 Geographic Data Collection and Submission Standards

**ADS 579saa, Geographic Data Collection and Submission Standards** provides the guidance for a USAID OU to manage data risk and define and communicate Activity Location Data collection and submission requirements in solicitation and post-award guidance documents, in accordance with the other responsibilities and procedures established by [ADS 579](#).

### 3. Managing Data Risk

Activity Location Data are collected, managed, and shared for an intended benefit: improved development decision making and accountability and transparency. However, in certain scenarios, Activity Location Data may also present some level of data risk in addition to benefit. Therefore, balancing benefit and risk is a key component of responsible Activity Location Data collection and management.

There is a common misconception that Activity Location Data will be publicly released once it is submitted to USAID. This misconception may lead to limiting data collection due to the potential data risk or result in overly redacting or aggregating data before it is submitted to USAID. In response, it is important to clarify the following:

1. When Activity Location Data that present risk are submitted to USAID data repositories, USAID can limit data access to: Public, Restricted Public, Non-Public, as defined in [ADS 579.3.2.4](#).
2. To maintain the spirit of openness and transparency, Activity Location Data that present risk redacted or aggregated versions of the dataset that mitigate data risk can be shared instead.

For example, if releasing Activity Location Data publicly poses substantial risk of re-identifying individuals and falls within one of the Principled Exceptions to public release, access to the Activity Location Data can be limited (see [ADS 579.3.2.4](#)).

The steps a USAID OU should take to assess and mitigate data risk are outlined in the [ADS 579saa, Geographic Data Collection and Submission Standards](#). The Activity Location Data requirements exclude the collection of PII and therefore privacy will not generally be a factor in Activity Location Data risk management (see the **Mandatory Requirements** section above).

### Data Risk

Three interrelated parts define data risk:

1. A negative outcome that could result from unauthorized access to the data,
2. The likelihood that the negative outcome will actually occur, and
3. The level of impact that would result from the negative outcome.

Types of negative outcomes include the Principled Exceptions outlined in [ADS 579.3.2.3](#). In addition, certain country contexts may present insecure environments that result in safety concerns regarding geographic data collection in the field. When applicable, these data collection constraints should also be considered when planning for data collection.

### **4. Location of Implementation versus Location of Intended Beneficiaries**

USAID OUs are required to collect Activity Location Data depicting the geographic location where an activity is implemented. In some cases, an activity's "Location of Implementation" may be different than its "Location of Intended Beneficiaries" and therefore it may be useful to collect geographic data depicting both types of locations. For example, consider an activity that conducts training events in the national capital

city and participants from all over the country travel to the city to receive training. In this scenario, collecting both the location of the capital city (Location of Implementation) and the locations where the training participants came from (Location of Intended Beneficiaries) may best represent the geographic location of the activity and provide more useful information to support portfolio management and transparency and accountability objectives. To collect data that depicts an activity's Location of Intended Beneficiaries, the same methods and standards used to collect the Location of Implementation would be applied. When applicable, collecting both an activity's Location of Implementation and the Location of Intended Beneficiaries is recommended but not required.

### III. Primary Responsibilities

The responsibilities outlined below apply to Activity Location Data and must be completed in accordance with the other primary responsibilities described in [ADS 579](#) that govern the collection and management of all USAID development data assets. Internal Agency resources, such as the USAID GeoCenter, are available to provide guidance on completing the responsibilities.

#### A. Activity Planners

During the activity design process (see [ADS 201.3.4](#)), Activity Planners, in close coordination with USAID OU Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Specialists or other subject matter experts:

1. Must determine the appropriate level of geographic detail to collect Activity Location Data (see the **Key Concepts** section above).
2. Must assess data risk and identify whether or not methods to mitigate risk are required (see **Managing Data Risk** section above).
3. Must coordinate with the Contracting Officer (CO), Agreement Officer (AO), General Counsel (GC) or Resident Legal Officer (RLO), as appropriate based on the type of implementing mechanism, to ensure that the solicitation indicates in the reporting section:
  - a. Any Activity Location Data required under the award provides standards that comply with [ADS 579saa, Geographic Data Collection and Submission Standards](#);
  - b. Any Activity Location Data collected each quarter is in a format that fulfills the [ADS 579saa, Geographic Data Collection and Submission Standards](#);
  - c. The level of geographic detail at which Activity Location Data will be collected;

- d. The award number of the primary activity will be included in Activity Location Data; and
  - e. Any additional OU requirements to standardize Activity Location Data, such as standard administrative unit or populated place names.
4. Should consider collecting geographic data that indicates the activity's "Intended Beneficiaries" in addition to the "Location of Implementation" (see **Key Concepts** section above).
  5. Should plan to use Activity Location Data for improved activity monitoring, evaluation, and learning (see [ADS 201.3.4.10](#)).

### **B. Contract Officer's Representatives (CORs), Agreement Officer's Representatives (AORs), Government Agreement Technical Representatives (GATRs)**

In accordance with the responsibilities outlined in [ADS 579.2.i](#) and in close coordination with Activity Managers, implementing partners, the USAID OU GIS Specialist, or other subject matter experts, the COR/AOR/GATR:

1. Must consult with the implementing partner to ensure that they understand the Activity Location Data collection and submission requirements included in the award.
2. Must verify that the implementing partner collects and submits Activity Location Data in accordance with the terms of the award (see [ADS 579.2.i](#)).
3. Must assess data risk and identify whether or not methods to mitigate risk are required (see **Managing Data Risk** section), in accordance with the other responsibilities outlined in [ADS 579.2.i](#).
4. Should analyze Activity Location Data with other monitoring data to inform efforts to manage adaptively and promote accountability (see [ADS 201.3.5.2](#)).

### **C. USAID OU GIS Specialist or Other Subject Matter Expert**

To facilitate Activity Location Data collection, management, and analysis for improved development programming, the OU GIS Specialist or other subject matter expert:

1. Must provide support to Activity Planners, AORs/CORs/GATRs, and their OU as they conduct their primary responsibilities regarding Activity Location Data.
2. Must work with their OU to establish methods to standardize Activity Location Data collection across activities, such as defining standard names and locations



for administrative units, populated places, facility locations, and other geographic units that will be used to collect Activity Location Data.

3. Should work with their OU to establish a minimum level of geographic detail to collect all Activity Location Data. This facilitates analysis of the data at the project and/or strategy level as the Activity Location Data can be aggregated to a common level of geographic detail to facilitate analysis of the data at the project and/or strategy level.

#### **D. USAID Operating Units**

To facilitate Activity Location Data collection and analysis for improved development programming, the USAID OU:

1. Must verify that the “Mandatory Requirements” (see **Mandatory Requirements** section above) are fulfilled.
2. Must plan for Activity Location Data collection and analysis during strategic planning and project design. This will help to ensure that Activity Location Data can be used to support decisions across the Results Framework hierarchy.
3. Should ensure that Activity Planners, CORs/AORs/GATRs, and/or subject matter experts receive training on geographic data collection and analysis practices.
4. Should analyze Activity Location Data with other performance and context monitoring information to inform management and adapt interventions, when appropriate (see [ADS 201.3.4.10 B](#)).
5. Should use Activity Location Data as part of their Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting approach to engage and coordinate with the OU and USAID, with implementing partners, and among key stakeholders to increase synergies and information sharing (see [ADS 201.3.5.19](#)).

#### **IV. Level of Geographic Detail**

The levels of geographic detail outlined in Table 2 are defined in [ADS 579saa, Geographic Data Collection and Submission Standards](#).

**Table 2 - The Four Levels of Geographic Detail**

<b>Level of Geographic Detail</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Example</b>
<b>Administrative Unit Area</b>	The location of the administrative units, such as districts, where the activity is implemented and represented by the entire area of the administrative unit.	A health activity builds the capacity of a district-level ministry of health and will impact the health system of the entire district. The location of the district is selected as the appropriate Level of Geographic Detail.
<b>Populated Place Location</b>	The location of the populated place, such as a city, town, or settlement, where the activity is implemented and represented by the latitude/longitude coordinates of the populated place.	A democracy and governance activity promotes local government accountability in 15 cities and will affect the entire city in each location. The location of each city is selected as the appropriate level of geographic detail.
<b>Exact Line or Area Feature</b>	The location of an area or linear feature where the activity is implemented and represented by a line or area.	An economic growth activity promotes increased agriculture yield in agriculture areas within 10 districts. The exact boundary of the agriculture areas is selected as the appropriate level of geographic detail.
<b>Exact Site Locations</b>	The location of the exact site where an activity is implemented and represented by the latitude/longitude coordinates of the site locations.	A health activity expands the scope of services available at 30 health facilities in 4 districts. The exact location of each health facility building is selected as the appropriate level of geographic detail.

## V. Frequently Asked Questions

### A. Managing Implementation

**1. When will USAID OUs need to start fulfilling the requirements of this mandatory reference?**

Starting on the date the mandatory reference is effective, USAID OUs will be responsible for fulfilling the requirements in new awards.

**2. Does this requirement apply to USAID OUs based in Missions and Washington, DC?**

Yes, collecting Activity Location Data is equally important for OUs based in the field and in Washington.

**3. How should this requirement be implemented in field support implementing mechanisms?**

In the case of field support implementing mechanisms, an Activity Manager may assist the COR/AOR in performing certain technical oversight duties, but the Activity Manager is not authorized to provide technical direction to implementing partners or any other action that binds the government based on the COR/AOR designation letter. In these cases, the Activity Manager is often located in the Mission, while the COR/AOR is located in USAID/Washington. It is recommended that Missions identify Activity Managers for Field Support activities implemented at their Mission (for more information see [ADS 201.3.4.9](#)).

**4. USAID's management oversight is limited for certain types of awards. In these cases, how will a USAID OU fulfill this requirement?**

For awards in which a USAID OU's management oversight is limited, the USAID OU will generate Activity Location Data internally. The level of geographic detail at which Activity Location Data is collected will be determined by the information available to the USAID OU. For example, if a USAID OU transfers funds to a Public International Organization that ultimately supports a host-country government ministry, the activity could be represented by the latitude/longitude coordinate location of the capital city based on the information available to the USAID OU regarding the activity's Location of Implementation. If information is available regarding the Activity's Location of the Intended Beneficiaries and it will be valuable to collect, then it may also be collected but is not required.

### B. Capacity Requirements

**1. What if a USAID OU doesn't have access to a GIS specialist or GIS tools?**

Defining and communication Activity Location Data collection and submission requirements do not require GIS expertise. In addition, the majority of Activity Location Data that is collected and submitted to USAID will be stored in a spreadsheet format that will not require additional expertise or access to special tools to verify that the data collection and submission requirements have been met and conduct basic analysis of the data. However, the efficiency and effectiveness of collecting, managing, and analyzing the Activity Location Data will be improved if USAID OUs ensure that Activity Planners, CORs/AORs/GATRs, and/or other subject matter experts receive appropriate training on basic geographic data collection and analysis practices.

**2. What level of technical support is available to OUs that need assistance fulfilling these responsibilities?**

Further technical assistance is available upon request from Agency resources, such as the USAID GeoCenter.

**C. Data Collection and Management**

**1. What is the appropriate level of geographic detail for national-level activities?**

National-level activities will be represented by the latitude/longitude coordinate location of the national capital city (see **Mandatory Requirements** section above).

**2. How should a USAID OU determine the “appropriate level of geographic detail” for Activity Location Data?**

This question is answered in the **Key Concepts** section above.

**3. In certain scenarios, collecting Activity Location Data at a high level of geographic detail may result in data risk. What should a USAID OU do to mitigate these concerns?**

This topic is addressed in the **Managing Data Risk** section above and further guidance is provided in [ADS 579saa, Geographic Data Collection and Submission Standards](#).

**4. What should a USAID OU do if the locations where the activity is implemented and the locations of its intended beneficiaries are not the same?**

In this scenario, it is recommended but not required to collect both the “Location of Implementation” and the “Location of Intended Beneficiaries”. This question is also covered in the **Key Concepts** section above.

**5. In many countries, administrative unit and populated place names can be spelled in several ways and still be considered correct. How should a USAID OU standardize data collection in this scenario?**

Numeric values are often defined by the host-country government as unique identifiers for each administrative unit to standardize data collection and management. In these cases, the numeric identifiers should be used, and different name variations can be included in the dataset for reference. When numeric values are not defined, the authoritative names used by the host-country government should be used and name variations can be included in the dataset for reference. When numeric values and authoritative names are not defined, a USAID OU can establish numeric values or names to establish a standard.

**6. What are administrative units?**

Administrative Units define the hierarchy of administrative divisions within a country. The units are delineated by geographic boundaries, starting with the country boundary that is referred to as administrative unit 0. The first level of subdivision within a country is referred to as the administrative unit 1. Administrative 1 units are subdivided into administrative 2 units and this logic continues until the lowest level of subdivision is reached. Terms such as “Admin 1” or “Adm1” are commonly used to refer to administrative units and frequently appear in column headings or filenames for datasets. Each country will refer to the administrative units with different terms for each level, such as region, province, and district.

As an illustrative example, Table 3 displays the names and number of units for each administrative level in Peru in 2018.

**Table 3 – Administrative Unit Hierarchy Example**

Administrative Level	Unit Name	Number of Units
1	Region	26
2	Province	196
3	District	1,869