FINAL REPORT

UAA-USAID E&E Bureau Pilot Mentor Program

UAA-USAID Team Evaluation Report

June 27, 2013

I.   Introduction

This evaluation report assesses the U.S Agency for International Development Europe and Eurasia Bureau (USAID E&E)-USAID Alumni Association (UAA) Pilot Mentor program which lasted for approximately four months, beginning in late January and ending in May 2013. This Pilot Program was based on a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) which outlines the objectives and responsibilities of each of the parties. (see attached MOU signed on Sept. 5, 2012). The MOU remains in effect until December 2014.

The Pilot Mentor program serves the larger USAID Forward's "Talent Management" objective of providing a mentoring program for 200 FSOs by the end of 2014. As stated in the MOU, "This Pilot Program intends to address the Agency's need by matching junior officers with USAID Alumni. These USAID alumni will provide *coaching* and feedback to FSOs on *defined projects and tasks."* (Italics added)

The MOU also calls for an evaluation to "draw out lessons learned that are applicable to USAID career development programs beyond the E & E Bureau." This evaluation report fulfills that expectation.

II.   Brief Description of the Program Model and Hypothesis.

For the Pilot Program, an initial pool of 10-15 Mentor-Mentee relationships was to be established, with the USAID E & E Bureau responsible for selecting the Mentees. UAA would propose a list of potential Mentors from which E & E would make the final selection. Selection of Mentors would be sensitive to the need to avoid risks or appearance of conflicts of interest, as many alumni continue their development work as consultants or work for consulting services organizations that do business with USAID.

The E& E Bureau would also participate in Pilot Program Mentor and Mentee training, provide monitoring and evaluation guidance, and participate in reviewing the monitoring and evaluation reports, "including identification of areas for adjustment and improvement." USAID HR Training Director Andrew Maybrook provided a one day training and orientation to mentoring to UAA Mentors, with assistance from UAA members Jerry Wood and Pamela Mandel. Maybrook also held telephone orientation sessions with all overseas Mentees, lasting about one and one half hours each.

In selecting Mentors, UAA undertook to find alumni whose background and experience would match selected Mentee needs, and who would commit an average 3-6 hours per week. As reported by UAA member Pamela Mandel, an effort was made to have a diverse array of substantive experts to be Mentors, with the expectation that Mentees would be matched up with Mentors based on specific areas of mutual interest, i.e., private sector officers would want to be mentored by someone with similar backgrounds. Although matching technical expertise

was an important factor in some relationships, other attributes may have played a more important role in the most successful relationships.

The basic hypothesis of the program, as deduced from the program documents and discussions with UAA and USAID leadership, was that the Mentor program would create a mentoring relationship by which the long term development, managerial, and career experience of alumni Mentors would be useful to Mentees in their professional development and career advancement. Although the USAID-UAA MOU uses the term "coaching" to describe the expected relationship, UAA's orientation stressed the Mentoring process, rather than coaching. *(The difference between Coaching and Mentoring is well defined in web sites of various professional management organizations. Coaching is task and skill oriented, short term, and designed to "improve performance". Coaching involves the subject's immediate supervisor. Mentoring is a "relationship" developed over the long term and is based on trust and confidentiality. It is in general oriented toward career development rather than focusing on immediate tasks and relevant skill development.)* However, the USAID E&E Bureau's use of the term, Coaching, may have implied Bureau expectations about specific skill development and problem solving, especially with respect to "defined projects and tasks" as stated in the MOU.

III.   **Evaluation team, time frame, and method.**

Team

The evaluation team was formed at the end of April, 2013. Each person on the three person team represented one of the stakeholder organizations; one from E & E, one from USAID/HR, and one from UAA. All members of the team were experienced current or former USAID officers. Dr. Richard Blue, currently Emeritus Vice President of Social Impact, Inc., represented UAA on a *pro bono* basis. Ms. Taisha Jones represented the E & E Bureau, and Ms. Karin Kolstrom represented USAID HR. Dr. Blue prepared this report, with substantial input from Ms. Jones and Ms. Kolstrom.

Time Frame

 A preliminary list of evaluation questions was distributed to team members and USAID and UAA leadership for comment prior to a team planning meeting held May 1, 2013. The team hoped that all interviews would be concluded and a report submitted by May 15. However, arranging telephone interviews with Mentees took longer than expected, and the cut-off date for data collection was extended to May 17. The Draft Report was prepared and circulated to team members and USAID and UAA May 19, 2013. A Final Review Draft was circulated June 27, 2013. A review committee of E&E and UAA interested parties provided comments and questions on June 12, 2013, including a request for additional interviews with USAID's Andrew Maybrook, and UAA's Pamela Mandel. This final report reflects the team's responses to the review committee's comments.

Method

With only 11 Pairs participating, the basic method was interviews using a Structured Key Informant (SKI) Interview Guide, combining both open ended and probing questions with a set of closed response ratings to be completed by the Respondent and, in some cases, the Interviewer. Each team member was responsible for interviewing Mentors and Mentees from 3 to 4 pairs. All Respondents were read an assurance of confidentiality statement and asked for

their consent to proceed. In addition to the evidence gained from the SKI interviews, the team reviewed the MOU, and other documents, including the results of an informal Mentor feedback report prepared by Jerry Wood, Co-chair of UAA's Strengthening USAID Committee. Initial interviews and discussions were held with E & E Bureau coordinator Ann Patterson, and UAA Coordinator Jerry Wood. The team had hoped to interview additional parties, including Mentee supervisors and leadership from other E & E bureau missions that did not participate in the UAA Mentor Program. This was not done due to time and other limitations.

As the Pilot Program developed, 11 Mentor-Mentee paired mentoring relationships were formed. In varying degree, these pairs developed a sufficient relationship to provide a body of experience which could be assessed by the evaluators.

The team was able to gain information from all eleven Mentors. All Respondents received a copy of the SKI Interview Guide in advance of the interview. The team interviewed 10 of the 11 Mentors, while one who was traveling submitted written comments and responses to the SKI Interview Guide.

Gaining access to Mentees was more difficult due to travel, work schedules and time differences. Still, of the eleven Mentees, nine (9) were interviewed, one submitted a written response using the SKI Guide, and one was not responsive to requests for an interview.

As noted, additional interviews were held with Mr. Andrew Maybrook, USAID, and Ms. Pamela Mandel, UAA. Both individuals were active in developing the program and in the training which took place.

Threats to Validity

Generalization from this small sample should be treated with some caution. Also, due to time pressures, the team members conducted each interview by themselves, which may have led to somewhat different kinds of response set problems. Ideally the team would have conducted several initial interviews together before doing individual interviews. This would have allowed for adjustments and better calibration of the interview protocol.

Report Structure

The Evaluation Report follows the standard outline for USAID evaluation reports, including Introduction and Evaluation Purpose, brief Project Description, Evaluation Team, Time Frame and Methods, Team Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations. The UAA-USAID MOU is attached.

We have kept the main report as brief as possible to facilitate easy access and utilization. Therefore we've excluded the usual five page executive summary.

IV. Findings

The SKI interview findings are presented in this section. First some data describing the positions of the participant Mentees will be shown. Then, data is presented according to each question in the SKI, separating Mentor and Mentee responses. Responses will be presented by a summary "statistic" aggregating the closed ended question responses, followed by illustrative and summary presentations of qualitative responses.

A.   Description of Mentor Program participants.

1. Mentors

We do not have consistent data about the extent to which Mentors considered themselves knowledgeable about current USAID structures, programs and procedures. Several Mentors volunteered they had been "out of USAID" for 10 or 15 years, while others, though long retired, had continued to be engaged with development issues as consultants to USAID. Discussions with both USAID and UAA leaders indicated some concern that potential Mentors who had left USAID many years ago and had not stayed actively involved with USAID developments may be of less value than Mentors whose retirement was more recent and who had remained involved as consultants or in other capacities.

2. Mentees

Of the Bureau's eleven (11) USAID Missions and the Regional Services Office, four Missions and one Mentee from the RSC/Budapest office participated. Two Missions, Macedonia and Armenia, had four Mentees each, with one each from Ukraine and Moldova.

With respect to level of experience, six are listed as DLI officers, and the balance of five are more experienced including two who were Office Directors and two who were Mission Director or Acting Mission Director level.

B.   Reason for Participating in the Program

1.   Mentors (Qualitative Summary)

Mentor participation was in response to two main motivations: 1) A desire to give something back and to help the new USAID officers gain from the Mentor's experience, 2) A personal contact from Jerry Wood, Pamela Mandel or someone else in the UAA asking them to get involved after attending an UAA meeting and putting their name on a list. One individual said: "I belief the UAA-E&E Bureau mentorship program is among the very best and most beneficial I experienced during more than 30 years in USAID."

2.   Mentees

For the Mentees, the reasons for signing up were in some ways the mirror image of the Mentors, namely the desire to benefit from the experience of senior, more experienced retirees, and, in several Missions, the Mission leadership encouraged their participation. Several stressed the importance of being able to discuss in confidence their own career development issues with someone who was not "in the organization". One individual said: "...the program introduction made it comfortable to discuss openly issues with the Mentor since this would not include other Mission staff." One other interesting observation was: "Being in a small Mission, there are few senior FSOs/DHs with whom to discuss USAID and career development. I really wanted to have someone from whom I could get advice and who could offer objective advice and another perspective."

C. Relationship between Mentor and Mentee

How would you rate the relationship between you and your Mentor/Mentee?

Scale: 1 Poor to 5 Very Positive

Rating 1 to 5	1	2	3	4	5
Mentor			1	5	5
Mentee			3	5	2

1. Mentors

The terms used by Mentors to describe the relationship ranged from cordial and friendly to open and, at the extreme, intense. One Mentor said: "The conversations were balanced, excelled and the Mentee was open. There was a respect of privacy and the Mentee asked for advice on many subjects from career development to technical concerns. Distance communication worked well." Another noted that using Skype helped a good deal in establishing a sense of a personal relationship essential to good monitoring. Overall, the ratings given by Mentors were very positive

2. Mentees

Mentees were somewhat less positive than Mentors about the relationship with their Mentors. Although most used terms like polite, professional, and cordial, some expressed the conclusion that the discussions were "not very productive". Another said: "Useful in some ways", but gave the rating a 3.

On the positive side, one Mentee who rated the relationship a 5 explained: "...my Mentor and I have had weekly check-ins by phone and regular email exchange. In addition to discussing Agency leadership, vision, mission operations, staff development and strategic professional growth, my Mentor has advised me re bidding and the AEF process." In another expression of why the Mentee gave it a 5, he/she explained that he/she had very specific issues and goals, and the Mentor had the exact skills fit and was able to provide the much needed just-in-time assistance. According to this Mentee, the Mentor provided advice, acted as a sounding board, reviewed written documents, and helped the Mentee with strategy during negotiations with high level parties. Due to the Mentee's position at post (a senior level officer) this sort of assistance was not available within the Mission. Moreover, the opportunity to meet face to face with the Mentor in Washington DC was very helpful.

Although the numbers are too small to warrant a generalization, there is some evidence to suggest that more experienced Mentees gave higher ratings than less experienced DLI Mentees. One USAID leader familiar with the program opined that the DLI's perhaps "didn't know what they didn't know".

D.   Time spent on relationship

How much time did you devote to the relationship on a weekly basis?

Average hours per week	Less than 1	1 to 2 hours	3-4 hours
Mentors	7	1	2
Mentees	7	3	

Note: We expected the Mentor and Mentee estimates to match, but this was not the case.

1. Mentors

Estimating weekly averages was difficult and somewhat misleading, as relatively few of the relationships kept to a weekly schedule. For most, the meetings were more episodic, in part because of travel disruptions. In at least three cases, the number of meetings was only 3 or 4 over the 5 months period. One Mentor reported he/she went through two Mentee relationships which did not work out, before matching up with a third rather late in the Pilot Program period. Some Mentors reported spending time researching requests and reviewing documents in addition to actual "meetings" with Mentees.   Several Mentors stated that they could have managed one additional Mentee, in large measure due to the episodic nature of their meetings.

2. Mentees

Again, the estimate of weekly averages is somewhat misleading because relatively few of the 11 pairs kept to a fixed schedule, and some came late to the program with time for only a few meetings with their mentors. For some, the meetings "tapered off as the time passed." An interesting observation from several Mentees was that they preferred to talk with Mentors from home after hours, as they felt the conversations were best had outside the office.

E.   Expectations fulfilled

Were your expectations fulfilled with respect to the Mentor program?

Response	Less than expected	As expected	More than expected
Mentors	3	5	1
Mentees	4	2	3

Note: One Mentee said they had no expectations and could not answer.

1. Mentors

As with the frequency of meeting time, the reporting of whether expectations were met depends on whether Mentors had any specific expectations, and most said that other than wanting to be helpful, they had no particular expectations.

One Mentor felt that the Mentoring orientation led him/her to be more "passive" than active in the various discussions with the Mentee. This Mentor said that if the program continued, they would take a more active role in helping the Mentee define issues, goals, etc. This Mentor felt the Mentee did not have any well-defined objectives or clear expectations about what he/she was supposed to derive from the program.

2. Mentees

All three evaluators noted that the more junior officers did not have clear and specifically stated expectations, although several said they received valuable assistance. For example, "one Mentee did not have goals in advance, however did get a lot of advice from the Mentor and benefitted greatly from the relationship, and would like to be able to ask the Mentor advice in the future."

One of the evaluator's commented that when neither the Mentee nor the Mentor have any clear goals or expectations, it may take some time and several conversations to determine whether the Mentor-Mentee relationship is worth the effort. This Pilot program exhibits examples of the emergence of positive and productive relationships in spite of unclear goals, and, negative outcomes as reported by one Mentee who said that there were conversations in which he/she had very little to say and the relationship never got off the ground.

Still, several Mentees felt the program far exceeded their expectations and said they had received much of value from the Mentor. As one Mentee said:

> When the pilot commenced, I was eager to participate and hoped the program would provide new insight and learning about the Agency and work in the XXXX sector. My expectations have been far surpassed as interaction with my mentor has gone way beyond just a technical line of conversation. My mentor has graciously agreed to continue a mentor/mentee relationship informally as it has worked so well over the past four months.

This is a testament to how a successful, long-distance mentoring program can work.

F. Main substance of the relationship

Describe the main content/substance of your discussions

Responses	Technical	Bureaucratic Management	Career Development	Mixed
Mentors		4	3	3
Mentees	1	1	3	4

Note: Not all Respondents gave a clear enough answer to code.

1. Mentors

Mentors whose own technical backgrounds were different than those of the Mentees reported that they felt they could be most helpful with career advancement issues and more general advice on how to comport one's self in the USAID organizational culture.

2. Mentees

Probably the most comprehensive description of the wide ranging content of the relationship came from one Mentee: "I am able to share with my Mentor current Agency news and direction, mission strategic planning, program implementation challenges, workload and time management issues, balancing life and work, etc."

Although there has been concern that the Mentor program might drift into a "technical consulting" relationship, there was little evidence from the interviews that this was a problem. One Mentee did say that he/she had discussed a programming issue with his/her Mentor, who suggested a solution. The Mentee then referenced what the Mentor had said in a Mission planning meeting, and received in turn considerable "pushback".

One evaluator noted that the substance of discussions with more senior Mentees, of which there were five in the Pilot program, tended to be more about bureaucratic and management issues, while discussions with DLI types were more about career development and behavior in the bureaucracy in general.

G.   Other Considerations

Very few Respondents had much to offer beyond what had been discussed. However, several used this question to offer some observations. One Mentor said that while he thought the program had value, it was not and could never be a substitute for a more active and aggressive mentoring and a coaching program mounted by Human Resources across the Agency.

Another comment from two of the Mentors was that they felt that any real "mentoring" program required, needed to have outside Mentors, especially as the number of FSOs in all but a few Missions is relatively few. As one Mentee put it: "Having someone who doesn't have 'any skin in the game' is very useful as a mentor."

A problem mentioned by one Mentee and several Mentors at various points in the interview was the difficulty of developing a true "Mentorship" between two people who don't know each other and have never met face to face. The corollary to this is the observation that it is difficult to develop deep "trust" through a few long distance discussions over a short period of time.

H.   The "Fit" between the Mentor and the Mentee

How would you describe the "fit" between you and the Mentor/Mentee?

Response	Poor	OK	Very Good	Excellent	No Answer
Mentor	1	2	6	2	
Mentee	2	1	4	2	2

1. Mentors

Mentors who said the fit was very good explained that this was because the discussions centered around career and to some extent general bureaucratic issues. Some stated that even on the bureaucratic topics, they felt they were not useful because they had been away from USAID for 15 years or more. Those who said OK but with problems felt it took some time to find

areas where they could be helpful, especially with junior officers who did not seem to have a very clear set of issues or questions that they wanted to raise with their Mentor.

2. Mentees

The factors that make for a good fit were captured by one Mentee who rated his/her Mentor as Excellent.

> He has a wealth of experience in the Foreign Service to bring to this mentoring relationship and knows how to listen as well. He has regional expertise in E&E, thus he can comment on development challenges specific to the region where I am working. He has (technical) management experience as well; thus he can provide helpful perspective on sector-specific issues. Most importantly, he is highly committed to the mentoring program and believes that working with new officers, supporting their professional growth and guiding them, will prove beneficial to the Agency in the long run.

Other Mentees mentioned good technical or substantive fit as a basis for initial discussion, which then evolved into other longer term issues. In short, the Mentee seems to have an initial reason to begin the journey toward a mentoring relationship, the basis of which may be technical, or sharing of country and regional understanding.

Perhaps the most common statement by Mentees was that while most of them ultimately had a good experience with their Mentor, almost all asserted that they would have preferred to have been able to make an "informed choice" themselves, rather than being assigned a Mentor they did not know or know much about.

I. Recommend Involvement to Others

Would you recommend the Mentor program to others? (Mentees Only)

Response	Yes with reservations	Yes with no reservations
Mentees	8	2

1. Mentees only

As noted above, the Mentees felt that they would have had a better Mentoring relationship if they had been able to make an informed choice. Some also said that for DLIs especially there are opportunities to meet with Mentors face to face when in Washington before starting their field rotations. Those Mentees who had face to face meetings said these were an important part of the relationship process.

J. Other Observations

Several Mentors and Mentees said the confidentiality of the relationship is a critical element in the development of necessary trust to make the Mentor program work effectively. One Mentee asked that we not interview his supervisor for this reason.

Another issue raised was the difficulty of having a Mentor who is not in the same organizational unit, who wondered how to establish a relationship with someone that one never meets in person and does not know.

Perhaps the most unanticipated responses came when discussing the length of the Pilot Program and whether the "contract" between Mentor and Mentee should be for a longer period. Several Mentees noted they will continue to have a relationship with their Mentor well after the Pilot program has ended. Obviously these were the most successful and rewarding relationships.

Others admitted that it took a long time to build trust, but at the same time, it did not take long to learn that one had exhausted the possibilities of getting anything of value from the relationship. In these cases, it was very helpful to have a "contract" with a specific end date...three or four months was about right. Then one could exit gracefully without giving offense to a Mentor.

Another noted that with a "Paid Coach", he/she felt comfortable in saying "no advice was needed", but with a volunteer Mentor, saying NO was more difficult because the Mentor had given up time for free.

One Mentor felt strongly that while the E&E-UAA Mentor program was very useful and rewarding, the program could not substitute for a more comprehensive official program initiated and run by USAID/HR. After the initial draft was submitted and comments received, we investigated whether HR had the capacity and the interest to mount a broader program. The answer was, No, due to lack of staff and other priorities. However, HR Training Director Andrew Maybrook did say that HR would certainly support and be involved in any continuation and expansion of the E&E-UAA program model.

V.   Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

1.   The evidence presented above leads to the conclusion that the Pilot program did produce mentoring relationships that were, in general, of value to the Mentees, and to the Mentors, especially in areas of personal and career development, but, for more senior people, also in areas involving difficult bureaucratic and strategic decisions.   Contrary to the MOU language, there was little evidence of specific task related or skill set development through the Mentoring program.

2.   The Mentoring relationship seems to work best when there is an initial basis for two people to have confidence in each other at the outset, and the Mentee has a clear and well-articulated set of issues and expectations with regard to what they can derive from the relationship. Successful mentoring relationships go through a "getting to know each other" phase. In this phase, sharing common country, regional or technical experience can be helpful. Once the parties feel comfortable with each other, the hope is that the relationship will emerge into a more comprehensive relation of trust and sharing of deeper problems, experience and wisdom.

3.   The Pilot Program demonstrated the value of a mentoring relationship to both experienced USAID officers, as well as to DLIs just beginning their USAID careers. On balance, the evidence suggests the conclusion that there is a need for Mentors across the experience spectrum, in part because USAID is in a re-building phase, with many senior positions being filled with still relatively inexperienced officers.

4.   Understanding what is expected in the Mentor and Mentee relationship is an important part of a successful relationship. In the Pilot program, the Mentors expressed a better understanding of this than did Mentees, especially DLI Mentees.

5.   It is clear from the evidence that no rigid schedule of meetings can be imposed on the relationship, at least after the first few meetings. The relationship if successful will be demand driven and while episodic, may experience very intense periods of discussion followed by relatively low level interaction. It is also the case that every relationship needs a point that allows for exit or a graceful adjustment and/or termination of the relationship.

Recommendations

1.   Although limited in time and scope, the Pilot Program was sufficiently successful to warrant continuation and expansion of the program between USAID and UAA, including beyond the E&E Bureau if UAA resources permit.

2.   More care needs to be given to the initial process of matching up Mentors with Mentees to ensure that while there is some initial degree of convergence of experience, skills and interests between the two sides, other attributes are considered. Matching technical backgrounds is one useful selection criterion, but it alone is neither a necessary nor sufficient condition for a successful mentoring relationship. Other Mentor attributes such as successful leadership experience, understanding of USAID management culture, ability to listen, openness to discussion and communication skills may be more important as the mentoring relationship develops.

3.   We recommend that the program be implemented on a "rolling basis" so that individual Mentor relationships can be established during times when USAID officers are in USAID Washington whether on assignment, TDY or home-leave. This will open up possibilities for more exposure to Mentee training, and might allow for more participation of Mentees in selecting appropriate Mentors and holding "face to face" meetings to lay the basis for a successful mentoring relationship.

4.   If the Mentoring program is to be scaled up, the objectives of the program need to be stated in a manner consistent with the general principles of Mentoring, as opposed to Coaching. This would allow for a more eclectic group of Mentors to emerge with the common denominator of having been successful managers and leaders of the sort capable of providing experienced based advice on career development and general management issues. While substantive technical experience is useful, it should not be the primary criteria for selecting Mentors or for matching Mentors with Mentees.

5.   Following from Recommendation 3 above, ways should be found to expand the training and orientation program for Mentees to more closely resemble the time and quality of the Mentor training program. A "rolling" program, as also suggested in Recommendation 3, might facilitate this.

6.   Although HR currently lacks staff capacity to mount and manage an "in house" Mentor program, HR's engagement with the current model will continue to be needed and highly useful. HR's support should be encouraged by all concerned.

7.   An easy to administer Monitoring and Evaluation (M and E) process should be established, building on the informal monitoring survey conducted by UAA member Jerry Wood, and by the Pilot Program Evaluation in this report. The M and E system should include a baseline survey of both Mentors and Mentees with at least one Monitoring survey as well as a final questionnaire to be completed by both at the end of the relationship. A more comprehensive external evaluation should be reserved for when USAID and UAA leadership are at the point of making major program strategy decisions.