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Managing Influential Scientific Information (ISI) and Highly Influential Scientific Assessments (HISA)

IMPORTANT CONSIDERATION

What is Influential Scientific Information (ISI) and HISA?

The term “**influential scientific information**” means scientific information the agency reasonably can determine will have or does have a clear and substantial impact on important public policies [*both domestic and international*] or private sector decisions. In the term “influential scientific information,” the term “influential” should be interpreted consistently with OMB’s government-wide information quality guidelines and the information quality guidelines of the agency. Information dissemination can have a significant economic impact even if it is not part of a rulemaking. For instance, the economic viability of a technology can be influenced by the government’s characterization of its attributes. Alternatively, the federal government’s assessment of risk can directly or indirectly influence the response actions of state and local agencies or international bodies.

One type of scientific information is a scientific assessment. For the purposes of this Bulletin, the term “**scientific assessment**” means an evaluation of a body of scientific or technical knowledge, which typically synthesizes multiple factual inputs, data, models, assumptions, and/or applies best professional judgment to bridge uncertainties in the available information. These assessments include, but are not limited to, state-of-science reports; technology assessments; weight-of-evidence analyses; meta-analyses; health, safety, or ecological risk assessments; toxicological characterizations of substances; integrated assessment models; hazard determinations; or exposure assessments. Such assessments often draw upon knowledge from multiple disciplines. Typically, the data and models used in scientific assessments have already been subject to some form of peer review (e.g., refereed journal peer review or peer review under Section II of this Bulletin).

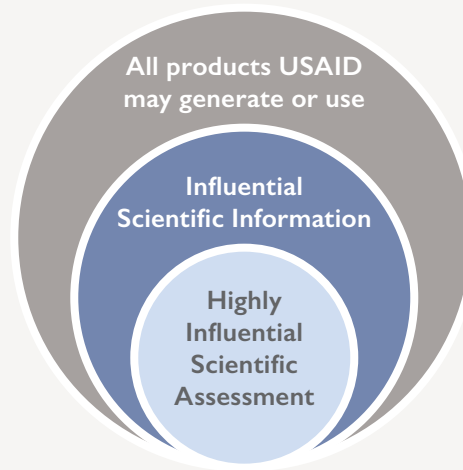
Generally, determinations whether a scientific and/or technical work product is “influential” will occur on a case-by-case basis. The continuum of work products covers the range from the obviously influential, which clearly need peer review, to those products which clearly are not influential and don’t need peer review. The majority of USAID’s work products fall in-between those two ends of the continuum and should be closely evaluated and assessed with respect to certain factors (see below). The Office Head or the Mission Director should make the judgment as to whether a work product is influential scientific information. There is no easy, single “yes/no” test that applies to the whole continuum of work products for determining whether a work product is influential scientific information. A useful rule of thumb is that if there is any doubt about whether a work product needs peer review, go ahead and subject it to peer review.

When scientific assessments meet the criteria of both influential and highly influential, it should be considered as highly influential.

When is information considered “influential”?

“Influential” when used in the phrase “influential scientific or statistical information” means the agency expects that information in the form of analytical results will likely have an important effect on the development of domestic or international government or private sector policies or will likely have important consequences for specific technologies, substances, products or firms. (https://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/fedreg_final_information_quality_guidelines/)

This diagram depicts the relation between all USAID work products and those considered Influential Scientific Information or Highly Influential Scientific Assessments.



CRITERIA/CHECKLIST FOR CATEGORIZING “INFLUENTIAL” PRODUCTS



Influential Scientific Information

- Establishes a significant precedent, model, or methodology;
- Likely to have an annual effect on the economy of \$100 million or more, or affect in a material way the economy, a sector of the economy, productivity, competition, jobs, the environment, public health or safety, or domestic, international governments or communities or policies;
- Addresses significant controversial issues;
- Focuses on significant emerging issues;
- Has significant cross-Agency/interagency implications;
- Involves a significant investment of Agency resources;
- Considers an innovative approach for a previously defined problem/process/methodology;

Highly Influential Scientific Assessment

OMB defines a scientific assessment as “an evaluation of a body of scientific or technical knowledge, which typically synthesizes multiple factual inputs, data, models, assumptions, and/or applies best professional judgment to bridge uncertainties in the available information”.

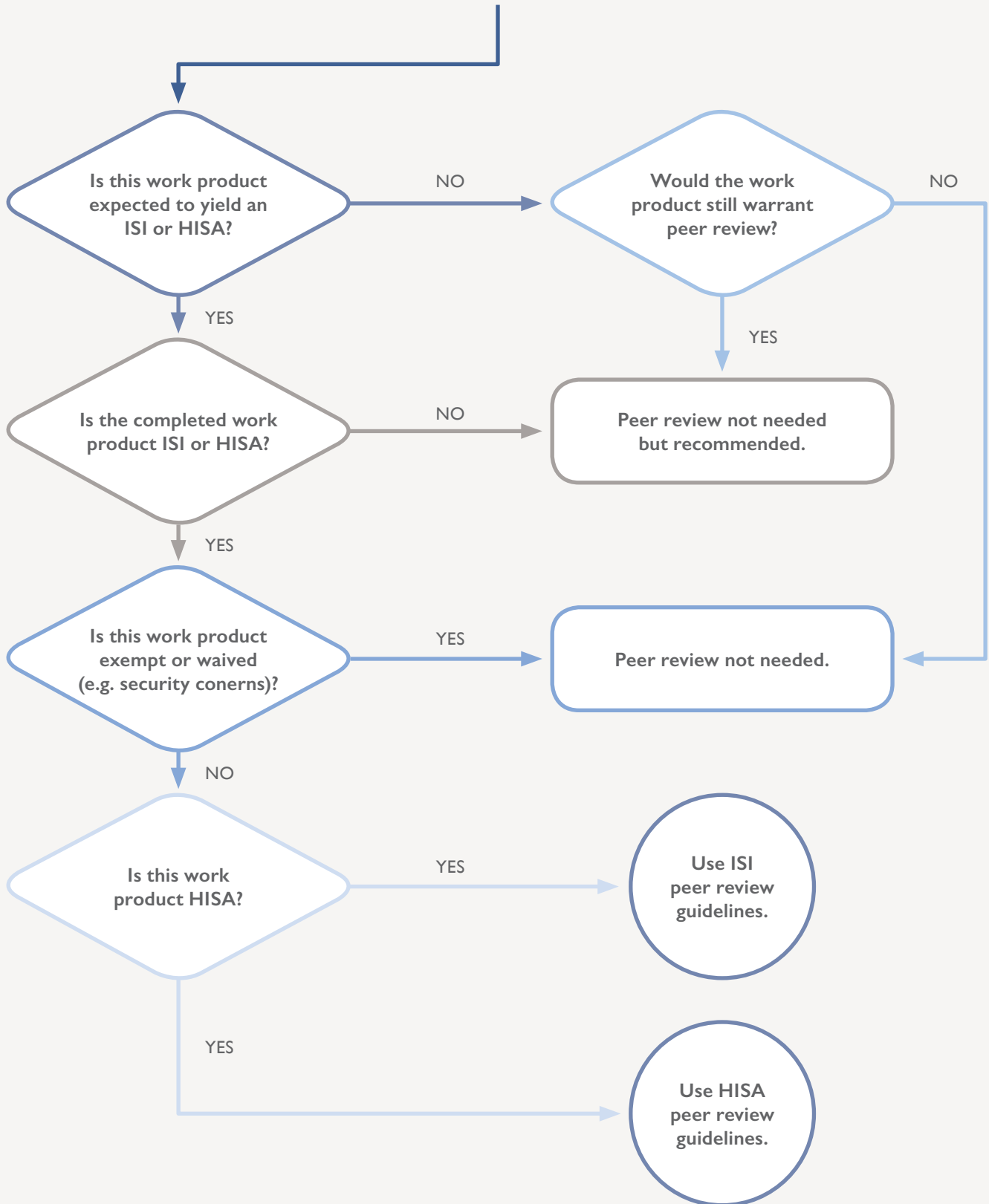
- Could have a potential impact of more than \$500 million in any year, or
- Is novel, controversial, or precedent-setting or has significant interagency interest.”

The OMB Bulletin includes the following examples of assessments that could be considered as HISAs:

- State-of-science reports;
- Technology assessments;
- Weight-of-evidence analyses;
- Meta-analyses;
- Health, safety, or ecological risk assessments;
- Toxicological characterizations of substances;
- Integrated assessment models;
- Hazard determinations;
- Exposure assessments.

PLANNING A PEER REVIEW PROCESS / FLOW CHART

Projects / Studies managed by AOR/COR



MANAGER'S PLANNING CHECKLIST FOR PEER REVIEW

1) Title of Work Product: _____

2) What Decision/Rule/Regulation/Action Does this Work Product Support: _____

3) Designation of Scientific and Technical Work Products

- Is the work product scientific or technical? ___ yes ___ no
- Is the work product: ___ influential scientific information (ISI),
 ___ highly influential scientific assessment (HISA), or
 ___ other? (see ADS 578 for an explanation of these terms).

4) Determining What Peer Review is Needed

- If ISI or HISA, peer review is needed. If not influential, is peer review still needed?
- What peer review mechanism is needed (internal and/or external)?
- When does the review need to be done?
- How much time will be needed to conduct/complete the review?
- Are there court ordered deadlines or other constraints?
- Has senior management (AA/MD/others) been informed of progress/problems?
- What would constitute success for this review?

5) Determining the Resources for Peer Review

- What is the priority of this project relative to other projects in the same office?
- What resources are needed to conduct the review?
- What are the impacts of the review on personnel?
- Who will lead the peer review?
- Who will conduct the peer review?
- Who will maintain the peer review record?
- Where will the peer review record be kept?
- What mechanism will be used for the peer review?
- Has the charge been developed?
- Has internal and external coordination been initiated/completed?
- Have arrangements for interim/final sign-offs (e.g., for the charge, the panel, on any changes to the final work product) been made?
- How will results of the review be presented and addressed in the final work product (e.g., in a preamble, in an accompanying appendix—as well as changes in the work product itself)?
- Has the work product been entered into the DDL and DEC?

6) Comments: _____
