<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Table of Contents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Table of Contents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Letter from SID-Washington</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>FY 2020 Network Co-Chairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Events Calendar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Event Summaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Contact Us</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INDEPENDENT CONSULTANTS NETWORK (ICN)

SID-Washington’s Independent Consultants Network (ICN) serves as a networking and information resource and fosters a community of interest of international development professionals who are independent consultants and those who are considering becoming consultants.
Dear Members of the Independent Consultants Network,

Our Fiscal Year 2020 was unusual for us, as it was for so many, ending during a global pandemic. This certainly affected our ability to deliver programming. Despite this hurdle, the Network still produced three great events, including Consulting 101 and a Happy Hour.

In the first couple of years since its launch, ICN has continued to build on its mission to create a space for independent consultants in international development to grow professionally through new networking opportunities and event formats.

We also welcomed Amy Chase (Palladium) as the new Co-Chair. We are excited to work with her over the next few years!

Now that we have mastered the art of virtual programming, we look forward to offering more events accessible to a wider audience, providing an even more dynamic community for interaction. We hope to see you at some of our upcoming events. You can see all of our programs on our website – and please check back often as we add new ones regularly.

Thank you for your interest in and support of SID-Washington’s Workgroups and Networks. If you have questions, comments or ideas, please send an email to events@sidw.org.

Best regards,

Katherine Raphaelson

Paul A. Sherman
Amy Chase Chase is a full-time Manager at Palladium on the USAID contract, CATALYZE. She has almost a decade of experience in human rights and international development. She’s spent nine years managing USG-funded projects, especially USAID projects in conflict and unstable environments. She has worked in Iraq, Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, Kosovo, and Rwanda with organizations such as World Learning, Democracy International, The Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation, Abt Associates, IFES, and The QED Group.

In 2018, Chase launched a social enterprise called The Crescendo Group which supports workforce development and economic empowerment for women, refugees, survivors of gender-based violence (GBV) and trauma, people with disabilities, and other marginalized groups. Crescendo currently works with local partners based in Kosovo, Albania, Italy, DC, Maryland, and Virginia. In 2019, Crescendo expanded its activities in diversity and inclusion (D&I) and workforce development services.

As a first-generation Chinese-American who has survived much trauma in her personal life, Chase was inspired by the resilience and strength of the survivors she met through her work in transitional and post-conflict societies. Prior to her career in international development and human rights, Chase was a project manager in marketing, media, and sales. She has a BBA from Baruch College and an MA in International Affairs from The New School. Chase is a native New Yorker and speaks fluent French and Cantonese. She has traveled to 50 countries and aspires to continue exploring many parts of the world.

Mike Shanley is the Founder and CEO of Konektid International, an USAID market advisory firm, and has spent more than a decade of his career working in the USAID market both at Chemonics and with Konektid. At Chemonics he worked on proposal development and USAID partnering activities across five continents, including helping organizations new to USAID navigate the partnering process. In 2013, he left Chemonics to found Konektid, a US small business with the mission of making it easier for new partners to enter the USAID market. He has spent the last five years running Konektid and making it easier for organizations from around the globe to work with USAID.
Thursday, September 5, 2019
4:00 PM - 5:30 PM ET | SID-Washington
Independent Consultants Network (ICN) Planning Meeting

Wednesday, December 4, 2019
5:30 PM - 7:30 PM ET | Vapiano
Happy Hour

Wednesday, April 29, 2020
5:00 PM - 6:30 PM ET | Online via Zoom
Consulting 101
Independent Consultants Network (ICN) Planning Meeting

**Event Description:** The Independent Consultants Network met on Thursday, September 5th at 4:00 PM to plan events for the group in the next year. In recent months, the group organized events on topics such as Discussion on Contracting Options and Foreign Currency Payments for Independent Consultants and Exploring Legal Structures for Independent Consultants.

**Meeting Agenda**

I. Introductions
II. Past Events and Future Improvements
III. Possible Event Topics and Formats
IV. Future Communications and Logistics
V. Next Steps

**Discussion**

I. Introductions

II. Past Events and Future Improvements
ICN Co-Chair Mike Shanley asked attendees to name the past events that they found helpful and how to improve them in the future:

- **SID-W Annual Conference**
  - What people liked:
    - Format: Easy to navigate the exhibit booths
    - Diverse variety of organizations
  - Future improvement:
    - Panel discussion focused on the technical aspects of international development

- **SID-W Career Fair**
  - What people liked:
    - Beneficial for career development and learning about new sectors and opportunities
  - Future improvement:
    - Many organizations were not prepared to engage with independent consultants
    - SID-W can invite experienced independent consultants to run workshops for these organizations to better prepare them (eg. how to read consultant’s resume)

- **ICN Happy Hour**
  - What people liked:
    - Relaxing environment
    - The opportunity to talk to people that would not have time to engage after attending an event
  - Future improvement:
    - More spacious venue
    - Quieter environment
    - Hope to hear some contents at SID-W prior to the event so people can talk about it during happy hour

- **SID-W Annual Dinner**
  - What people liked:
    - Great networking opportunity with people from diverse international development backgrounds
    - Great variety of organizations
  - Future improvement:
    - A reception before dinner will allow more time for networking

III. Possible Event Topics and Formats
After receiving feedbacks on events from last year, ICN Co-Chair Mike Shanley asked attendees to brainstorm ideas and topics of interest for future events:

- Consulting one-on-one
- Contracts and negotiations
  - Things to look out for in contracts
  - Tips for negotiation; fixed prices
  - Compliance
  - Non-disclosure agreements; conflicts of interest
  - Overseas assignments
- Social media and job–seeking
  - How to utilize social platforms to engage with companies and find employment opportunities
- Consultant mentorship
  - Shadow a more experienced independent consultant for one day
- Experienced independent consultants (10+ years) panel
  - Where to find work? What are your tips for new independent consultants?
- Consulting for foundations/other sectors
- Diversify consulting fields and experiences - how to enter a new sector?

IV. Future Communications and Logistics

- Communications & networks
  - Membership directory
  - Google group: share notes and encourage more discussions and engagements outside SID-W events
  - Some proposed to create a LinkedIn group for better networking outcomes - need to evaluate with SID-W
- Other logistics
  - Some consultants volunteer to host ICN events in their offices if possible - need to evaluate with SID-W

V. Next Steps

Based on the discussion, the Co-Chairs will compile the feedback from the meeting and coordinate with SID-Washington Staff to roll out exciting events over the course of the next year.
Consulting 101

Speaker: Katherine Gentic, Founder and CEO, Akiri Consulting LLC

Moderator: Amy Chase, Manager, Palladium

Speakers: Katherine Gentic, Founder and CEO, Akiri Consulting LLC

Shota Migineishvili, Controller, DevWorks

Event Description: This was the first session of our Consulting event series. Consulting 101 was designed for new consultants, those who are exploring the consulting field, and more seasoned consultants who were interested in a refresher. Our speakers discussed contractual, accounting, and admin topics that every consultant encounters in their careers as independent consultants.

Key Takeaways:

1) Understanding the Difference: Consultants vs. Subcontractors

Katherine Gentic (Akiri Consulting, LLC) has worked as the lead consultant on many USAID contracts and projects and carries years of experience with her as both a consultant and a subcontractor. For this event, geared towards new consultants eager to learn the basics of the practice and looking for opportunities to get their foot in the door, Gentic broke down the differences between a consultant and a subcontractor, and explained the ways in which they function in the consulting world. Gentic highlighted that a consultant mostly works overhead and offers support for companies, and that consultants are often sole proprietors. Additionally, consultants work directly under their Social Security Number (SSN), as they are not attached to a business, and are subject to AIDMax on billable assignments. A subcontractor, on the other hand, works under an Employer Identification Number (EIN) as opposed to an SSN, and is not subject to AIDMax for time, materials, or labor hour arrangements.

2) Expectations for Deliverables

When creating deliverables for clients, Gentic stressed the importance of keeping language clear-cut and concise. She advised consultants to steer clear from words such as, “may”, “if necessary”, and “as needed”, explaining that these phrases offer too much room for interpretation and negotiation. Instead, Gentic feels that consultants need to be as specific as possible, and should clarify exact numbers in deliverables. These numbers can include the number of meetings, trips, times to meet, people to meet with, and even countries to travel to. To Gentic, a deliverable can never be too specific. In terms of allowances and differentials, Gentic stated that these are determined by each company’s internal policies, and that they are not a requirement per regulations.

3) Determining Rate of Pay

Shota Migineishvili (DevWorks) brought years of financial planning, accounting, and consulting to the table for this event, and highlighted in detail the ways consultants should expect to be paid. A question asked during this event asked how begin-

ner consultants should determine their rate of pay, and both Migineishvili and Gentic explained that those just starting out in the field should examine market prices for consultants, make comparisons to other beginning consultants, as well as consider the scale of the project and the abilities of the client. Additionally, Migineishvili discussed what consultants should expect when they travel for a client, and mentioned that reimbursements should come from airline, lodging, transportation, communication, and exchange rate expenses. Migineishvili also mentioned that consultants have their own tax obligations, and that consultant service fees are subject to income tax and self-employment tax.

Due to this, Migineishvili stated that a W-8 or W-9 form must be filled out each time you work with a client to ensure you are able to accurately report that income each year. Consultants can determine whether a payment is based on deliverables and should confirm this with the client they are serving. For contractors, Gentic suggests payment by labor hour, but for subcontractors, she suggests payment based on both time and materials. Additionally, Gentic urged consultants to try and stay away from payments determined by a Firm Fixed Price (FFP), as market prices fluctuate and can put a consultant at risk of losing money.

4) Consulting: Where to Begin?

At the end of the event, Amy Chase (Palladium) asked both Migineishvili and Gentic for their advice to new consultants. Gentic told the audience that fear will prohibit you from making a successful career for yourself. Those wishing to create a path in consulting shouldn’t be afraid to take the first leap by marketing yourself and stepping into a new arena. Gentic mentioned that the first year she consulted for businesses, she was skeptical as to whether or not she would enjoy the practice, and if she would benefit from it. However, Gentic said that she persevered and took the leap, and that the payoff has been more than she could have imagined. She concluded by saying that the confidence, communication skills, and self-reliance she gained throughout the process has allowed her to make career choices that she never would have imagined making. Migineishvili began financial consulting for businesses after discovering his passion for financial decision making, and he said he loves getting to work with a range of clients on a variety of issues and projects.

EVENT SUMMARIES

SID-WASHINGTON | FY 2020 ANNUAL REPORT
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Photo Credit

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