

# **USAID ALUMNI ASSOCIATION (UAA) – USAID MENTORING PROGRAM**

## **PERIODIC SURVEY**

**March 2021**

### **SUMMARY OF RESULTS**

#### **I. INTRODUCTION**

The UAA –USAID Mentoring Program has sent brief follow-up questionnaires to all mentors enrolled in the program in order to identify whether or not that year’s mentor-cohort has been approached by the mentee to begin sessions – this is one of the most crucial indicators of subsequent success because if a partnership does not get off the ground (launch) it cannot achieve its objectives of strengthening USAID leadership in the future. In March 2021, the Mentor lead conducted a brief survey of 72 mentors participating in the 2020-2021 cohort. Since some mentors had more than one mentee, this covered XX mentees. Fifty-nine mentors responded (82% response rate). In addition, while mentees were not contacted directly, two mentees provided unsolicited and overwhelmingly positive feedback on the Program.

#### **II. THE PROGRAM TO DATE**

2013: Based on results of a Pilot program that was launched in collaboration with the E&E Bureau in January 2013, agreement was reached to continue the Program, beginning with another E&E group in November 2013. Thirteen mentoring partnerships were identified for this program. Three partnerships never established an ongoing relationship. Of the remaining 10 partnerships, nine mentors and four mentees completed the survey. Many of the mentees have since moved on to other bureaus.

2014: The March 2014 program represented a significant expansion with participation of several bureaus in the Program. Working from mentee applicant profiles, 16 mentoring partnerships were identified. Most respondents to the survey were from this program. Five mentees were from Global Health, seven from LAC, and four from PPL/Asia. Three mentoring partnerships never got started for various reasons. Of the remaining 13 partnerships, three mentees were from Global Health, seven from LAC, and three from PPL/Asia. Seven pairs (both

mentor and mentee) completed the survey. Of the remaining six pairs, four mentors and one mentee responded.

2020/2021: For this year, over 92 USAID staff from across USAID (including AFR, Asia, GH, ME, LAC, SLG members, and Payne Alumni) applied for UAA mentors. E&E did not participate since a Bureau Coordinator was not identified and most central Bureaus did not participate given the extensive reorganization efforts that characterized USAID/Washington in 2020. Mentees were posted primarily overseas but also included those new Payne Alumni who began their careers with a Washington DC assignment.

Finding so many new Mentors for this year was a challenge. Finding the first 40 or so was straight-forward since members were ready volunteers. Getting closer to 90 required new ways of 'beating the bushes' to generate new Mentors, including repeatedly approaching members who ever participated in the program, using current members to actively recruit friends for the program, targeting recruitment to meet specific backstop or characteristic requests, and asking current Mentors to take on additional Mentees. This last approach was particularly challenging since many Mentors continue to mentor two or more staff from earlier cohorts. The Mentor cohort continued to expand globally, with Mentors hailing from Asia, Europe, and Latin America as well as across the US.

Nonetheless, given the exceptional demand among USAID staff for UAA mentors, the UAA Mentoring Program team used varying techniques to allocate scarce mentors. These techniques included:

- Firm deadlines for participation
- Asking Bureau Coordinators to identify mentees of highest priority for the Bureau
- Clarifying to potential mentees seeking a mentor solely to help prepare annual evaluation documents (AAR, etc) was a disqualifying reason
- Clarifying to potential mentees that UAA mentors were there to assist career development not transition to a different career or employer

In all, 72 members volunteered to become Mentors for 78 Mentees. Of the 78 Mentees, 12 were new SLG members and five were 2020 Payne Alumni.

On-line Mentor training took place in mid-December with an on-line follow-up session in mid-January for those unable to join the December event. The quick survey was sent out in early March to solicit information on two main issues: whether the mentor-mentee partnership had successfully 'launched' and whether an additional on-line session would be useful to Mentors.

### **III. SUMMARY OF RESPONSES TO SURVEY QUESTIONS**

#### **QUESTION 1: Has your Mentor-Mentee Partnership begun**

The majority of Mentors responded (59 of 72 or 82%). Of these, 53 (90% of ) Mentors indicated that the Partnership had begun. For those six, the MP team reached out to mentees (this is a mentee-driven program and the first approach is made by the mentee) to determine whether they remained interested in the program. Three FSOs indicated that they were interested in continuing and have set up meetings while three remain 'lost.'

Of those lost FSOs, two are 2020 Payne Alumni, representing 40% of this year's alumni cohort.

#### **QUESTION 2: How often have you met with your Mentee?**

Of the 53 Mentors who reported a successfully launched Partnership, 32 (60%) indicated having met three or more sessions while the remaining 21 (40%) reported meeting once or twice.

#### **QUESTION 3: Are you interested in another on-line get together and if so, what would you want to discuss**

Just 29 (55%) Mentors responded to this question. Of those, five; and the remainder (17%) said no follow-on session was required; 15 (52%) indicated they would like an additional session giving ideas of topics for discussion; the remaining nine (31%) indicated they would join a session if offered but made no suggestions on topics. For those indicating a preference for topics to discuss, the most frequently mentioned topics included what are the new administration's priorities? what's happening with ADS and policy updates? what is the new evaluation system all about and what has been the Agency's experience with it so far?

#### **Other Issues Raised:**

One remaining issue was raised by many Mentors: they wanted to understand whether Mentees were finding the sessions useful. They wanted survey results of mentees to better understand whether they were being effective and how they could be more useful to Mentees.

### **IV. CONCLUSIONS**

#### **General**

Data indicates that the 2020/2021 program is well launched. Feedback from non-respondents would be important, but the response rate to the brief survey was high and the results promising. Nonetheless, a few things are clear: a better understanding of why certain

partnerships do not launch, particularly among Payne Alumni, is important; general feedback from Mentees is essential to ensure mentoring is meeting needs; growing the Program more or faster will require a different approach, perhaps through targeted sub-programs; periodic on-line sessions to develop skills, familiarity with USAID changes, and camaraderie and commitment among Mentors is important. Finally, quick annual surveys of Mentors and Mentees should become a hallmark of the Program.