



Future Options for the USAID Alumni Association (UAA)

The purposes of the USAID Alumni Association, as set out in its Articles of Association, are:

- To harness the experience and expertise of the USAID alumni community for the purpose of providing sound and timely professional counsel and public education in support of U.S. foreign assistance to promote effective international development;
- To serve as an independent voice to support USAID and its development mission by facilitating professional development and the exchange of knowledge related to the effective use of foreign assistance;
- To foster a network of former USAID employees who wish to utilize their public service skills to promote international development in their current communities; and
- To provide opportunities for social interaction among the members.

The UAA now confronts a reality not previously imagined - the elimination of our cherished USAID. This fundamental change compels a reexamination of the Association's purposes. At the same time, membership in the Association in 2025 has rapidly increased and now exceeds 850, double that of last year.

The challenges to sustainable economic, social, and political development remain. What has changed is the readiness of the United States – and many other traditional donor countries – to finance the efforts needed to help poor and middle-income countries overcome extreme poverty, widespread disease, lack of economic opportunity, a deteriorating climate, inadequate institutions of governance and participation, and persistent conflict and fragility.

The UAA faces a need to adapt its strategies, activities, organizational structure, and modus operandi in a manner that will meet the expectations of all its members and respond to the continuing challenges to development in light of the new realities. The UAA Board is committed to developing a new strategic plan to address these issues with active participation of members, particularly new ones. The Board will lead a session at the October 31 AGM to discuss the Association's future, and this will initiate the process of collectively defining and beginning to implement the changes that are required.

Many members of our all-volunteer organization have expressed their wish to remain actively engaged in furthering the purposes that the UAA was created to serve in these changed circumstances. The rapid growth in our membership offers us new opportunities. UAA members will need to determine what can and cannot be done.



In a seventy minute session, we will only be able to initiate the discussion of these critical topics, but the ideas expressed by the members will help guide us in developing a new strategic plan for the UAA. There will be many opportunities for members to contribute to this process. The following are examples of topics that could be discussed at the meeting:

- Which are the highest priority activities for the UAA to support during 2026 and future years?
- What paths remain open to affect public opinion and political support for a continued United States role in addressing critical international development challenges?
- As a small organization, should the UAA join with and support larger organizations in coalitions pursuing its objectives, including public outreach to generate support for international development? How can the UAA collaborate with other organizations formed in the immediate aftermath of USAID's demise, e.g., the Aid Transition Alliance (ATA) and OneAID. Should the UAA consider formal legal links -- or even a merger of one or more of these organizations?
- The UAA presently has nine operating committees, and the activities of many are limited by small committee membership.
 - o Can the new members help reinvigorate and expand participation in the UAA committees, to help implement a new UAA Strategic Plan?
 - o What committees will be needed to manage the changed activities of the UAA?
- An ad hoc committee was formed to create the USAID Staff Support Fund; if the UAA wants to be more of an activist organization, how will this fit with the committee structure?
- How can the UAA's support for preservation of USAID's legacy be expanded with the involvement of its new members?
- The UAA is registered with the IRS as a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization and is prohibited from political lobbying. Should UAA become more active as an advocacy organization? If so, how best to do so? Should the UAA either (1) create a related advocacy organization or subsidiary or (2) undertake a change in its legal status to become a 501(c)(4) tax-exempt organization that would enable it to engage broadly in advocacy (including with Congress in support of legislation and funding) for international development? If UAA were to become a 501(c)(4) organization, contributions to the Association would no longer be tax deductible.



UAA Listening Sessions September 18, 2025

The UAA scheduled listening sessions with new members to learn their perspectives on priority activities for the UAA, and their concerns. Here are examples of their comments.

- Thinking about future of assistance is a big deal. Can UAA members' unique experiences be applied? Can UAA develop a consensus position? How best to advance the dialogue with the experience of practitioners?
- How do we make our knowledge and lessons learned available longer term? Working groups and papers are valuable, but only if they are directed to the right target audiences. Only then can we be influential.
- Connectivity, even social cohesion, is important. Loss of commitment and coherence is hard -- for many, their heart and identity is still tied up with USAID.
- Need to look at the criticisms of aid, including the inattention to sustainability. We left too many DG institutions high and dry without sufficient funding alternatives, too dependent on USAID.
- Reminder that USAID is more than FSOs; need to listen to all categories of employees.
- Natsios noted that it is irrelevant how much money is appropriated if there are no people to implement programs. State needs help figuring out how to move forward. Can UAA help with this?
- UAA is more important now than ever before. Former officers want to maintain a community, work on things together and engage in rethinking foreign aid.
- Many RIFed staff have no security, and therefore remaining part of a group is important to us. Also, we are job hunting in a very bad job market and need advice from those who retired from USAID and went on to have other careers.
- One of USAID's weaknesses was lack of domestic support for its programs based on lack of knowledge about what USAID actually did.
- Employers in the U.S. need to understand how the skills of former USAID staff can be useful and important for jobs in the private or public sectors.
- Many former USAID employees would like to write about their experiences in development, and we need to find a good way of capturing those lessons.
- We failed to communicate our role, especially USAID's impact on US local businesses and farmers, how USAID was impacting them in a positive way.
- FSNs should be included and supported; large numbers of people and families were affected.
- We have a role to play in what foreign assistance 2.0 should look like and engage with members of Congress.
- Can USAID's work on climate change be preserved and maintained?
- Importance of both social and professional gatherings and opportunities to see and meet people.