

Department of State (State) Fiscal Year 2023 Agency Report

1. Please provide a summary of your agency’s activities undertaken to carry out the provisions of OMB Circular A-119, “Federal Participation in the Development and Use of Voluntary Consensus Standards and in Conformity Assessment Activities” and the National Technology Transfer and Advance Act (NTTAA). The summary should contain a link to the agency’s standards-specific website(s) where information about your agency’s standards and conformity assessment related activities are available.

The U.S. Department of State leads America’s foreign policy through diplomacy, advocacy, and assistance by advancing the interests of the American people, their safety and economic prosperity.

The Department recognizes that standards play an important part in achieving these objectives. Our standards policy, engagement with standards development organizations, and our use of standards within the agency supports the U.S. government’s standards policy, which recognizes the importance of voluntary consensus standards and gives weight to a flexible “bottom-up approach,” in which the needs of private industry and government agencies drive the choice in standards, rather than a “top-down” approach that may be unnecessarily restrictive.

The Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs

The Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs (EB) is the Department’s lead for international economic agreements, which shape the global rules of trade and investment and enable the United States to maintain a high rate of growth while fostering global prosperity, security, and opportunity. EB is the Department’s principal interface with all other economic agencies and provides the Secretary of State with a global perspective on economic and business issues; it leads on economic engagement with key strategic bilateral and multilateral partners; advises the Secretary on Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) grants and International Financial Institution (IFI) loans; leads the Department on international trade, transportation, and telecommunications policy; is responsible for the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), G-7, and G-20 engagements; and is one key agency for designing and implementing economic sanctions.

Every day, EB creates jobs at home, boosts economic opportunities overseas, and makes America more secure. EB promotes a strong American economy by leveling the playing field for American companies doing business in global markets, attracting foreign investors to create jobs in America, and deploying economic tools to deny financing to terrorists, human rights abusers, and corrupt officials. Economics has become the indispensable foreign policy tool of our time. Everything we do is to ensure that the United States remains the world’s strongest and most dynamic economy.

EB houses the Department’s Standards Executive. The Standards Executive coordinates standards policy within the Department, represents the Department on the Interagency Committee on Standards Policy (ICSP), and works with the interagency to evaluate and address domestic and international standards and technical regulations that may impact U.S. commitments in international bodies and trade agreements, or harm U.S. commercial interests.

Web site: [Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs - United States Department of State](https://www.economicaffairs.gov/)

The Bureau of Cyberspace and Digital Policy

The Bureau of Cyberspace and Digital Policy (CDP) leads and coordinates the Department's work on cyberspace and digital diplomacy to encourage responsible state behavior in cyberspace and advance policies that protect the integrity and security of the infrastructure of the Internet, serve U.S. interests, promote competitiveness, and uphold democratic values. CDP addresses the national security challenges, economic opportunities, and values considerations presented by cyberspace, digital technologies, and digital policy and promotes technology standards and norms that are fair, transparent, and support our values.

CDP's International Information and Communications Policy, Office of Multilateral Affairs (CDP/ICP/MA) leads delegations to International Telecommunication Union (ITU) international standards development meetings. The U.S. delegation is selected from the public and private sector and looks to facilitate the use and implementation of Voluntary Consensus Standards where reasonable and appropriate. The ITU, a specialized agency of the United Nations, is an intergovernmental organization in which 193 governments and over 900 non-governmental organizations and entities from the private sector cooperate.

The ITU is made up of three sectors: the Telecommunication Development (ITU-D) sector, the Telecommunication Standardization (ITU-T) sector, and the Radiocommunication (ITU-R) sector. Telecommunication standards are developed in the ITU-T sector. The resulting standards form the basis for much of the technical and policy aspects of international telecommunications and provide important input to the development of national regulatory policy.

As part of its engagement with the ITU, CDP/ICP/MA ensures new areas of standardization proposed by the ITU-T reflect the needs and interests of the U.S. public and private sector and are within the mandate of the ITU-T. CDP/ICP/MA coordinates development of the government's technical, policy, and regulatory positions based on advice provided by government agencies and U.S. industries. CDP/ICP/MA also encourages the participation of U.S. companies in these activities.

Web site: [Bureau of Cyberspace and Digital Policy - United States Department of State](#)

The Bureau of Overseas Building Operations

The Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations (OBO) directs the Department's worldwide overseas building program. Coordinating both internally and externally with other Federal agencies and industry groups, OBO delivers safe, secure, functional, and resilient facilities that represent the U.S. government to host nations worldwide and support the achievement of U.S. foreign policy objectives abroad.

In developing and maintaining the governing standards for design and construction, OBO adheres to the same strategy as many other Federal, State, and local agencies, which is to adopt model codes developed by industry organizations, and supplement or modify them only as required to reconcile unique needs and circumstances applicable to our remote projects overseas (e.g., enhanced security, logistical and maintainability limitations.) The Department of State has adopted the International Code Council (ICC) model building codes and the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) model codes and standards, including the National Electrical Code (NEC), as the basis for its codes, incorporating them into its contract standards by reference.

Likewise, functional design requirements and specifications defer to industry standards whenever possible. When OBO has specific requirements to suit OBO's unique mission, we follow Construction

Specification Institute standards and utilize templates common in the industry, such as MasterSpec by the American Institute of Architects, and the Unified Facilities Guide Specifications by the Department of Defense, both of which incorporate standards developed by common industry groups by reference. Using industry standards saves time for our private sector partners (e.g., architects, engineers, and contractors), because they are familiar and consistent with industry norms. At overseas locations, OBO strives to meet a variety of standards and attempts to identify local equivalents to provide a high degree of reliability and safety.

These codes and specifications are updated periodically. The Foreign Affairs Manual in provision 15 FAM 900 incorporates consensus standards into the overseas safety, health, and environmental management program. OBO also applies the Secure Embassy Construction and Counterterrorism Act (SECCA) statutory requirements and participates on the Overseas Security Policy Board (OSPB) as all agencies under Chief of Mission authority must comply with OSPB standards set forth in the classified section of the Foreign Affairs Handbook, 12 FAH-6.

Web site: [Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations - United States Department of State](#)

2. Please record any government-unique standards (GUS) your agency began using in lieu of voluntary consensus standards (VCS) during FY 2023. Please note, GUS which are still in effect from previous years should continue to be listed, and you do not need to report your agency's use of a GUS where no similar VCS exists.

Start by reviewing Table 1 (below): Current Government Unique Standards FY2023.

To add a new GUS, please include:

1. The name of the GUS;
2. The name(s) and version(s) of the VCS(s) that might have been used, but after review, found to be inappropriate;
3. A brief rationale on why the VCS(s) was not chosen.

To rescind a GUS, (if they are no longer in use or have been replaced by a voluntary consensus standard) please:

1. Cross out the standard from Table 1.
2. Add a 'Rationale for Rescinding' explaining why the standard was rescinded.

Please record below the total number of GUS currently in use. This number should include the previous total plus any new GUS added, and minus any GUS rescinded:

Current total GUS: 1

Table 1: Current Government Unique Standards FY2023

(1) Government Unique Standard

2023 OBO Design Standards (annual update, retitled OBO Project Standard Requirements going forward)

Rationale

The majority of the OBO Design Standards incorporate industry codes and standards (which are Voluntary Consensus Standards (VCS)) by reference to the degree they support OBO's mission. When it is necessary to amend, modify, or focus industry codes and standards to address unique considerations relevant to Department of State overseas facilities, the strategy of using "code supplements" is used to modify VCS model building codes is consistent with the practice of domestic state and local jurisdictions. It is also practical for the Department of State to further transform and standardize some VCS U.S. industry provisions into contractual requirements, which at the national level in the United States are addressed only as guidance for local jurisdictions; this is the case for some considerations related to zoning and utilities. Of the ten OBO Codes, all but one are supplements to VCS model codes. The OBO Telecommunications Code is considered a Government Unique Standard (GUS) because there are no VCS available suitable to reference for the broad requirements and contexts applicable to Department of State overseas facilities.