

USAID Alumni Association Candidate Statements 2026: Two Vacancies

Alexious Butler



I respectfully nominate myself for election to the USAID Alumni Association Board of Directors.

Throughout my career, I have led international development programs across Africa, the Caribbean, South Asia, and the Middle East. Working with host governments, multilateral institutions, civil society organizations, and local communities, I have managed large-scale portfolios, built high-performing teams, and advanced sustainable solutions in challenging operating environments.

Today, I remain deeply engaged in advancing the field of international development. I am currently teaching global development and international affairs, helping prepare the next generation of practitioners and leaders. I recently authored a chapter examining the leadership of African American women at USAID, reflecting my continuing commitment to preserving and interpreting the history of our profession. I also serve as a policy advisor to the Alliance for

American Leadership, where I support efforts to strengthen U.S. global engagement and advocate for an independent agency dedicated to the effective implementation of foreign assistance.

During this ongoing period of uncertainty for the broader development community, I believe the UAA has a critical role to play in preserving institutional knowledge, supporting former USAID professionals, and contributing to thoughtful discussions about the future of development. As a Board member, I would work to expand member engagement, elevate the expertise of USAID alumni, and help ensure that the lessons, values, and impact of the USAID community continue to inform future generations of practitioners and policymakers.

Margaret Ennis Spears (awaiting statement)

Lela Kerashvili

I served at USAID/Georgia for over 20 years as a Senior Development Assistance and Project Management Lead in the Strategy and Program Office. Prior to USAID, I was the Deputy Country Director for World Vision and Director of Grants & Compliance for a four-year USAID-funded Community Mobilization Initiative with Mercy Corps.

Throughout my career, I have demonstrated commitment, leadership, and significant contributions to U.S. missions in Georgia, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Burma, serving on 2–4-month TDYs. These assignments primarily involved working with Foreign Service Nationals (FSNs) and training them to independently manage U.S. Government processes. Following the closure of USAID/Georgia, I have been working for an international NGO in Kyiv on humanitarian programs.

For many years, I have been an active member of the USAID FSN Committee, the joint USAID–State Department FSN Committee, and the Global FSN Advocacy Council, where I served from 2019 to 2021. In these roles, I worked on FSN-related issues both locally and globally, helping achieve tangible improvements to Georgia's Local Compensation Plan while also contributing to efforts to strengthen the status of FSNs worldwide.

During the closure of USAID missions, I was one of the FSN advocates for the fair treatment of FSNs, including serving as one of the drafters of the letter to Secretary Rubio, signed by more than 1,700 FSNs worldwide, requesting fair severance pay for all FSNs.

I have been pleased to maintain close contact with the UAA's FSN Working Group and have been invited to participate in its meetings, where I shared the FSN perspective on critical issues, served as a liaison to FSNs throughout the region and around the world, and helped engage other former FSNs. For additional information about my qualifications, you may contact Mary Alice Kleinjan or any of the members of the UAA's FSN Working Group, including Irene Koek, Diana Putman, Mike Trott, Rosemarie Depp, and Joy Riggs-Perla.

I am a recipient of two U.S. Government-funded educational awards: one to pursue a Master's degree in Public Administration at New York University, and another, ten years earlier, as a member of one of the first exchange student groups to travel to the United States. I attended Amherst College from 1988 to 1989, during the final years of the Soviet Union. The time difference between Eastern Time and Eastern European Time will allow me to actively participate in UAA Board activities, as evenings in Kyiv coincide with midday in Washington, D.C.

Cheryl “Cherie” Klein



Even before July 1, 2025, my last day as a USAID employee, I understood the importance of community, solidarity of purpose, mutual support, collective action, and the role each of us has in building the world we want to see. To that end, I am expressing my sincere interest in putting my competencies, perspectives, time, and effort to good use as a USAID Alumni Association (UAA) board member at this critical post-USAID juncture for the UAA, foreign assistance workers, and U.S. foreign assistance. As a UAA board member, I would apply what I've learned in the past year and a half as a co-founder and co-leader of Our USAID Community about organizing, building and sustaining a diverse community, and empowering people to participate in efforts to work together to advance their interests and the interests of others.

My natural curiosity and openness to different perspectives, focus on and commitment to building inclusive communities, and rock-solid belief in the importance and value of robust, effective foreign assistance programs supported by a non-partisan, merit-based workforce that reflects all the best American ideals, position me to be a successful UAA board member. Supporting the accountability and justice efforts of former USAID colleagues over the past year and a half has led me to realize that I could contribute more broadly to the interests of UAA members. It has also reinforced for me that connecting the work of the different groups benefits all alumni. I am eager to join with other UAA board members, former USAID colleagues of all hiring categories, and future foreign assistance workers to meet this new moment and build a stronger, more inclusive UAA moving forward.

I hope my colleagues will support me in my endeavor to serve as a UAA board member so that I can continue contributing my expertise and attention to be an apolitical voice for all USAID alumni, to harness alumni knowledge and skills to educate the public about the importance of robust, effective foreign assistance and its workforce, and to enhance our UAA community to uplift and support each other through opportunities to engage and interact.

Nitin Madhav



I wanted to work for USAID long before I actually worked for the Agency – because the Mission aligned with my personal values. Over the almost three decades that I worked at the Agency, I worked in a variety of roles and across programmatic sectors. I represented the Agency at broad ranging fora from very specialized technical issues to the development of U.S. foreign policy.

Moving forward, I would welcome an opportunity to serve on the UAA Board for a few reasons:

1. We need more advocacy. People relate to the passion we felt as employees for the work that we did. We need to talk about the impact we made better.
2. We are a repository of the knowledge, experience and expertise of USAID's work which

will be needed if there's an opportunity to reconstruct the U.S. Government's foreign assistance programs.

3. We need a better strategy against misinformation. The Agency has always been a target of misinformation programs. Not addressing this vigorously was a cause of our downfall.

4. Civil servants are underrepresented in any conversation about USAID. While the Foreign Service officers were the "face" of the Agency overseas, the Civil Service kept things moving in Washington.

It's for these reasons that I would like to be considered to serve on the Board for the UAA. Thank you.

Andrew Plitt

I joined UAA shortly after my forced retirement from USAID in September 2025 following 35 years of service. I seek to join the UAA board to increase the representation of those who directly endured the trauma of the 2025 USAID dismantling. I stayed on at USAID through September to help guide as humane an off-boarding as possible for the Washington and overseas staff given the cruelty and incompetence of the political leadership that was tearing down the agency. I believe there is value in having borne witness to the destruction and the related grieving that can be brought to bear on the way forward for UAA. I am fully supportive of the current board and its committees, and my priorities if I elected to the board would be 1) to ensure maximum resource and efforts towards Peer Support—to help those USAID and partner staff who struggle to find work and recover from the disruption; 2) to leverage UAA member expertise in the public

discourse on the future of international development and foreign assistance; and 3) strengthen UAA linkages to the network of organizations (OUC, OneAid, AOTH, etc) that have arisen to address the moment we are living through as development professionals and U.S. citizens. I left USAID as SFS Minister Counselor (awaiting Senate confirmations of promotion to Career Minister and to serve as Assistant Administrator for the Middle East) and will endeavor to use my varied skills and contacts to advance UAA causes across all committees and activities.

Jeanne Pryor

I had over 35 years at USAID, starting as a GS-7 and rising to the Senior Executive Service. Over this time, I worked on the most challenging foreign policy priorities of the U.S. (Afghanistan, Iraq, ISIS fight, COVID, Gaza). With the devastation of USAID last year, the UAA became a lifeline for me as I struggled with the trauma of what happened. The UAA's work truly inspired me in a very difficult time. I now want to pay it back. What I bring to the table is substantial experience working with the Hill, communicating in ways average Americans can understand whether through public speaking or the media, and extensive friendships and contacts across all USAID hiring mechanisms. There is a mistaken impression amongst non-FS hiring mechanisms that the UAA is only FS. I want to turn that narrative around and bring in additional USAID colleagues. The UAA is playing a critical role in advocacy and education on international development, knowledge preservation and learning to inform the next generation of foreign assistance, and support for our traumatized colleagues. I hope to contribute my abilities to further these important efforts. Thank you for your consideration.

William (Bill) Schaedla

Greetings fellow alumni! Many thanks for the chance to tell you about myself. I am a longtime - albeit intermittent - resident of the American Southwest who maintains a home in the doggy/horsey Village of Corrales, New Mexico. From this sanctuary on the Rio Grande, I currently serve as the State's Environmental Health Director. In my USAID life, I was an FSO Program Officer, coordinating activities in South Africa, Nigeria, Ethiopia, and Djibouti. I did a stint with supporting Power Africa's sub-Saharan energy security efforts. I also contributed to agency-wide initiatives, including the Climate Change Leadership Council. Before this, I worked with the Department of Interior as a professor at the Native-serving Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute and held senior positions with the World Wildlife Fund, TRAFFIC, FREELAND, and WildAid. I was a Fulbrighter and Peace Corps Volunteer on the Thai-Burmese border in the early 1990s.

I have also held governance and advisory roles with nonprofit, academic, and professional organizations in the Americas, Asia, and Africa. Among other things, I have been Board Chair to the American Community Association in Addis Ababa, a board member to the American International School of Johannesburg, a council member to the Siam Society, and an advisor to Thailand's Foundation for Environment and Education.

Like many of us, I'm a "Twenty-Fiver." My career and life plans shifted radically when the administration took a hatchet to U.S. Foreign Assistance. I realize the devastation has likewise affected the post-career calculus of our retired alumni. Correspondingly, I hope to hear what all of you think UAA's priorities should be. I have ideas, but it goes without saying that good development is participatory. As a Board member, listening and following up on collective ideas and needs will be my top priority.

Curt Wolters

Greetings.

I was a USAID contractor from 1976 through 1979, and was direct-hired in the field (USAID/Liberia) as Program Economist in 1980. I received my FSO Commission in 1984. I retired from USAID at the 'designated age' of 65, after having served in Africa, the Middle East, South and Central Asia, and at AID/W, where my last position was Desk Officer for the West Bank and Gaza.

In the course of events I also became Supervisory Program Officer and Deputy Mission Director, and received the Meritorious Honor Award and the Superior Honor Award. I am FSI-certified in five languages.

Ten years after retirement I was re-recruited by USAID and served for a year as Regional Economist in Southeast Afghanistan, based in Kandahar. Subsequently I worked for two years as Energy Economist at USAID in Islamabad. Prior international development work was with the International Division of the Ford Foundation where, in its West Africa regional office, where for six years I progressed from Program Assistant to Program Advisor in the Social Sciences. This also involved program oversight responsibilities in seven West and Central African countries. As for 'boardmanship', I was an elected (parents, teachers, staff) school board member of the British International School in Liberia and the American International School in Pakistan for a total of seven years.

I assume that my professional experience and varied career aspects qualify me to serve as UAA Board Member. I am a decorated US Air Force veteran and 88 years young.