

USAID hires contractors — but bars ex-USAID staff. By Helen Murphy, Devex Newswire, 30 Jan 2026

The Trump administration is hiring new contractors to shut down USAID — while explicitly banning anyone with prior USAID experience. Critics say it's costly, inefficient, and proof that dismantling an agency is harder than its architects expected.

Closeout, minus experts

The officials overseeing the shutdown of what remains of USAID are hiring more contractors to finish the job — just not anyone who's actually worked there before.

An internal “activity memo” obtained by Devex explains the logic behind the ban, even as Trump administration officials continue to insist the agency is “dead and gone.” “By recruiting a fresh workforce, the Agency aims to avoid the risk of impaired objectivity,” the memo says, arguing that **former staff might struggle to objectively dismantle the systems** they once ran.

The memo came from **Matthew Dickinson**, the agency’s “chief terminations officer,” and was sent to **Eric Ueland**, who is “performing the duties of administrator and chief operating officer.” Dated Jan. 7, it asks to “preclud[e] the new contractor from hiring anyone with previous USAID experience.” Ueland signed off two days later, and a Jan. 16 “Request for Quote” restates the rule in black and white.

The resulting “Institutional Support for USAID Closeout Contract” **comes with a \$199 million ceiling** and a \$6.7 million initial obligation, with a base period running until March 7. That also happens to be around when the remaining several dozen foreign service and civil service officers are expected to be cut, according to **Randy Chester**, the USAID vice president at the American Foreign Service Association.

Chester was unimpressed. He calls the move “**further proof of the incompetence of the people** running the show now.” “If you want people who are experts in the field to do something that’s required, you hire those experts,” he says, dismissing concerns about objectivity as “complete bunk.” “I can’t imagine being there and being told, ‘I don’t trust you.’”

A former senior USAID official was even blunter, saying the episode shows “it is harder to actually close an agency than Project 2025 and MAGA folks ever understood.” “**DOGE was a massive failure**,” the official adds. “**Spending will go on for years**, and the worst part is that the spending won’t accomplish anything.” The State Department declined to comment. USAID’s press office no longer exists.

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