

2017 UAA Membership Survey – Report on Results

The USAID Alumni Association sent an email to all 957 registered members in its Constant Contact database in early January 2017 with links to the Annual Membership Survey. There were responses from 88 members, a 9% response rate. The number of respondents has fluctuated over the years, as follows:

Year	# responses	% change
2014	124	
2015	45	-64%
2016	94	109%
2017	88	-6%

The response rate in 2017 was 9.2% of registered members, a small decrease from the 10.3% response rate in the 2016. The proportion of responses from the Washington, DC metropolitan area has leveled off, after decreasing from the prior years: 49% in 2017 and 2016 vs. 53% in 2015 and 63% in 2014, with corresponding increases in respondents from outside the DC area.

Questions focused on the UAA newsletter; UAA website; UAA 2016 events in the DC area; opportunities outside the DC area; public speaking on international development; UAA mentoring program; reasons for not continuing to contribute; interest in participation in UAA activities related to our goals; and other ideas for UAA activities. This report is organized according to these categories.

Overall, the tenor of comments was positive and constructive, reflecting a high level of participation by those who are engaged with the organization.

UAA Newsletter

Of respondents to the survey, 76% read the newsletter, an increase over 67% in 2016; another 18% sometimes read it; with 5% not responding or not reading it. Upcoming Events, Alumni Profiles and News were each favorites of 54-72% of the 82 respondents to this question, with Event Recaps and Committee Updates favored by 33-39%.

Among the 20 who identified another newsletter feature as their favorite, 80% (16 persons) indicated that it is the In Memoriam section. Four, or 20%, favor book reviews or book group; and two each indicated the job/volunteer opportunities and the Where in the World feature showing USAID staff transfers and promotions.

The principal ideas for other topics to be covered in the newsletter are news about what's happening at USAID, both in terms of policies and programs, (7 mentions total), as well as news that will affect USAID with 3 mentions. There were two

suggestion that updates from multiple members be featured, as an alternate to the more detailed profile now provided in each issue.

UAA Website

Consistent with 2014 and 2016, about 80% of the 2017 respondents “often” or “sometimes” look at the website – with the preponderance in the “sometimes” category. This has dropped from 2015, when almost 90% of respondents often or sometimes looked at the website.

Respondents are most interested in news about colleagues—the Alumni Directory, Tributes (obituaries), and UAA news were the best-liked features on the website. In addition, Development links, USAID Staff Movements, and the UAA Calendar each garnered over 40% respondents’ designations as favorites, consistent with last year. There were recommendations for the website to include profiles of alums outside DC, information about work being done by alums, USAID public webinars, USAID priorities, publications regarding USAID and development assistance, and frank exchanges on development issues.

UAA 2016 Events

Forty-four percent of respondents indicated they participated in UAA events during the prior year; 51% did not, and 5% did not respond. This is essentially the same as in 2016, possibly reflecting the stability in the proportion of respondents from the DC area.

Among those able to attend events in person, the Annual General Meeting and the DACOR Development Dialogues were ranked as being of the highest interest by a considerable margin; 94% and 83%, respectively, were ranked 4 or 5, the two highest rankings, which is consistent with prior years’ surveys. Other events received ratings of 4 or 5 for a substantial number of respondents: 65% for the Spring Reception (an increase of 20 percentage points), 46% for Winterfest (6 percentage point increase), and 43% for the Summer Picnic. The event of “least interest” continues to be the Summer Picnic – 18% indicated it was of no interest, but this was a decrease from 26% who so rated it in 2016, and the 20% who so rated it in 2015 and 2014.

Among the 37 respondents (of the 43 in the DC area) to the question of what were the two most important factors in decisions to attend UAA events, the topic was mentioned by 86% of 2017 respondents, a notable increase from 59% of 2016 respondents and the 75-76% of respondents in 2014 and 2015. In 2017, the opportunity to see friends was one of the two most important factors in deciding to attend an event for 43% of respondents, an increase over the 35% who cited it in 2016. Location was mentioned by 32% of respondents in 2017 compared to 51% in 2016 and 43% in 2015. All other factors were cited by fewer than 20% of respondents in 2017.

Opportunities outside DC area

Of the 41 respondents who live outside the DC area and the 7 who did not attend UAA events, 33% have listened to or viewed presentations or discussions posted on the website, compared to 31% of the 54 who lived outside the DC area or did not attend in 2016 survey, and the 23% of the 30 who lived outside DC area or did not attend events in the 2015 survey. Comments on this question ranged from 3 who mentioned specific events they'd looked at on the website, 2 each who find themselves too busy to do so and who dislike webinars, and one who was not aware that this option is available.

Five of the 41 respondents living outside the DC area, or 12%, are interested in organizing UAA event(s) in their areas, compared to 7 of 47, or 16% last year. An additional 17 respondents living outside DC, or 41%, responded that they'd maybe be willing to help to organize a UAA event in their area, compared to 16, or 36% last year. There were more answers to this question than respondents who reported living outside the DC area, weakening the comparison with earlier years.

Among the 24 comments about this question, 6 were concerned that there were too few USAID alumni locally to organize an event, 6 offered contact information in order to help organize such events, and 4 described ideas for events (past or future) or what groups to seek out. In addition one asked what was meant by a UAA event, and one indicated interest in attending, but not organizing such an event. (The other 6 indicated the question was not relevant, mostly because they are from the DC area.)

Public Speaking/Training/Mentoring Program

A similar proportion of this year's respondents, 41/88, or 47%, expressed interest in speaking publicly about international development compared to last year's 48%. With only 8% not responding to this question, 45% are not interested, more than last year's 39%. Of the 41 interested in speaking, 33, or 80%, indicated a willingness to participate in person or virtually in a training program by USAID/LPA on the use of its public affairs manual.

We added a question this year about willingness to participate in the UAA-USAID Mentoring program in 2017 or beyond; 20 respondents, or 54% of those who answered this question, indicated that they are interested in participating. (We have no explanation of why 51 respondents did not reply to this question.)

Reasons for Not Continuing to Contribute

Another new question this year asked those who contributed in 2015, but not 2016, what the primary reason was. Of the 17 respondents who answered, 8 (47%) indicated they forgot or didn't realize they had not contributed in 2016. Two

indicated that membership did not meet their expectations, and 7 indicated it was for other reasons. They were asked to elaborate, and two mentioned high costs and low ability to participate, and one indicated that s/he let her/his membership lapse. The other 4 indicated that the question did not apply to them.

Participation in Priority UAA Activities.

Interest in participating in the work of UAA committees was significant—29 out of 88 respondents indicated interest in at least one committee and provided a name and contact information, although 2 went on to say that they couldn't participate this year. Individual UAA committees are reviewing the expressions of interest and will be contacting respondents directly.

The activities with the highest expressions of interest were:

- Goal 1, Oral History,
- Goal 1, Public Speaking,
- Goal 2, USAID History,
- Goal 3, Mentoring Program, and
- Goal 4, Sessions on development issues or USAID policy.

Others Comments and Recommendations

There were 13 responses to the question about additional activities for UAA, covering a very wide range of topics. Committees will review all comments and suggestions for potential action or response.

Those comments which related to UAA's interaction with others outside our association included:

- Increase direct interaction with USAID staff to strengthen USAID and so we can learn from them;
- Encourage students and young professionals to enter the field of development; and
- Create and maintain a USAID Wikipedia entry.

Other comments related more to our own activities and included:

- Support social activities by the UAA;
- Organize debates on development issues among alumni, because we do not all have the same opinions;
- Provide training for alumni on new Agency policies and processes, to enable us to stay fresh and involved;
- Integrate ex-FSNs effectively into UAA; and
- Collect information about what alumni consider their biggest career successes at USAID.