CHRISTOPHER NELSON WIZDA

Program Leader and Regional Analyst | *Turkmenistan, Central Asia, Russia and Mongolia*
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US Citizen | Work authorization: USA, Slovakia and Mongolia | Available immediately; two weeks' notice for full-time roles

SUMMARY

Program leader and regional analyst with more than a decade of work across Central Asia, Russia and Mongolia. Directed a 40+ person country office and a multimillion-dollar US government funded grant portfolio in Turkmenistan, holding programs and compliance intact through budget freezes, stop-work orders and a full organizational restructuring. Serves as Senior Expert on Turkmenistan, the Caspian and regional connectivity at Steppe Bridge Advisory; Scientific Committee member, contributing researcher and Editor for Academic Publications (Central Asia Studies) at IFME; and Trade Monitor: Turkmenistan columnist at Trade Finance Global. Strength in program design and delivery, donor and government relations, MEAL and multilingual research, using AI tools as a force multiplier under strict human verification. MSc in Management and an experimental MBA; fluent Russian; US teaching license; PMD Pro, PgMD Pro and MEAL DPro training.

CORE COMPETENCIES

Program and project management | Grant and budget oversight | Compliance and risk management | Organizational restructuring | Team leadership and staff development | Government, donor and embassy relations | Monitoring and evaluation (MEAL) | Regional, trade and political-risk analysis | Editing and academic publishing | Curriculum and capacity building | Multilingual stakeholder engagement

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Senior Expert, Turkmenistan, Caspian and Regional Connectivity Oct 2026 - Present
Steppe Bridge Advisory LLC, Remote

- Provide expert analysis and client briefings on Turkmenistan, the Caspian and regional connectivity for a strategic intelligence firm.

Scientific Committee Member and Editor for Academic Publications (Central Asia Studies) Sep 2026 - Present
Institut Français des Mondes Eurasiatiques (IFME), Remote

- Contribute original research on Turkmenistan, the Caspian and the Middle Corridor, edit academic publications in Central Asia studies and serve on the Scientific Committee; delivered IFME's September 2026 lecture on Turkmenistan and the Middle Corridor.

Independent Researcher and Regional Analyst Oct 2025 - Present
Self-employed, Ulaanbaatar and Remote

- Run an independent research practice on Turkmen and Caspian energy, trade corridors and regional governance; write the monthly Trade Monitor: Turkmenistan column at Trade Finance Global and publish The Karakum Brief, a monthly regional newsletter.
- Deliver briefs and sector reports to editorial and institutional deadlines, sourcing in English, Russian and Turkmen and using open-source, satellite and GIS methods, including an interactive atlas of Soviet-era Turkmen gas development.
- Use AI tools as a force multiplier under strict human verification: built a multi-role AI research desk (researchers, editors, a red team and a fact-checker) and audited how consumer AI handles Central Asian history in English, Russian and Turkmen.

Business Management Teacher Sep 2025 - Present
Shine Ue School, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia

- Teach IB Business Management and Cambridge IGCSE Business Studies to 100+ students across six class groups; own curriculum design, assessment and reporting, including accessible materials for students with dyslexia.
- Run the school entrepreneurship club and coach student teams for international business competitions, earning a Best Supervisor Certificate at the 2025 IBS BFSU Global Case Contest.

Country Director Feb 2025 - Aug 2025
American Councils for International Education, Ashgabat, Turkmenistan

- Directed all in-country operations of a US Department of State and US Department of Education funded exchange organization: a country office of 40+ staff, a multimillion-dollar grant portfolio and five programs across four regional centers.
- Took over after a two-year leadership gap and led an organizational restructuring and leadership transition, including staff adjustments, contract renegotiation and rebuilding of team morale.
- Held full program compliance and continuity through budget freezes, active stop-work orders, host-government oversight and frequent internet outages.
- Served as principal interlocutor with Turkmen ministries, partner institutions and the US Embassy in Ashgabat.

English Education and Community Development Volunteer Jan 2023 - Jan 2025
US Peace Corps Mongolia, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia

- Managed a multi-sector portfolio across education, social enterprise, agriculture and youth development, including field assessments, stakeholder coordination and grant acquisition.
- Delivered recurring teacher training reaching 60+ teachers per session, IELTS training for 40+ participants and youth programs empowering 120+ young people; helped distribute and teach Wikipedia editing guides across 50+ participants with a local NGO.

- Contributed to establishing the Social Enterprise Association of Mongolia, mentored 50+ businessmen and entrepreneurs with a USAID partner and redesigned a school greenhouse project after identifying a $40,000 budget deficit.
- Ran monitoring and evaluation against KPIs through the Volunteer Reporting and Grants system; served as Central District Warden for 10 volunteers, coordinating emergency response and safety protocols.

Research and Advisory Consultant Jan 2019 - Jan 2023

United Nations Volunteers Online Volunteering Service, Remote

- Delivered country data collection for the UN DESA E-Government Survey 2020 (Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan), workforce-demand analysis for UNDP Asia-Pacific and document review for UNCDF and the ITU.
- Edited and translated (Russian-English) on more than a dozen UN assignments, including UNICEF Global Annual Results Reports and UNDP Asia-Pacific reports; co-edited an inclusive education indicators manual (2020).
- Served as Program Development Consultant on a joint Jordan Ministry of Interior and UNDP initiative to strengthen local governance for planned decentralized higher education programs in two regions.

Native English Teacher and Group Lead Aug 2018 - Mar 2022

ILA Aspect British School and Kindergarten, St. Petersburg, Russia

- Analyzed the Russian education market and presented an online-delivery expansion plan to diversify school revenue.
- Led COVID-19 crisis communications, translating government directives and coordinating support for 16 foreign staff.

Branch Manager and Visa Specialist Oct 2014 - Jun 2015

VisaHQ.com, Inc., Los Angeles, California

- Launched a new branch within a 15-office international corporation a month ahead of schedule, earning top quarterly performance recognition; processed about 55 visa and passport applications daily and held B2B accounts including Boeing and Honeywell.

Earlier experience 2015 - 2020

- Contracts: Project Management Department Head, UN Academy of Somalia, 2020; Strategy Consultant, Act to Rise for Innovation in Special Education, 2019-2020. Volunteer Delegation Liaison for Turkmenistan, Special Olympics World Summer Games, 2015.

EDUCATION

MSc in Management, International Business Development, *Peter the Great St. Petersburg Polytechnic University, Russia* 2018

BA in Northern Studies, Circumpolar North and Rural Areas, *University of Alaska Fairbanks* 2014

AA in Liberal Arts and International Studies (Honors), *Northern Virginia Community College* 2011

CERTIFICATIONS AND LANGUAGES

Credentials. US teaching license, District of Columbia Standard Educator Credential (2026-2030); TEACH-NOW Graduate Certificate in Teacher Preparation, Moreland University (2026); Transknowlogy MBA, Signum Magnum College (2024); CELTA, Cambridge English Level 5 (2021); Director of Studies, International House (2022).

Coursera Professional Certificates (2024). Google Digital Marketing & E-commerce; Google Project Management; IBM Business Intelligence Analyst.

Training. PMD Pro, PgMD Pro and FMD Pro; MEAL DPro (2024); four Coursera AI Specializations (2024-2025); Harnessing Artificial Intelligence for Smarter Trade Facilitation and Efficient Supply Chains, UNCTAD (in progress, 2026); Strategic Leadership and Management Specialization (2019); two University of Geneva courses on international organizations (2019, 2024); NASA ARSET Fundamentals of Remote Sensing (2026); Slovak Language and Culture Summer School, Comenius University (2020); School of Modern Diplomacy, UNU-CRIS (in progress, 2026).

Languages. Russian (fluent); Mongolian (ACTFL Intermediate Mid, 2025); Turkmen and Turkic languages (elementary); Slovak (elementary).

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

Publications. Review of David Chaffetz, Raiders, Rulers, and Traders, Central Asian Survey (2026); "Golden Horses, Red Square," History Today (2026); Trade Monitor: Turkmenistan column, Trade Finance Global (2026); briefs for the Praevisio Institute (2026); two features in Equestrian Life (2026).

Presentations. "The Indexed Steppe: Consumer AI and Colonial Knowledge Hierarchies," Dialogues on Central Asia, University of Amsterdam (2026); "Turkmenistan: A Hidden Player in Central Asia and the Middle Corridor," IFME (2026); "Düýe at Dusk," Nomadic Futures (IISNC under UNESCO auspices), Ulaanbaatar (2026).

AFFILIATIONS AND HONORS

Affiliations. Listed Researcher, Oxus Society for Central Asian Affairs; Member and Minimum Standards contributor, Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE); Editorial board, Makul English-Turkmen language series.

Honors. Award of Recognition for students' Cambridge and IB Business results, Shine Ue School, 2026. Daily Point of Light Award, 2025. Best Supervisor Certificate, IBS BFSU Global Case Contest, Beijing Foreign Studies University, 2025. Badge of Honor, Chingeltei District, Ulaanbaatar, 2024. Teacher's Sign, State School 23, 2024. Eagle Scout, Scouting America.