



Alumni Association: *A Guide for USAID Missions*  
An Additional Help for ADS Chapter 253

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**Alumni Association Formation: A  
*Guide for USAID Missions***

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# Introduction

Participant Training is a learning activity involving Participants taking place in the U.S., a third country, or in-country, in a setting predominantly intended for teaching or imparting certain knowledge and information, with formally designated instructors or lead persons, learning objectives, and outcomes, conducted fulltime or intermittently. It involves the transfer of knowledge, skills, or attitudes (KSAs) through structured learning and follow-up activities, or through less structured means, to solve job performance problems or fill identified performance gaps. Training can consist of long-term academic degree programs, short or long-term non-degree technical courses in academic or in other settings, seminars, workshops, conferences, on-the-job learning experiences, observational study tours, or distance learning exercises or interventions.

USAID believes that the alumni of its Participant Training programs are a powerful force in furthering development objectives. Forming an alumni association offers alumni opportunities to positively impact their country through implementing concepts explored during their in-country, third-country and U.S. programs. Additionally, alumni associations provide for a sustainable forum for Missions to engage and partner with alumni to advance shared goals. This handbook is to serve as a guide. No two associations are alike and there is no single formula that will guarantee the successful creation of an alumni association. Although associations may follow different paths of development and end up taking varying forms, this handbook presents a set of key steps and guidelines that many successful associations have followed with proven success. In 2011 alone, USAID funded over 2 million participants worldwide.

The ultimate success of an alumni association depends on the alumni themselves. While Mission support may be helpful, if not necessary, an alumni association will only be successful - i.e. sustainable - if it remains in essence a grassroots, member-driven organization. Missions can provide a number of invaluable resources, such as modest funding, meeting space, relevant speakers, access to senior U.S. Government staff, logistical support, guidance and advice - without usurping the organization - and thereby cultivating a lasting, fruitful, mutually-beneficial relationship with the alumni association.

Should you have any questions about this guide or any related issue, please do not hesitate to contact the EGAT/ED Participant Training team at [alumnihelp@usaid.gov](mailto:alumnihelp@usaid.gov). Also see the Department of State Personnel Community on the USAID-State Alumni website for additional resources, best practices, and guidance (<https://alumni.state.gov/usaid>).

*Good luck!*



# Chapter I: What is an Alumni Association?

Before a Mission starts planning an alumni association either on its own initiative or because of the expressed interest of a group of alumni, the Mission Staff who typically focus on Participant Training must start with the very basics and first conceptualize *how* the alumni association will be. This brainstorming or meeting of a “working group” is key in laying the foundation for an organized structure. Is the alumni association to be a loose group of alumni or an incorporated non-governmental organization (NGO)? Will it be open to all Mission alumni or just alumni of one individual participant training program? What is the purpose, what does Mission hope to accomplish and what will alumni get out of it?

This chapter will address these key questions that a Mission should consider at the very conception of an alumni association proposal.

## Alumni Association Defined

In this context, an alumni association is an organized group of people who share the common experience of having participated in a USAID-sponsored training program. Members may or may not share common interests, a common purpose, and may in fact come from diverse backgrounds. Therefore, the fundamental characteristic that unites them and brings them together is the unique shared experience of having spent time participating in a training program which was either directly or indirectly, or fully or partially funded by USAID. It is upon this shared bond that the foundation of an alumni association should be built and out of which goals shall arise.

## Purpose of an Alumni Association

What’s the point? With all of the work involved and commitments of time and money required, this is the question Missions should ask itself and that alumni will ask the Mission.

### *Mission Perspective*

From a Mission perspective, the purpose of an alumni association is to provide a sustainable and efficient means of engaging alumni and to provide alumni with a sustainable means to

implement the concepts and ideas they explored during their training experiences. Alumni associations can be beneficial to Missions and USAID in general in other ways as well by:

- Promoting mutual international understanding
- Capturing participant data
- Continuing a dialogue
- Enabling program evaluations

### *Alumni Perspective*

From the perspective of alumni, alumni associations can have a number of purposes. Some alumni associations, such as the Andean Peace Scholarship Project Alumni Association, exist for the purpose of giving back in appreciation of their exchange opportunity through **promoting mutual understanding** between the United States and their home country. Likewise, the Cooperative Association of States for Scholarships (CASS) alumni association promotes mutual understanding through a similar strategy.

Many alumni also view participation in alumni associations as a way of **improving their communities**. Some alumni can use their alumni association as a way to organize community service activities such as working with orphans and the elderly, cleaning up parks and water supplies, or holding fundraisers for causes important to alumni. Other alumni associations can seek to improve their communities beyond charity work, by influencing decision-making and policy discussions at high levels.

Alumni associations are a great way for alumni to **network with one another**, both socially and professionally. Association meetings and events provide a forum for alumni to maintain bonds forged during their experience with each other and to build new friendships and connections. By joining an alumni association, alumni automatically plug themselves into a network of high-achieving professionals that can prove to be an invaluable career asset. Many alumni associations conduct mentoring programs between older and younger alumni, hold workshops on leadership and résumé writing, organize job fairs for members, and invite human resources representatives from leading firms to meet with alumni.

Lastly, alumni gain a sense of **prestige** by associating themselves with an alumni association and gaining access to senior U.S. Government officials, high-level alumni, and achievers from both the public and private sectors at alumni-association-only events.

### Forms of Alumni Associations

Regarding **membership**, alumni associations may be organized around one specific participant training program, such as the Europe and Eurasia region's Community Connections program. Alternatively, an association may be open to alumni of a particular Mission or region.

Regarding **geography**, alumni associations may be based in a locality, a city or state within a country, an entire region of a country, or they may be national organizations.

Regarding **organization**, many associations register as local NGOs and may have a board of elected officers. The type and number of officers may be based on the tasks at hand (secretary, treasurer, etc.), the number of different participant training programs represented, and the total number of association members.

As alumni associations grow and take on larger projects and events, alumni associations often form ad-hoc working groups or committees to oversee the completion of specific projects.

Local conditions, local and national laws governing associations and nonprofit organizations, and circumstances behind previous attempts at forming an alumni association should all be taken into consideration when planning the form an alumni association should take.

## Best Practices of Alumni Associations

For additional information about existing alumni associations, the State Alumni website has a community dedicated to alumni associations: the Alumni Associations Resources Community (<https://alumni.state.gov/alumni-association-resources>). Here, you'll find numerous best practices from around the world, helpful web chats, contact information for alumni association leaders, and a discussion forum for your questions.

## Chapter 2: Getting Started

Starting an alumni association may seem like a monumental task, but it does not have to be. It is true that forming an alumni association requires Missions to make substantial commitments of time, funds, organization and attention; however, with careful planning, achievable goals, and reasonable expectations, the process need not be daunting.

This chapter will lay out the groundwork that should precede the actual formal formation of the alumni association.

### Conceptualize

Before settling into a calculative thought-mode to reckon the logistical “how,” one must first retreat into a meditative thought-mode to ponder the “why.” Therefore, the very first step in forming an alumni association is to develop a vision of what the purpose of an alumni association could be and how it should look, taking all relevant circumstances into account (cultural, political, regional, etc).

A Mission must ask itself:

- **What purpose will the alumni association serve?**
  - Promoting mutual international understanding
  - Continuing a dialog
  - Multiplying the investment of exchanges
  - Enabling program evaluations
- **Who will it include?**
  - Membership
  - Geography
- **What form should it take?**
  - Organization

With these questions answered, your goals will become more focused, and the subsequent steps will become more defined. For example, if the purpose is to improve relations between the U.S. and a host country, a Mission might consider forming an alumni association, both of which decisions narrow the focus of what sort of programs the alumni association might undertake and what kind of support the Mission should provide.

## Find Alumni

Before a Mission can organize an association or contact alumni to join, it is essential to have the accurate names and contact information for the alumni within the country. If the Mission or implementing partner does not have adequate records, expect that this process may take several months to accomplish.

First, check what alumni data exists in the records of the implementing partner or your Mission. Also, see what is in TraiNet by checking with the TraiNet/VCS Helpdesk at [TrainetSupport@riverainc.com](mailto:TrainetSupport@riverainc.com). Now, evaluate how complete the data at hand is. If compiling a complete and current list of alumni names, program information, and contact information seems like a daunting task and your Mission's staff workload is at its maximum, consider applying for alumni project funding through the Department of State's Office of Alumni Affairs (or through EUR/ACE for FSA and SEED countries) to fund a temporary contractor or intern to update records.

## Recruit Provisional Alumni Board

In order to make the alumni association authentically member driven, it is important to involve and consult alumni early in the process. Missions should identify a group of individual alumni who are energetic, motivated and willing to devote their time and take a leadership role in the association. Often, alumni who are the most motivated will already be in contact with the Participant Training Specialist or Technical Office staff.

- Select alumni who feel passionately about forming an association. Only passionate believers in this cause will be willing to make the commitments necessary to make the vision a reality.
- If forming a USAID-wide association, invite representatives from all programs. Do not exclude any program, regardless of how small or short term it is/was.
- Convey all of the benefits of an alumni association.
- Start with offering basic and achievable ideas. Presenting grand schemes upfront will scare alumni away.

This provisional alumni board will serve as a sort of steering committee and will operate as the alumni association's leadership until the association has been formally organized and a set of officers and/or board members has been elected by the founding alumni members.

Having presented the Mission's vision of the association, the Mission should carefully guide, but not dictate, the development of the association as the Mission works with the provisional alumni board to develop a vision, mission, establish goals, choose a name, and make a timeline.

## Form Vision, Mission, and Establish Goals

Forming a vision, mission and goals are critical components of a strong foundation upon which to build an alumni association.

- **Vision:** What the alumni association aims to become
- **Mission:** What the alumni association strives to become
- **Goals:** What an alumni association will do to achieve its mission

Here is an example of the vision, mission and goals from an Alumni Association established by the State Department in Kosovo:

**Vision:** *We aim to be a prominent, respected organization whose members make meaningful contributions to Kosovo, the lives of its citizens and each other.*

**Mission:** *Our mission is to mobilize the power of the alumni for positive change: to strengthen Kosovo civil society, to improve Kosovo standards of living, and to help alumni better achieve their goals.*

**Goals:** *To provide alumni with resources, relationships and opportunities that help them make contributions of immediate and enduring value.*

To form the vision, mission, and goals, assemble the provisional alumni association board and discuss with them their interests, what motivates them, what role they see for an alumni association, and what they would want from an alumni association. With this information, work with the alumni to develop these three statements, and in doing so:

- Accept and work with all ideas and suggestions. Do not exclude or disengage anyone.
- Shy away from political plans and statements – these will divide alumni and end the association before it even begins.
- Make initial decisions through compromise and consensus.

It is extremely important, while managing expectations and dissuading radical or unrealistic ideas, to be as open and inclusive as possible.

## Choose a Name

Choosing a name is a simple but important step. When an alumni association becomes a named Alumni Association, it suddenly takes life and is perceived to exist, if only on paper. While the vision and mission are arguably much more important, the name is something alumni can grasp, tell others and with which they can begin to associate.

The alumni association name will provide alumni with an **identity** – and it is the first thing other alumni, the rest of the global alumni community and the local community will notice – and it should therefore reflect the nature of the association as best suited for the alumni involved.

Projecting outwardly into the world, many alumni associations include their country or nationality in their name. Other associations, looking inwardly, seek to explain to their fellow countrymen and women the shared bond of the association, including “*United States*”, “*U.S.*”, or “*U.S.-Educated*” in their association’s name. Alumni associations might be defined by a specific program (ex: *Community Connections Eastern Europe*, etc.) or by a region or locality.

In short, choose a simple descriptive name that is reflective of the alumni association’s membership. To see a current list of US Government-sponsored associations worldwide, go to the Alumni Associations Resources Community on the USAID-State Alumni website (<https://alumni.state.gov/alumni-association-resources>).

## Establish a Timeline for Development

As with any large undertaking, setting deadlines and establishing a timeline are critical to the success and fruition of the project. Not everything can be done at once. Manage expectations and develop a rational timeline that spaces out large steps and takes into account the amount of time that alumni and the Mission have to devote to the project.

Six months or more may pass between the first provisional alumni board meeting and the official launch of the alumni association, and that’s fine as long as the timeline is feasible with continued progress along the way.

Here is an example of an Alumni Association's development timeline:

Here is an example of an Alumni Association's development timeline:

### **August**

- *Conduct work sessions*
- *Form founding board*
- *Initial launch celebration*
- *Approve: name, charter, by-laws, board positions, budget*
- *NGO registration*
- *Register alumni*

### **September**

- *Hire Alumni Resource Center Coordinator*
- *Open Alumni Resource Center*
- *Website 1.0, database*
- *Speaker*
- *Set General Assembly agenda*
- *Announce publicly*
- *Register alumni*

### **October**

- *Approve strategic plan*
- *Develop newsletter*
- *Approve General Assembly plan*
- *Speaker*
- *Announce publicly*
- *Register alumni*

### **November**

- *Approve 2013 Annual Plan*
- *Approve and send newsletter*
- *E-invites sent for General Assembly*
- *Complete General Assembly planning*
- *Nominate candidates for board positions*
- *Register alumni*

### **December**

- *Hold General Assembly*
- *Operating Board begins*
- *Publicize*
- *Register alumni*

## Chapter 3: Steps and Considerations

When planning the development of an alumni association, there are a number of steps and considerations to take into account. The steps put forth in this chapter are not necessarily comprehensive; past attempts, the alumni involved, and other local conditions may dictate fewer or additional steps. Because of the unique nature of each alumni association, the Mission may consider completing these steps in a different order. In consultation with the provisional alumni board, choose steps and order them in a way that makes most sense in light of the challenges faced. A Mission may choose to have a digital video conference (DVC) to bring their budding alumni association together with another, more established alumni association in another country to get ideas, ask questions, and share best practices.

### Develop Process for Elections

Developing a process and timeline for the selection of leadership is critically important. The provisional alumni board plays an instrumental role in the formation of an alumni association, however, once all the founding work is done, it will be time for the alumni members to take the reigns and ownership of the association and elect their own representatives.

First, decide whether the association will have a board of directors, a set of key officers, or other leadership style.

Second, establish what executive positions there will be. Having at least a president/chairperson, vice president/deputy chairperson, treasurer and secretary is standard. Some alumni associations may choose to have additional officers to represent regional chapters or to head special programs while smaller associations might combine these traditional roles.

Third, plan how the elections will take place. How will nominations be gathered? Will all alumni gather in one location to meet and vote or will elections be conducted via email? How many members form a quorum?

Lastly, develop a timeline for the process with clear deadlines for each step:

- Call and deadline for nominations

- Date of election
- Date that new officials will take over

It is also recommended to establish clear term limits for each position. Charismatic leaders come and go, and it's important for the sustainability of the alumni association that it not become dominated by one or two individuals who will leave a huge void if they eventually move on to something else.

## Establish Association Charter and By-laws

The association charter and by-laws are the formal codification of much of the work that you have already done. This will be the governing document of the alumni association and it is therefore important that this document be comprehensive, clearly worded, and flexible.

The draft alumni association charter and by-laws should be discussed and ratified by the founding members of the alumni association.

Here is a basic scheme based on the charter and by-laws of the Department of State's International Visitor Program – Philippines Alumni Association (IVP-PHILS), to reference when drafting a charter and bi-laws of your own:

### **Article I – General Provisions**

- *Name*
- *Vision*
- *Mission*
- *Goals*

### **Article II – Membership**

- *Define qualifications for membership*
- *Define requirements, if any, for membership (are there annual dues, and if so, what are they used for?)*
- *Rights of members*
- *Duties of members*

### **Article III – Meetings of Members**

- *Establish an annual meeting of all members and the procedure for calling other meetings*
- *Define a quorum for voting at meetings*
- *Establish an order of business for the annual meeting*
- *Rules for absentee voting*

*(Continued below)*

*(Continued from above)*

**Article IV – Alumni Board**

- *Define the role and responsibilities of an alumni board*
- *Number, composition, term and qualification for service*
- *Provision(s) for disqualifying a board member or officer*
- *Regulate quorum, frequency and location of board meetings*
- *Provision for filling vacancies in the board*

**Article V – Officers**

- *Establish elections*
- *Define role and powers of each office*
- *Provide for the creation of committees (if applicable)*

**Article VI – Funds**

- *Define sources of funding*
- *Regulate disbursements of association funds*
- *Establish a fiscal year*

**Article VII – Election Process**

- *Establish process for elections*

**Article VIII – Amendments of the by-laws**

- *Establish a process for making changes to the charter and by-laws*

Things to keep in mind:

- It is essential to gather input and draft a charter and by-laws before convening a founding meeting of the association.
- Take into account the context of your country in defining your mission and charter.
- Activities of the association should be aligned with the mission and objectives that have been set forth

in the charter.

## Identify Funding Sources

For the establishment, not to mention the long-term sustainability, of any association, some funding is necessary. In many cases, Missions, through their technical assistance contractors, may be able to provide full funding for the organization in the short-term, while in other cases, it is necessary to seek out monies from a variety of sources. Be aware of funding opportunities both internationally as well as those available locally. The possibilities listed below are entirely optional for a Mission to consider in the event of seeking outside funding.

### *ECA Funding*

The Office of Alumni Affairs at the Department of State holds an annual global competition for all its Missions worldwide for **alumni-focused project proposals**; USAID may also take part in this competition. Visit the Department of State Personnel community at <https://alumni.state.gov/dos> to read proposals that were funded in past years and for supporting documents, project ideas, and updates about upcoming competitions. The global competition is normally announced in January or February of each fiscal year, pending availability of funds. All projects are put before a panel and winning projects are awarded with fiscal data by mid-June.

Contact the State Department's Global Alumni Coordinator with specific questions: [alumni@state.gov](mailto:alumni@state.gov).

### *FSA-SEED Funding*

**FSA (Freedom Support Act)** countries are non-competitively awarded a specific annual allotment of funds earmarked for alumni programming. **SEED (Support for East European Democracy)** countries are eligible to participate in an alumni-grant competition organized through EUR/ACE. In the past, projects have both been received on a rolling basis and have also been accepted only before a hard deadline and put before a panel.

Contact EUR/ACE or the EUR/PPD desk officer for South and Central Europe with specific questions.

### *Outside Funding*

There are numerous sources of outside funding available through local resources that alumni may be able to utilize, such as public-private partnerships, project grants (visit the **Grant Opportunities** section of the USAID-State Alumni website), and creative fundraising. Missions can use their influence to leverage support for the alumni association in seeking out cost-sharing sponsorship from other organizations. Often, individual alumni can utilize their connections to local NGOs, universities, private companies and the government for additional financial support. Missions should brief alumni on all avenues of funding and ways to build support for their organization.

## Plan Initial Events

Now that the critical ground work has been completed, the alumni association can plan several initial events. Events should aim to **introduce the association to alumni** and explain the **benefits of membership** and the **goals of the organization**. Beyond that, be creative! Plan initial events that are relatively inexpensive, easy to organize, and that embody the mission and goals of the alumni association. Look to the USAID-State Alumni website for event ideas from around the world.

Is the alumni association, as an example, centered on volunteerism? If so, then invite a high-level alumnus or alumna from an NGO to speak and hold a related volunteer action such as visiting an orphanage or going to a school to teach kids about volunteerism.

As another example, if the alumni association is centered on education policy, invite a panel of alumni professors, scholars, and/or university presidents to present and debate education reform.

Plan events such as these in order to fulfill the essential purpose of the alumni association, bring alumni together, and draw on their expertise and experience.

Is the alumni association woefully under funded? Consider applying for project support as detailed previously in this chapter. Search for partners to co-fund events or donate resources. Are there alumni who teach at a local school or university? Perhaps they can secure a venue for events free of charge. Also consider partnering with a local American Corner or Binational Center to provide meeting space on a regular basis. Above all, involve alumni in this process as much as possible.

## Publicity, Founding Event, and Membership Drive

Once the structure of the alumni association has been established, a charter and by-laws have been drafted and some initial events have been planned, everything is in place to be presented to alumni. To do so, the provisional alumni board and the Mission must plan a founding event, organize publicity, and carry out a membership drive.

Missions should **publicize** the formation of the alumni association, starting by notifying the EGAT/ED Participant Training team at [alumnihelp@usaid.gov](mailto:alumnihelp@usaid.gov) about new alumni associations. EGAT/ED/PT team can share this news with relevant program officers, regional Mission staff, and the larger global alumni community. The Department of State's Office of Alumni Affairs can also provide support, advice and promotional materials.

Some suggested publicity mechanisms are:

- **The USAID-State Alumni website (<https://alumni.state.gov/usaid>).**
- Any registered member can the Mission a news story about a new alumni association on State Alumni.

- The State Alumni webmaster or the exchange program's community manager can send out a mass email to all relevant alumni to announce the association and invite them to join.

- **The Department of State's Global-Alumni-Coordinators Listserv**

- **Local media outlets**

- Consider publicizing the new association through local print, radio, or television announcements.

- **Direct mailings**

- State's Office of Alumni Affairs can provide promotional brochures, bookmarks, and other printed materials for distribution to inform alumni of the USAID-State Alumni website and encourage participation in local alumni associations. Some of these materials are available in languages such as Spanish, French, Arabic and Russian.

- The Office of Alumni Affairs can also provide sample promotional language from other alumni associations.

The **founding event** is the climax of all the work that the Mission and the provisional alumni board have done. As many alumni as possible should be invited to join in the founding of the alumni association, where:

- The alumni association, vision, mission, and goals will be presented
- The benefits of membership will be explained
- The charter and by-laws will be discussed and ratified
- A new alumni board and/or officers will be elected
- Ideas and goals will be discussed
- Concrete plans will be established and agreed upon

The founding event may be hosted by the Mission. Having the Mission Director present provides an incentive for alumni to come, and more importantly conveys that the Mission is committed to supporting the alumni in all their endeavors.

A **membership drive** is a necessary component of the founding meeting and is a vital initial breath of life for the newly created alumni association. Without proper publicity and outreach aimed at establishing a broad and active membership, all of the initial groundwork achieved by the Mission and by the alumni board will be for naught.

In conducting a membership drive, Missions may consider creating **alumni association promotional materials**. Consider creating simple registration forms for alumni to complete and sending out regular updates about the status and development of the alumni

association. Missions have created alumni association pins, business cards, and brochures to use in outreach and to explain the benefits of joining the alumni association. The EGAT/ED Participant Training team can also provide brochures and other promotional materials for you to use.

## Create a Community on the USAID-State Alumni Website

This can be a useful tool for both the Mission and the alumni association to provide outreach and is an essentially free alternative to an alumni association developing and hosting a website on its own. The only cost involved is the time of the staff member or alumni association representative whose job it is to add content to the site.

State Alumni communities provides alumni associations with:

- A unique website connected to USAID-State Alumni with any or all of the features offered on the main State Alumni site.
- A unique URL (<https://alumni.state.gov/AlumniAssociationName>) that can be distributed and used as a direct link to the webpage.
- Easy to use content management system (CMS) for uploading content.
- Free, indefinite web-hosting and support.

Contact State's Office of Alumni Affairs for a full list of available features and a complete explanation of the process of creating a personalized web-based Community.

## Establish a Headquarters or Office

Although not necessary, establishing a **headquarters** and procuring **office space** for an alumni association can be extremely valuable. Having a physical space where the alumni association can host its own events is an advantage over processing groups through security when meeting at the embassy. A physical space also allows for alumni associations to put together events with very short notice and provides a sense of openness and ownership.

In one example in Azerbaijan, the cost of a permanent headquarters was offset by renting the space out to private companies or other organizations for conferences. Consider also partnering with a local university to gain regular access to a meeting space (here you can leverage the "human capitol" of your alumni, i.e. those associated with a university, etc). Lastly, if there is an American Corner in town, consider partnering with them to use their space for alumni association meetings and events.

## Register as an NGO

A large undertaking in itself, registering as a non-governmental organization (NGO) is an entirely optional step, and should be viewed as another means of developing the association and not an end in and of itself. Often this may not be feasible for a Mission to assist with but is an existing option nonetheless.

Laws and regulations differ from country to country, so be sure to become familiar with the legal requirements of your country. Typically, the process is similar to that of incorporating a business - a charter that meets certain standards is required and it is necessary to file certain legal documents and tax forms to register the name and organization. The result is a new legal entity, with defined legal rights and responsibilities. It would be best to enlist the assistance of alumni involved in local NGOs who are familiar with the process and an alumnus or alumna who is a lawyer.

It is recommended that an alumni association register as a national/local NGO within their country as opposed to an international NGO. The process of registering internationally is often more complicated and involves additional responsibilities without offering much more added value for the alumni association. As an additional consideration, an alumni association should make sure that their charter explicitly allows their NGO to accept international funds for the purpose of being able to receive grants from the Mission and from other international institutions.

If legally possible, consider putting off registering until after the founding event, to give the alumni association a chance to get off the ground, for alumni to realize the responsibilities involved in maintaining an association, and to allow them to take on as much of the ownership and responsibilities of registering as possible.

## Chapter 4: Further Development

### Beyond the Founding Meeting

Now, the foundation has been laid, a structure has been built, the first few events have taken place and alumni have begun to join in. The alumni association has been created, however the work is never over.

Alumni associations will encounter and must deal with a number of issues:

- How to manage growth and retain members' interest;
- How to fundraise and take steps towards financial sustainability;
- How to plan and execute larger projects and activities for alumni and for the broader community;
- How to conscientiously and effectively engage government officials and NGOs in alumni association projects;
- How to organize projects for the broader community, such as photo/art exhibitions, English language classes, policy roundtables, etc.

There are several other considerations to be made to ensure the long-term sustainability of the alumni association.

- Pass on the torch of leadership to others – don't become reliant on only a few core activists or dominant personalities.
- Continually recruit new alumni immediately after they return from their exchange programs.
- Keep a focus on the vision, mission, goals, and rules of the association and make sure they are clear to all alumni members.

## Conclusion

Starting an alumni association can involve a serious commitment of time and resources on the part of USAID. Although seemingly daunting, with careful and rational planning, forming an alumni association can be a smooth, manageable process with lasting fruitful outcomes.

Use this handbook as a guide, not as a rigid recipe, and be ever mindful of the particularities of your country and the interests and concerns of the alumni. Alumni in your country may be attempting to build an alumni association on their own, and with the information provided in this guide, not to mention the wealth of alumni association resources on USAID-State Alumni, you will be more informed and prepared to offer guidance and support.

*For additional information on alumni best practices from around the world, or for advice, please contact the EGAT/ED Participant Training Team at [alumnihelp@usaid.gov](mailto:alumnihelp@usaid.gov) or visit the USAID-State Alumni website at <https://alumni.state.gov/USAID>.*

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