

Florida's USAID Alumni Caucus

At the iconic St. Petersburg Yacht Club, located downtown on the shores of Tampa Bay, the newly renamed Foreign Service Alumni Association (FSAA) held its Annual General Meeting on January 16. Over sixty of its former FSO members from across the state of Florida, with many of our colleagues from Sarasota, St. Pete-Tampa and its suburbs welcomed some new faces and got together to catch up on a tumultuous 2025. The meeting included as our guest speaker, John Dinkelman, AFSA's President who shared some of his poignant experiences since being elected, facing off against the new Administration at a time of anxiety for the nation, less use of development and diplomacy in the management of America's foreign affairs and the abrupt shedding of its Federal merit-based, non-partisan workforce.

FSAA's new name, modeled after that of its partner- the USAID Alumni Association- has also experienced an influx of new members, not necessarily retired, but refugees from last year's Reduction in Force, unprecedented downsizing including early buyouts and politicization of the federal government to advance its America First agenda. Our partnership between USAID's alumni in Florida and those from the other foreign affairs agencies has resulted in a growing number of development professionals attending FSAA meetings, and a continuation of a side-meeting, usually after the luncheon, of a group of USAID alumni in which our friends from CA, the DMV, and elsewhere join us via Zoom.

Our hour and a half discussion after lunch focused on actions being taken in Congress to appropriate funds for the remainder of this fiscal year and next that are aimed hopefully at restoring some of the drastic cuts experienced in 2025 and rebuilding capacities to plan, design and implement some of the lifesaving foreign assistance programs that also promote our values, American security and prosperity as has been the case in previous decades. As we have in past such discussions, we shared the progress being made to organize and stand up regional chapters of UAA starting with Florida and California's ongoing efforts, and identify opportunities to strengthen and grow our networks of development professionals and reach out with the help of like-minded partner organizations to other Americans to rebuild support for future American leadership on global development issues.