

MEPI Alumni Connection

رابطة خريجي ميبي

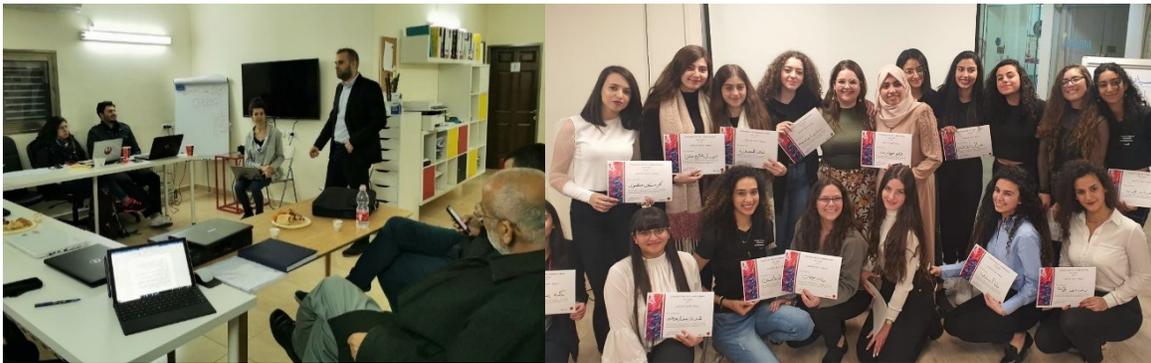


MEPI



2020 MEPI Alumni Survey

Israel Report



Acknowledgments

The U.S.-Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) Alumni Connection develops an active alumni network that fosters long-lasting relationships and opportunities to stimulate social and business entrepreneurship in the MENA region. The MEPI Alumni Connection supports community leaders from across the Middle East and North Africa to strengthen their networks, collaborate on leadership initiatives, and develop their skills in order to contribute to their communities.

IREX would like to acknowledge the contributions of MEPI alumni who took the time to respond thoughtfully to the biennial survey and share their experiences. Data collection outreach was conducted by the program team and supported by MEPI staff and partners. Hallie Davis conducted analysis and drafted this document with support from the MEPI Alumni Connection team.

This assessment is made possible through the MEPI Alumni Connection, a program of the U.S.-Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) of the U.S. Department of State (DoS) and implemented by IREX. The opinions expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Government.

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2020 MEPI Alumni Survey: Israel

MEPI Alumni Connection

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Respondent Profile

14 respondents
from 2006 to 2019 (program completion years)



Age

20-29 years 64%
30+ 36%

Gender

Female 50% Male 50%



MEPI Program

71% Student Leaders Program
21% Leadership Development Fellowship
7% Tomorrow's Leaders Scholarship Program

How was MEPI a life-changing experience?

Enhanced career opportunities

"MEPI opened many closed doors for me in my home country...it helped me to get a great position at an international organization."

Developed a broader perspective

"As someone who grew up very traditionally, MEPI helped me realize that the world is a much bigger place."

Built relationships with diverse individuals

"It allowed me to meet and meaningfully get to know people living parallel lives in countries I don't have access to."

Impact of MEPI

How MEPI has helped develop alumni's ability to make an impact in their communities.



Alumni Impact

Employment

Employment rate of respondents

86% of respondents are currently working.



Community Projects

Type of community project conducted



67% of respondents conducted at least one community project within the past two years.

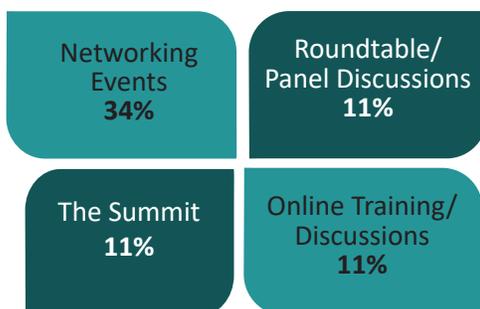
Leadership

73% of respondents have served in a leadership role in the past year.

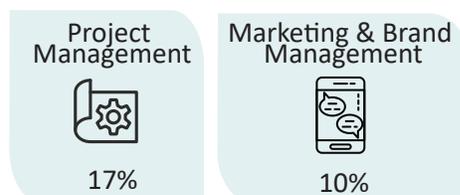


MEPI Alumni Interests

Desired Activities



Top Skills Respondents Would Like to Develop



Most helpful



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I. Introduction and Background

For nearly two decades, the U.S.-Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) has fostered partnerships between citizens, civil society, the private sector, and governments in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region to resolve local challenges and promote shared interests in the areas of participatory governance and economic opportunity and reform. The MEPI Alumni Connection aims to further strengthen and sustain a network of approximately 1,500 graduates of MEPI leadership programs, including the Student Leaders Program, the Tomorrow's Leaders Program, and the Leadership Development Fellowship (LDF) (previously the Leaders for Democracy Fellowship). The MEPI Alumni Connection engages with alumni by offering a variety of activities to promote community and business leadership and enhance professional development opportunities. Alumni from across the MENA region in Algeria, Bahrain, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, and Yemen are included in the MEPI Alumni Connection.

This report presents and analyzes the 2020 MEPI alumni survey results of respondents from Israel.

II. Methodology and Limitations

In 2020, the MEPI Alumni Connection team surveyed alumni of MEPI leadership programs to better understand the backgrounds and needs of these alumni, the impact of MEPI leadership programming in MENA, and assess mid-line results of the MEPI Alumni Connection. The survey is conducted biennially, and an initial needs assessment was conducted in 2018.

In July-September 2020, an online survey with up to 64 questions, provided in English and Arabic, was distributed to MEPI leadership alumni who had contact information in the MEPI Alumni Connection database and completed their program in 2003-2020. The questions were designed to learn more about engaging the MEPI alumni; the impact of MEPI programming on alumni professional, personal, and community leadership development; and the reach of MEPI programming and alumni in MENA.

Responses were collected using Survey Monkey. The survey was distributed initially to a representative group, 20% of alumni, to test its effectiveness over the course of a week. The order of questions was subsequently adjusted, and fewer questions became required to encourage survey completion and response rate. The survey was then distributed to the remaining 80% of alumni. Alumni who had not completed the survey received approximately weekly reminders via SurveyMonkey. Alumni were encouraged to complete the survey by IREX, MEPI, U.S. Embassies, and other MEPI leadership program stakeholders via program platforms and activities. Additionally, team members called a selection of alumni from diverse programs and countries who had not responded to the survey to encourage them. Alumni who completed the survey were eligible to be randomly selected for a professional development honorarium.

The survey was closed in September 2020 with a response rate of 30% (504/1663). Duplicates and any response from individuals not eligible for the MEPI Alumni Connection were removed for a total sample of 408 eligible responses. For analysis and reporting, the open-ended answers in Arabic were translated into English. The results were analyzed through quantitative data analysis and qualitative coding. The data has been disaggregated and further analyzed by gender, citizenship, age, and MEPI program and program completion year, where relevant. Due to the lengthy nature of the survey, the response rates for many of

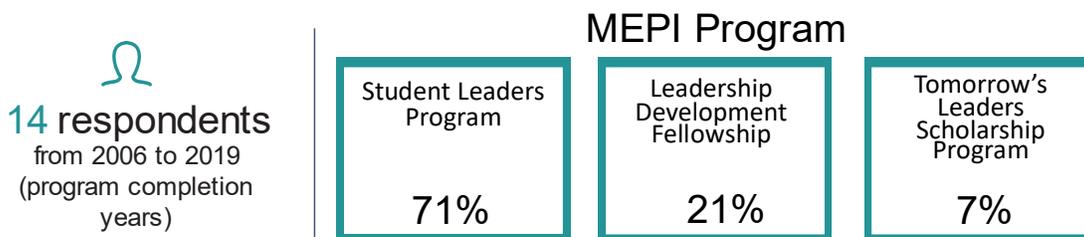
the questions were uneven and low. Therefore, all percentages utilized in this report are calculated as a percentage (%) of total respondents for each corresponding question. Responses included in this report represent 14% (14/100) of all eligible alumni from Israel who had contact information available at the time of the survey.

III. Results

A. Respondent Profile

The survey includes 14 alumni respondents whose citizenship is Israel, making up approximately 3% (14/408) of the total sample of alumni respondents across all participating countries and programs. There is an exact representation of male and female respondents, as each gender makes up 50% (7/14) of the sample. However, younger respondents have a higher representation as 64% (9/14) are 20-29 years old, and 36% (5/14) are 30 years old or older.

Across MEPI leadership programs, 71% (10/14) of respondents are alumni of the Student Leaders Program, 21% (3/14) are alumni of the Leadership Development Fellowship, and 7% (1/14) are alumni of the Tomorrow's Leaders Scholarship Program. The year respondents completed their MEPI program ranges from 2006-2019. However, there are gaps in completion years as no respondents completed their program in 2009-2011 or 2013-2014. Five respondents (36%) completed their program in 2006-2012, and nine (64%) completed their program in 2015-2019.



Findings also show that most of the respondents' current or primary country of residence is Israel, 78% (7/9), with two respondents (22%) residing in the West Bank or Gaza.

B. Impact of MEPI

Survey results show that respondents' participation in their MEPI program had a significant impact on their lives. Participation in their MEPI program helped respondents grow in their careers, gain a broader and more global perspective, and build friendships with individuals from diverse backgrounds. Additionally, respondents felt that MEPI enhanced their ability to impact their communities positively. Respondents noted their ability was improved because they were able to build new skills, strengthen their personal identity, and develop new relationships.

In turn, alumni respondents have had an impact in their careers and entrepreneurial activities, in their communities, and as leaders. Respondents work across a variety of industries and have started businesses and organizations. Additionally, respondents' participation in their MEPI program has helped them develop applicable job skills. In their communities, respondents have been active, conducting projects

mainly focused on education and youth engagement. Moreover, respondents' impact also extends to serving in leadership roles and demonstrating leadership in their communities through mentorship.

MEPI Impact on Alumni

MEPI was a positive and transformative experience for respondents. They reported that participation in their MEPI leadership program changed their lives and enabled them to have a greater impact in their communities.

Among five respondents, four (80%) agreed that MEPI was a life-changing experience for them. These four respondents noted that MEPI helped enhance their career opportunities, develop a broader perspective, and build relationships with individuals from different backgrounds.

How was MEPI a life-changing experience?

"MEPI opened many closed doors for me in my home country...it helped me to get a great position at an international organization." 

 "The program did change my life and my way to look at things, it is a great experience that helped me grow up and learn a lot...see a new world and meet new people from all over the world."

"As someone who grew up very traditionally, MEPI helped me realize that the world is a much bigger place than the little village I grew up in." 

 "It allowed me to meet and meaningfully get to know people living parallel lives in countries I don't have access to. It allowed me to make sure that they also got to know me."

In addition to being a transformative experience, respondents also stated that MEPI helped improve their ability to impact their communities. Respondents noted that MEPI helped them build skills to initiate and expand projects in their communities, better understand themselves and their identity, and build relationships with others. Of nine respondents, four (44%) said MEPI helped them build new skills, three (33%) said it strengthened their personal identity, and two (22%) said it helped them develop new relationships.

How MEPI has helped develop alumni's ability to make an impact in their communities.



Note: Data based on nine respondents.



Build New Skills

“It helped [me] learn how to construct and build a project from the basis and helped me [learn] that I should start small and then go bigger.”

“I developed the education branch which I lead in the organization that I work in.”

“It allowed [me] to gain more experience in civic work and community initiatives.”

MEPI helped develop “leadership tools and communication skills.”



Strengthen Personal Identity

“I think one of the main things that I have developed in MEPI has been understanding and accepting my complex identity as a Palestinian and Israeli citizen. This identity is what I have been exposing people...to [in] my community, and its complexity.”

“The program helped me figure out my abilities and find ways to use them to achieve good work.”

“It has made me realize the power within and with the right skill set anything is possible.”



Develop New Relationships

“Relationship [and] networking with alumni helped to start my own project.”

“It allowed me to meet people from different countries without barriers.”

Alumni Impact

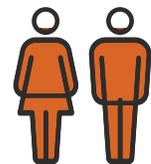
Alumni respondents have made an impact in their careers and entrepreneurial activities, their communities, and as leaders. Additionally, they have been able to use their experiences from MEPI to have an even larger impact on their communities.

Employment and Entrepreneurship

At the time the survey was conducted, 86% (12/14) of respondents said they were currently working with paid employment. The employment rate is slightly higher among males and younger respondents. All males 100% (7/7) and 71% (5/7) of females reported there were employed. Additionally, 89% (8/9) of younger respondents and 80% (4/5) of older respondents were employed. Across MEPI programs, 67% (2/3)

Employment rate of respondents

86% of respondents are currently working.

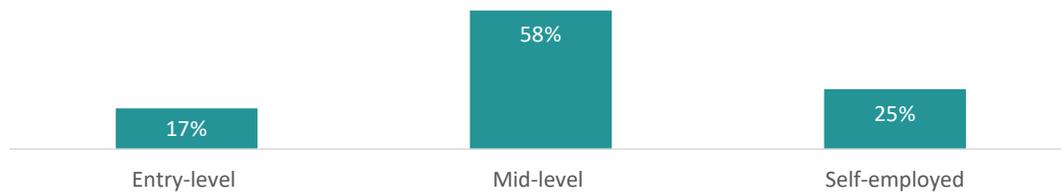


Note: Data based on 14 respondents to the question, “Are you currently working? (Only select yes, if you have paid employment).”

of respondents from the Leadership Development Fellowship and 90% (9/10) of respondents from the Student Leaders Program were employed.

Of 12 employed respondents, 17% (2/12) held an entry-level position, 58% (7/12) a mid-level position, and 25% (3/12) were self-employed. No respondents indicated they held executive-level positions. One male and one female held entry-level positions. Among mid-level positions, four were female and three were male. Additionally, all three respondents who indicated they were self-employed were male.

Employed respondents' position



Note: Data based on 12 respondents who indicated they were currently working and provided their position.

Respondents work across a variety of organizations, businesses, and industries. Of 12 respondents, two worked in education services and two in warehousing information (i.e., media, telecommunications, data, and IT). One respondent reported working in each of the following areas: construction/manufacturing, extraction utilities, finance, scientific research, technical services, and transportation. Additionally, two respondents indicated “other,” which was categorized as religious, civic engagement, or grant-making.



46% of respondents started their own business or organization after their experience with MEPI.



While a smaller percentage of respondents reported they were self-employed or owned a business, 46% (6/13) indicated they had started their own business or organization after their experience with MEPI. This discrepancy in responses may be because some respondents started a business in the past but are no longer business owners. Additionally, respondents may not rely on income from their business and therefore do not consider themselves self-employed, or they started an organization and do not consider themselves to be self-employed or a business owner. Among those who started a business/organization, 67% (4/6) said they had support from a partner(s) they met through their MEPI program or the alumni network. This result indicates respondents' participation in their MEPI program, and the alumni network, has enhanced their opportunities for entrepreneurial activities.

MEPI has also helped respondents be successful in their careers as they have applied skills learned from their MEPI program in their current positions. One respondent noted, “I apply what I have learned through the workshops and events that I run, as well as through my five collaborations with my staff.” Another said, “it helps me be a team worker and cope under pressure.”



“I'm able to influence other's perspective on the Middle East and Arab world. I'm using my skills of active empathy to develop my team both professionally and personally.”

Community Projects

Respondents have been active in their communities as 67% (8/12) have conducted at least one community project within the past two years. Among the eight respondents who conducted a project, five were male and three were female. Regarding age, six of the eight were 20-29 years old and two were 30 years old or older.

Among respondents who conducted a community project, the most common was focused on education, 36%. Additional projects were focused on youth engagement (29%), civic engagement (14%), and professional skills (14%). An additional 7% conducted projects on gender equality and social inclusion.¹



Note: Data based on seven responses to the question “What type of project did you conduct?” Respondents could select multiple options.

Among respondents who conducted at least one community project, six provided an estimate of how many people they believe benefited from their projects. According to responses, more than 3,000 individuals were positively impacted by respondents’ community projects. The number of beneficiaries reported ranged from 50 to 1500.

Respondents also provided accounts of their greatest success or result. One respondent mentioned, their community project “helped youth and groups of women to seek education and get involved in community and social activities that benefit the broader community.”



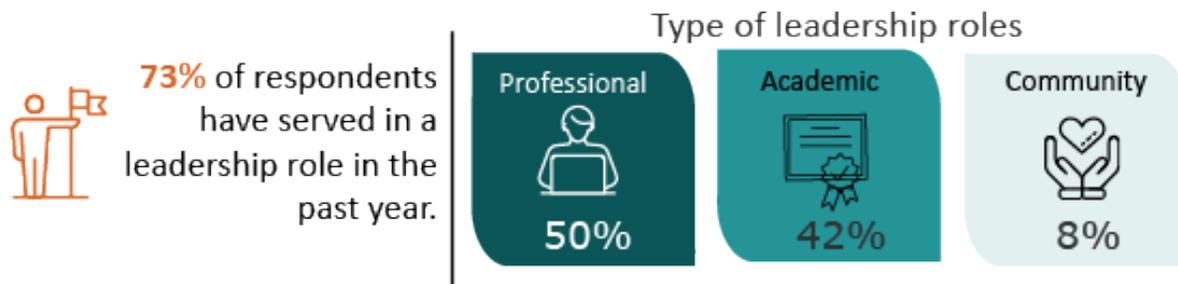
“I asked my organization to allow me to lecture others on the Arab Community, and the biggest success has been the willingness and acceptance of my Jewish employer to allow me to speak freely and my Jewish colleagues who were intrigued and sought to learn and discuss our reality in an inclusive manner - something they have passed on to their families and respective communities.”

Leadership

Respondents have also impacted their communities by serving in leadership roles. Of 11 respondents, 73% (8/11) have served in a leadership role within the past year. Among respondents who have served in leadership, four were male and four were female. Additionally, 50% were in a professional setting, 42% were in an academic setting, and 8% in a community setting.²

¹ Percentages are based on seven responses in which multiple options could be selected.

² Percentages based on eight respondents who served in a leadership setting and could select multiple options.



Note: Percentages for type of leadership roles are based on eight respondents who could select multiple options.

Beyond serving in a formal leadership role, respondents have also demonstrated leadership in their communities through mentorship and guiding others. When asked how leadership skills have been used to help people, one respondent mentioned, “I offer my experience in project management and coaching for groups and individuals.” Another said, “I’m a big believer of giving back...I help mentor younger people who need guidance.”

C. Impact of the MEPI Alumni Connection

The MEPI Alumni Connection offers numerous activities for alumni to grow their network and develop new professional skills. Many respondents have participated in these activities, with webinars having the highest participation. Additionally, lack of time was the main reason respondents did not participate in any alumni activities.

Respondents’ engagement with the MEPI Alumni Connection has led to numerous positive outcomes. They built new relationships and conducted numerous events and activities to promote specific issues and awareness. Moreover, the MEPI Alumni Connection likely has a broader impact on communities as many respondents have shared what they learned from alumni activities with colleagues and family.

Alumni engagement

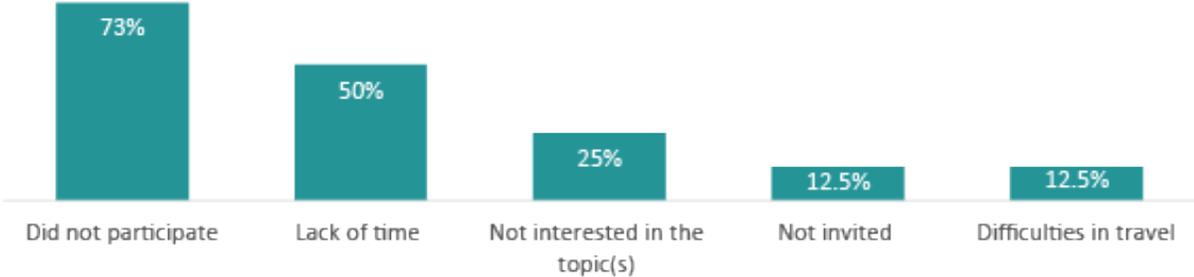
Professional Development Activities

Of 11 respondents, 27% (3/11) participated in networking or professional development opportunities through the MEPI Alumni Connection within the past two years. Among the three respondents who participated, two were male and one was female. Additionally, all three respondents were from the Student Leaders Program.

The MEPI Alumni Connection offers numerous types of networking and professional development opportunities to appeal to diverse alumni. These opportunities include webinars, networking events, meetings, virtual discussions, mentorship, online training, the Summit, opportunities to meet and speak, and the Alumni of the Year Award. The activities with the highest participation were webinars (19%). The next most highly participated activities were networking events (13%), meetings (13%), virtual discussions (13%), mentorship (13%), and online training (13%).

Of 11 respondents, 73% (8/11) said they did not participate in any networking or professional development opportunities through the MEPI Alumni Connection. These respondents were then asked to provide their primary reason for not participating. The most common reason, 50% (4/8), was a lack of time to attend any events. Additionally, two respondents (25%) said they were not interested in the topic of any events, one respondent (12.5%) indicated it was due to not being invited, and one respondent (12.5%) said they could not attend due to travel difficulties.

Respondents’ reasons for not participating in alumni activities



Note: Data based on eight respondents who did not participate in any networking or professional development opportunities.

Impact of Alumni Engagement

The MEPI Alumni Connection has helped alumni build relationships with new alumni and one another. As a result of participation in a MEPI Alumni Connection activity, 55% (6/11) of respondents have built relationships with new alumni. Additionally, half of those respondents, 50% (3/6), have built relationships with more than five new alumni, indicating that alumni activities help foster numerous relationships.

 **20** events and activities were led by **6** respondents. 

The MEPI Alumni Connection has also helped enhance collaborations. Respondents have collaborated with civil society organizations to conduct events that promote specific issues and awareness. In the past two years, 20 events and activities were led by six respondents. Among these six respondents, four were male and two were female. Additionally, five of the six respondents were 20-29 years old, and one was 30 years old or older.

The MEPI Alumni Connection likely has a broader influence beyond its direct impact on helping respondents develop new relationships and conduct events. Of 11 respondents, 64% (7/11) said they have shared what they learned through a MEPI alumni activity (event, training, partnership, etc.) with others. Among respondents who said they had shared what they learned, 20% have done so with colleagues, 20% in-person, 16% online, 16% with family, 12% on social media, 8% with other MEPI alumni, 4% with other Department of State alumni, and 4% in a publication.³ Therefore, MEPI alumni activities likely benefit alumni and their colleagues, friends, and family.

³ Percentages based on seven responses in which multiple options could be selected.

D. MEPI Alumni Interests

Overall, respondents feel comfortable and secure participating in MEPI Alumni Connection activities. Additionally, some respondents agreed that the resources provided by the MEPI Alumni Connection are appropriate.

Respondents expressed their interests and preferences for different activities and opportunities they would like. Respondents indicated that networking events, including networking events with professionals and diplomats, were the type of activities they would most like to see implemented through the MEPI Alumni Connection. Regarding the format of events and training, respondents would most prefer online events during evening hours and 2-4-day intensive training. Additionally, respondents noted that they would like to develop skills in brand management and project management. In terms of support, respondents indicated that the most helpful form of financial support would be through grants and investments. Having a professional mentor would be the most beneficial form of non-financial support.

Alumni Needs

About a quarter of respondents, 27% (3/11), agreed that the MEPI Alumni Connection provides appropriate and relevant resources to their current professional or academic level. Additionally, respondents were asked if they felt secure and comfortable when participating in MEPI Alumni Connection activities. Among 10 respondents, 60% reported that they always felt secure, and 40% often felt secure. Additionally, there were no respondents who said they rarely felt secure.

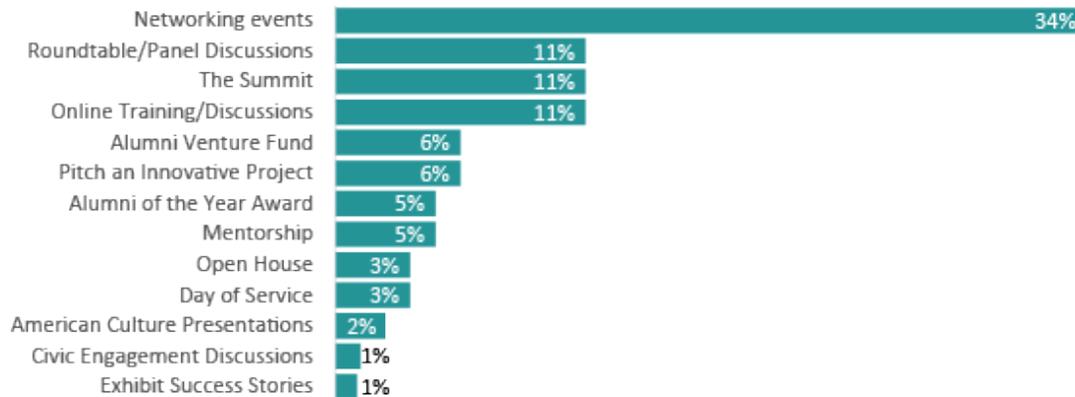
Opportunities to Further Strengthen and Grow the MEPI Alumni Connection

There are several opportunities for the MEPI Alumni Connection to continue and further strengthen its support for alumni. The survey included questions to understand respondents' interests in activities and opportunities with the MEPI Alumni Connection. Question topics included activities alumni would like to see implemented, preferences for format of events, skills they would like to develop, as well as beneficial financial and non-financial support they would like to receive.

Respondents stated that the activities they would most like to see implemented were networking events (34%), such as networking events with diplomats and professionals. The next most desired activities were panel and round table discussions (11%), the Summit (11%), and online events (11%), including online training, webinars, and virtual discussions. Other activities included the Alumni Venture Fund (6%) and the ability to pitch an innovative project (6%)⁴

⁴ Data based on 13 responses in which multiple options could be selected.

Respondents' desired activities



Note: Data based on 13 responses in which multiple options could be selected.

The most common responses regarding the format of events/training were online events during evening hours (26%) and 2-4-day intensive training (20%). Additional responses included in-person events during weekends (14%), online events during weekends (11%), in-person events during evening hours (11%), 1-day training (9%), online events during work hours (6%), and in-person training during work hours (3%).

Respondents were also asked to select the skills they would most like to develop to advance their community and professional leadership. Among all respondents, project management (17%) and marketing and brand management (10%) were the most preferred skills. Other skills respondents would like to develop included women and gender issues (7%), renewable energy/environmental issues (7%), conflict resolution (7%), developing public-private partnerships (7%), leadership development (7%), and technology and entrepreneurship (7%).⁵

In addition to activities and skills, respondents were asked what financial and non-financial resources would be most beneficial in helping them feel prepared to launch and/or improve new projects. Respondents indicated that the most beneficial financial resource would be a grant (30%) and/or an investment (30%). An additional 13% said a donation would help them feel prepared. Instead of choosing a specific resource, 13% of respondents said that all financial resources would be helpful (i.e., grant, investment, donation, and loan) and 9% said that no financial resources were needed. Additionally, the financial resource respondents indicated would be least helpful was a loan (4%).⁶

Respondents' desired financial resources



Note: Data based on 14 responses in which multiple options could be selected.

⁵ Data for the format of events and preferred skills was based on 14 respondents; multiple options could be selected.

⁶ Data based on 14 responses; multiple options could be selected.

Respondents indicated that the most beneficial non-financial resource would be a professional mentor (30%), followed by having access to alumni or professionals with relevant experience (26%), and having a partner or partners (15%). Other responses for helpful non-financial resources included access to in-person training (19%) and access to online training (11%). These results suggest that partnerships and professional collaborations may help respondents feel more prepared to launch an initiative than formal training.⁷

IV. Conclusion and Recommendations

MEPI has significantly impacted respondents' lives and enhanced their ability to make an impact in their communities. MEPI has helped transform respondents' lives by advancing their career opportunities, developing a broader perspective, and fostering friendships among diverse individuals. MEPI has also improved respondents' ability to impact their communities by enhancing their skills, strengthening their identity, and helping them develop new relationships.

Alumni respondents have been able to use their MEPI experience to have an impact in their careers and entrepreneurial activities, in their communities, and as leaders. Many respondents are working in various industries and have started businesses and organizations. Respondents have also applied their skills, gained from MEPI, to serve as mentors and influence others. Respondents have also conducted community projects, predominately in education and youth engagement. Moreover, respondents have also impacted their communities by serving in leadership roles.

Participation in the MEPI Alumni Connection has also been impactful for respondents as it provides numerous opportunities for them to grow their network and develop new professional skills. Respondents' participation was highest in webinars and networking events. Respondents' engagement and participation in these activities have led to new partnerships and collaborations with civil society organizations.

There are also opportunities for the MEPI Alumni Connection to strengthen alumni relations and provide further support. Respondents indicated that they would like the opportunity to participate in more networking events and roundtable or panel discussions. The format of events and training most preferred by respondents were online events during evening hours and 2–4-day intensive training. Additionally, respondents would like to develop skills in brand management and project management. To further support alumni's ability to improve or launch new projects, respondents said grants and investments would be the most beneficial financial resource. Additionally, a professional mentor was indicated by respondents as the most beneficial non-financial resource.

⁷ Data based on 13 responses; multiple options could be selected.

This assessment is made possible through the MEPI Alumni Connection, a program of the U.S.-Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) of the U.S. Department of State and implemented by IREX.

<https://www.irex.org/project/mepi-alumni-connection>