

Evaluation Matters: Evaluation of the TechWomen Program



THE EVALUATION

Why: The evaluation was intended to provide evidence to the ECA program team to inform the design and implementation of the TechWomen program for future cohorts as well as to make any necessary mid-course adjustments.

What: The evaluation addressed the following four questions:

1. How are TechWomen Alumnae establishing and maintaining networks with other TechWomen Alumnae? By country, by region, and/or globally?

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THE PROGRAM

The TechWomen program, launched in 2011, empowers, connects and supports the next generation of women leaders in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) from Africa, Central and South Asia, and the Middle East by providing them the access and opportunity needed to advance their careers, pursue their dreams, and inspire women and girls in their communities. During the five-week program, participants engage with female leaders in project-based Mentorships at leading companies in the Silicon Valley and Bay Area, participate in professional development workshops and networking events, and travel to Washington, DC for targeted meetings and special events to conclude the program.

KEY FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Key findings and conclusions from the evaluation include:

- » **TechWomen Alumnae Network.** TechWomen Alumnae primarily build and maintain relationships within their cohort and also collaborate with Alumnae from the same country. These Alumnae networks are informal, and their structures and strength differ significantly by country and context, relying on Alumnae themselves to create and grow these networks. Social media platforms are a primary conduit for connecting across cohorts and countries for formal collaboration, and professional and personal relationships with both Alumnae and Mentors.
- » **Creation of new STEM Networks.** A slightly higher number of Alumnae are plugging into existing networks where they had connections before the TechWomen program, than are starting new networks of STEM women. Those who do start new networks of STEM women seek to either replicate the supportive community they experienced during the program or to start chapters of existing STEM initiatives or formalize existing networks. Alumnae are overwhelmingly mentoring women and girls in their home countries, both formally and informally, and most of these mentorships are with women and girls in STEM fields.
- » **Connections with TechWomen Mentors.** Most Mentors still interact with their mentees about once a year (18.4 percent) or several times a year (20.4 percent), but very few are in close, frequent contact. Alumnae had an average of 6.85 relationships with Mentors, and Mentors reported an average of 10.78 relationships with Alumnae, suggesting that each Alumna and Mentor maintains a healthy level of engagement in the network.



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Contact Us: ECAevaluation@state.gov

2. To what extent are TechWomen Alumnae starting new networks of STEM women? To what extent are they plugging into existing networks of STEM women in their home communities?

3. To what extent are TechWomen Alumnae establishing and maintaining networks with TechWomen Mentors?

4. How connected are TechWomen Alumnae to U.S. embassies?

Who: The MELI Unit contracted Social Impact, Inc. to conduct the evaluation

When: April 2020 – August 2021

How: Social Impact, Inc. utilized a mixed-methods approach including two surveys, 171 virtual key informant interviews, and 22 focus group discussions in nine countries, and employed both social network analysis and thematic analysis.

How Much: \$447,157

- » **Connection with U.S. Embassies.** Alumnae engage with embassies through a variety of social and STEM-related events, often collaborating with the embassy to organize programming, workshops, to participate in festivals, and to secure access to funding opportunities.
- » **Mentor-Mentor Network.** One of the most significant yet unintended outcomes of the TechWomen program is the formation and growth of a strong mentor-to-mentor network. Mentors shared that their relationships with other TechWomen Mentors are varied in nature, with some relationships being of a strictly professional nature, while other Mentors shared that some of their closest friends are other Mentors, with the relationships formed as a result of their participation in the TechWomen program and their shared desire to lift each other up.

INTEGRATING RECOMMENDATIONS

ECA's TechWomen program team has adjusted its overarching procedures and practices stemming from this evaluation's recommendations:

- » **Consider Providing Support for Expansion of Country-Level STEM Networks.** ECA, in collaboration with implementing partner IIE, is considering the best way to increase STEM networks for participants who live in smaller or more rural communities. The selection criteria for seed grants will strive to consider diverse candidates, regions, professional and lived experiences, and projects.
- » **Explore Mentor Attrition Rate and Pursue Retention of High-Quality Mentors.** The mentor application period for the 2022 TechWomen program recently ended and as part of the application review process, ECA will assess the volume of prospective returning mentors and mentor attrition. The program is also considering retaining a third-party diversity consultant to support mentor recruitment. Additionally, the TechWomen program will host a 10th anniversary event to recognize the 700+ mentors for the contribution of their time, skills, resources, and networks over the last decade. ECA hopes this event will re-attract quality mentors who have been previously engaged.
- » **Utilize an Equity-Based Approach to Delegation Trips.** ECA, in partnership with implementing partner IIE, plans to adjust the selection criteria for delegation trips to increase diversity of individuals selected. ECA is also considering providing travel funds for individuals who work at host organizations unable to fund their employees' travel overseas. ECA is determining which of the proposed adjustments should be tested for the upcoming delegation trip application and selection period. The next planned delegation trip will take place in Spring 2023.
- » **Increase Virtual Opportunities/Programming.** ECA will continue to engage Alumnae through virtual events such as TechWomen Connect, an annual virtual engagement event with Zoom calls for different cohorts. ECA and the implementing partner will also continue to maximize the use of Facebook and LinkedIn to engage Alumnae and Mentors.

If you are interested in learning more, you can find the full evaluation report here:

https://eca.state.gov/files/bureau/eca_evaluation_division_assessment_final_report.pdf