BUREAU OF EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS

MONITORING, EVALUATION, LEARNING, AND INNOVATION UNIT

EVALUATION REPORT

Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative (YSEALI) Academic Fellowship

JANUARY 2023

EVALUATION

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The evaluators at District Communications Group and NORC at the University of Chicago are grateful to The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs at the U.S. Department of State for their collaboration and support in carrying out this study. They are also indebted to the program team, partner organizations, exchange program participants, and staff at posts who participated in this study. Their contributions enriched this report.

EVALUATION REPORT

YOUNG SOUTHEAST ASIAN LEADERS INITIATIVE ACADEMIC FELLOWSHIP

Revised January 2023

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ACRONYMS

AEIF	Alumni Engagement Innovation Fund (grant program)
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
DCG	The District Communications Group
DoS	U.S. Department of State
ECA	Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs
EQ	Evaluation question
EWC	East West Center
FGD	Focus group discussion(s)
FY	Fiscal year
IDI	In-depth interview
IP	Implementing partner
MELI	Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning, and Innovation Unit of ECA
UConn	University of Connecticut
UM	University of Montana
UNO	University of Nebraska, Omaha
USG	U.S. Government
YSEALI	Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative

YSEALI ALUMNI NETWORK NAMES

AMPLFY	Alumni Mobilization Program through Leadership and Influence to Filipino Youth
FUSAAC	Fulbright and Undergraduate State Alumni Association of Cambodia
MAAP	Malaysian Alumni of American Exchange Programs
TUSAA	Thailand-United States Alumni Association
TYN	Thailand YSEALI Network
USGAA	United States Government Alumni Association of the Philippines
VUSAC	Vietnam-U.S. Alumni Club
YCOM	YSEALI Council of Malaysia

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

EVALUATION PURPOSE AND EVALUATION QUESTIONS

This evaluation explores the YSEALI Academic Fellowship's outcomes since its inception in 2013, with a focus on short- and long-term outcomes for alumni including skill-building and professional advancement. The evaluation also examines whether and how post-program activities sustain and amplify benefits of the five-week program. In addition, the evaluation uses a complexity-aware lens to explore the effect of factors outside the program's control (e.g., the home country setting and the COVID-19 pandemic) on participant experience and outcomes.

PROGRAM, PROJECT, OR ACTIVITY BACKGROUND

This evaluation examines the YSEALI Academic Fellowship, which is designed to strengthen leadership development across the 10 member states of the Association of Southeast Asian ASEAN[1] and Timor-Leste, deepen engagement with young leaders aged 18-25 on key regional and global challenges, and strengthen people-to-people ties between the United States and Southeast Asia. The Academic Fellowship, which is managed by DoS ECA, includes a five-week educational exchange at a U.S. university and is focused on themes of civic engagement, environmental issues, and social entrepreneurship and economic development.

Following completion of the educational exchange, alumni may participate in community projects and alumni networks which foster long-term connections with peers, posts, U.S. university IPs and others. Both the IPs and posts in the fellows' home countries play an important role in post-program activities.

EVALUATION DESIGN, METHODS, AND LIMITATIONS

The mixed-methods complexity-aware evaluation was conducted in phases, with each

1. ASEAN members states: Brunei, Burma (Myanmar), Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam.

phase informing subsequent tasks and more deeply exploring emergent themes. The discovery phase included a document review and eight IDIs with program stakeholders. The next phase of the evaluation (Phase 1) was a study of YSEALI alumni post-program activities, which involved a literature review and 33 IDIs with posts and program alumni. The Alumni and Participant Survey design (Phase 2) drew heavily on the findings from Phase 1, ultimately garnering responses from 802 alumni (a response rate of 58 percent). Finally, 16 focus group FGDs with alumni were segmented according to the results of the survey to further understand key themes. Alumni and other stakeholders were highly responsive to inquiries from the evaluation team, though the findings in this report are based primarily in self-reported experiences of alumni and may not reflect the opinions of less engaged alumni who did not choose to participate.

EVIDENCE AND FINDINGS

EQ1: How has the YSEALI program and experience in the United States contributed to the advancement of fellows' professional and academic goals? What specific aspects of the YSEALI experience do fellows perceive as the most important contributors to their professional and academic pathways?

- Alumni suggested that the prestige of participating in the YSEALI program opened professional and academic doors in their lives since participation in the program.
- The majority of YSEALI respondents reported that the YSEALI program contributed positively to their professional and academic goals by improving their knowledge and skills and expanding their ability to collaborate with others in their field.
- YSEALI alumni suggested that improvements in soft skills such as leadership, collaboration, and confidence were an important, long-lasting outcome of the exchange program.
- Some alumni stated that practical skill-building related to program management, proposal writing, and fundraising was particularly valuable in advancing their academic and professional goals and wished for a greater focus on these elements of the program.
- Alumni voiced that the program's emphasis on cross-cultural communication and open exchange helped them expand personal and professional horizons and connect with people across the region and internationally.
- Despite indications that alumni overall felt the program material was relevant to them, some expressed a desire for more in-depth lessons related to the subject area (environment, civic engagement, entrepreneurship) and a greater tailoring to the Southeast Asian context.

EQ2: How have networks and other post-program activities contributed to alumni outcomes (academic, professional, and other)?

- The majority of alumni reported that relationships formed through YSEALI have contributed positively to their academic, professional, and personal outcomes.
- About a third of alumni survey respondents indicated that networks also provide more concrete benefits, such as mentorship opportunities, professional references, and funding resources.
- Alumni reported that community projects provided an important opportunity to apply the lessons they learned during the program, representing a step toward alumni outcomes.
- The majority of alumni survey respondents indicated that they implemented or were continuing to implement community projects.
- Small grants from posts and IPs appear to be contributors to post-program community project success.
- However, funding is not available to cover all alumni's projects, and some alumni noted that a lack of funding was a barrier to implementing their projects.
- Some alumni can carry their projects out independently, that is, without funding from posts, IPs, or AEIF.
- Some alumni suggested that more IP support and feedback would improve the success and sustainability of community projects.

EQ2.1: How does YSEALI contribute to network development and health?

- All YSEALI stakeholders appear to contribute to network development and health in some way, but levels of involvement and coordination vary.
- Posts and IPs provide support to their regional networks (affiliated with the YSEALI institutes that they implement), including staff time, management of email listservs, and/or social media pages or groups.
- Participants shared that their time in the United States did not allow for a great deal of interaction with other participants — especially outside of their cohort — or with Americans, aside from the few professors that they worked with directly from the IPs. They also shared that it did not enable enough social time among their cohort members.

EQ 2.2: What types of networks effectively contribute to alumni outcomes? Do regional and international network connections contribute to alumni outcomes?

- Many participants forge strong ties with a small group of cohort-mates and those they interact with during the program. Alumni find it easier to stay in touch with other alumni

from their own home country and report that those connections are the most helpful to them. Connections between cohort members, especially those from different home countries, are primarily sustained by self-organized efforts.
- Connections with U.S. individuals do not seem to contribute strongly to alumni outcomes.
- Home country alumni associations appear to be particularly effective in connecting YSEALI alumni and furthering alumni professional and academic goals.
- Membership in a home country alumni association supports alumni goals by facilitating networking with peers and connecting them to resources.
- No single home country association type is most effective in supporting alumni's professional and academic goals, suggesting that different models may be better suited to particular contexts.
- Members of alumni associations that receive post support expressed that access to post funding and nonfinancial support are key benefits of membership.

EQ2.3: To what extent are YSEALI alumni networks formally or informally structured?

- Data show that alumni connections take place within, across, and outside of 19 formal and informal networks.
  - Ten home country alumni networks have formed associations with explicit governance structures.
  - Six posts coordinate informal home country networks.
  - Three regional networks are informal; none is represented by an association.
- Qualitative sources indicate that alumni often collaborate in small, tight-knit, time-limited groups to carry out post-program projects and serve as peer resources related to future academic and career choices

EQ2.4: How does the effectiveness of networks vary over time?

- Alumni who participate in associations reported higher engagement overall than those not in associations.
- Qualitative research indicates that there is decreased engagement with large cohort-wide alumni chats and online groups over time.

EQ 2.5: How might post-programming activities amplify the resources in fellows' home country contexts to achieve outcomes?

- Data suggests that funds and support available through the YSEALI program itself may be insufficient, as alumni turn to external resources to support ongoing projects

upon their return home or struggle to launch their project effectively due to funding constraints.
- Alumni share suggestions of how additional post-program engagement would also be welcomed and support them personally as some of them struggle with personal challenges when confronted with the disconnect between their time in the U.S. and their home country contexts.

EQ3: How does the fellows' home country context (such as their social network, work or academic setting, or broader social/political context) help or hinder fellows as they apply lessons learned from the YSEALI program?

- While many alumni agreed that they were able to apply lessons learned from YSEALI in their home countries, many shared that their home country contexts presented challenges. In some countries, the political climate as well as getting access to funding and other support was challenging. While alumni from Singapore had the most ease upon their return home, those from Myanmar faced the most extreme struggles in applying the lessons they had learned.

EQ4: How has participation in YSEALI influenced fellows' perceptions of the United States?

- Most alumni expressed that the YSEALI program led to increases in more favorable views of American people.
- Alumni reported that the program especially improved their understanding of free speech, religious and ethnic diversity, values and culture, and democracy in the United States.

EQ4.1: Has the program motivated fellows to take action inspired by their perceptions of the United States? If yes, what kind of actions?

- Many alumni reported that participation in the YSEALI program increased their ability and commitment to carrying out initiatives and projects in their community.

EQ5: How do alumni see themselves in relation to the regional ASEAN community?

- Alumni expressed that their participation in the YSEALI program resulted their feeling closer connection to the ASEAN community.

EQ6: The program is considering the addition of a reciprocal component of the program in the ASEAN region. Do fellows see it as valuable to their careers to bring American fellows to their countries? What do fellows recommend as impactful ways to set up such a program?

- The vast majority of alumni saw value in a reciprocal exchange that would bring U.S. fellows to their countries.
- Alumni recommended that the program highlight daily life in their country and ensure that U.S. fellows experience their country through homestays and excursions.

CONCLUSIONS

The evaluation indicates that the YSEALI Academic Fellowship is meeting its objectives and underscores the importance of strengthening post-program activities, such as community projects and alumni networks, through resources and coordination support.

The evaluation demonstrated that the YSEALI Academic Fellowship influences participants' opinions and trajectories in several desired ways, including achieving professional and academic goals such as: career advancements; increased knowledge and skills in their areas of interest; pursuing higher degrees; and access to professional and academic networks. Alumni credited the program with a greater sense of solidarity with the ASEAN region and more positive views of the United States and the American people. Additionally, evidence gathered during the evaluation indicated that participants developed a suite of soft skills and confidence that strengthened their academic and professional interests and abilities.

Yet some alumni struggled to put their passions into action upon returning to their home countries. Sustained engagement and ability to employ their new knowledge can be dependent on the support they receive when they return home, leading to mixed legacies of the program in alumni's home countries, particularly those that are in the most politically repressive environments. Formal networks and grants that support alumni in launching community projects serve as a critical way to elongate the program lifecycle.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The evaluation produced three types of recommendations: those which can be taken during outreach and participant selection to make the program more diverse and inclusive; those which relate to the content and nature of the programming during the exchange; and those which can help foster longer-term outcomes and engagement among alumni after the exchange.

EVALUATION PURPOSE AND QUESTIONS

EVALUATION PURPOSE

This evaluation set out to determine how successful the YSEALI Academic Fellowship has been in meeting program aims, including the role of post-exchange programming in achieving and sustaining outcomes, and to examine assumptions underlying the program's theoretical basis. The evaluation provides evidence to inform programmatic decision-making to the ECA program team regarding the design, implementation, and improvement of the YSEALI Academic Fellowship. The findings also provide critical information to DoS, the U.S. Congress, and other stakeholders such as the U.S. academic institutions that have participated in the program.

This evaluation explored the program's effects and outcomes since its inception in 2013, with a focus on alumni short- and long-term outcomes in areas including skill-building and professional advancement. The evaluation also assessed the strength and sustainability of post-program activities and professional and educational networks created by the program and its stakeholders, the extent these networks have been leveraged by fellows to achieve outcomes, and the results of the program on educational trajectories and professions.

As discussed above, the YSEALI Academic Fellowship includes several complex aspects. Rather than describing the program's contribution in isolation, the evaluation explored the effect of factors outside the program's control (e.g., the home country setting and the COVID-19 pandemic) on participant experience and outcomes. Findings can help decision makers adapt nimbly and effectively to influence from the program context.

For example, the evaluation explored the relationship between fellows' home country contexts[2] with post-program networking activities and shed light on how to strengthen

2. Fellow home country context includes: 1) fellow socioeconomic status and personal situation; 2) fellow academic or work situation and/or pathways; and 3) social/political/economic events in the United States and/or home countries.

alumni networks and their contribution to outcomes.

Although the evaluation included several stakeholders involved in the YSEALI Academic Fellowship program, the evaluation team focused its inquiry on the fellows' perspectives on the program and the effect on their professional and educational goals. The participants — including their experience in the United States and its effect on their lives thereafter — were the principal interest. Anything that participants cited as consequential to their program experience and its effects was investigated to the fullest and reported.

EVALUATION QUESTIONS

The evaluation sought to answer the following questions.

1. How has the YSEALI program and experience in the United States contributed to the advancement of fellows' professional and academic goals? What specific aspects of the YSEALI experience do fellows perceive as the most important contributors to their professional and academic pathways?
2. How have networks and other post-program activities contributed to alumni outcomes (academic, professional, and other)?
    - 2.1. How does YSEALI contribute to network development and health?
    - 2.2. What types of networks[3] effectively contribute to alumni outcomes? Do regional and international network connections contribute to alumni outcomes?
    - 2.3. To what extent are YSEALI alumni networks formally or informally structured?
    - 2.4. How does the effectiveness of networks vary over time?
    - 2.5. How might post-programming activities amplify the resources in fellows' home country contexts to achieve outcomes?
3. How does the fellows' home country context (such as their social network, work or academic setting, or broader social/political context of home country) help or hinder fellows as they apply lessons learned from the YSEALI program?
4. How has participation in YSEALI influenced fellows' perceptions of the United States?
    - 4.1. Has the program motivated fellows to take action inspired by their perceptions of the United States? If yes, what kind of actions?
5. How do alumni see themselves in relation to the regional ASEAN community?
6. The program is considering the addition of a reciprocal component of the program in the United States. Do fellows see value to their own careers in bringing American

3. Networks may vary by characteristics such as: membership (American citizens, U.S. Embassy/Consulate, regional/national, other); degree of formality structure; leadership or facilitation (alumni, post, partners, combination); purpose of network (support or coordination); and frequency of contact or exchange.

fellows to their countries? What do fellows see as recommend as impactful ways to set up such a program?

PROGRAM BACKGROUND

The YSEALI suite of programs is designed to strengthen leadership development across the 10 member states of ASEAN[4] and Timor-Leste, deepen engagement with young leaders aged 18-35 on key regional and global challenges, and strengthen people-to-people ties between the United States and Southeast Asia. YSEALI, which began in 2013, is a broad initiative with components managed by a range of DoS actors, including the regional bureau, embassies, and ECA. It includes education on regional issues, professional skills-building, professional development workshops in the region, online networking, project seed money, and educational exchanges.

The focus of this evaluation is the YSEALI Academic Fellowship, which is managed by ECA. The Academic Fellowship includes the YSEALI educational exchange portion of the YSEALI program, covering themes of civic engagement, environmental issues, and social entrepreneurship and economic development. Targeted at undergraduate students and recent graduates in Southeast Asia, the Fellowship includes an intensive academic residency, community service activities, leadership development, and an integrated study tour. The Fellowship provides participants with an in-depth examination of a specific field of study, while also heightening their awareness of the history and evolution of U.S. society, culture, values, and institutions, broadly defined. The program addresses the influence of principles and values such as democracy, the rule of law, individual rights, freedom of expression, equality, diversity, and tolerance, while incorporating a focus on contemporary American life.

The program's core theory of change hypothesizes that participants use the program experience and networking to advance educational and professional goals while acting as citizen ambassadors to promote positive attitudes and values about the United States in their home countries. The program is five weeks in length; participants spend approximately four weeks at an academic institution and approximately seven days on an integrated educational study tour, including two to four days in Washington, D.C., and a one-day closing event. The program aims to foster ECA's mission to promote mutual understanding between citizens of other countries and citizens of the United

4. ASEAN member states: Brunei, Burma (Myanmar), Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam.

States. It is intended to include opportunities for participants to meet Americans from a variety of backgrounds, interact with their U.S. peers, and speak to appropriate student and civic groups about their experiences and life in their home countries.

Following the completion of the educational exchange, alumni may participate in community projects and alumni networks which foster long-term connections with peers, posts, IPs, and others. Both the U.S. universities, or IPs, that lead the YSEALI Academic Fellowship programming and posts in the fellows' home countries play an important role in post-program activities.

As a subject of evaluation, the YSEALI Academic Fellowship presents a wide range of complexities. While there were a number of uncertain, emergent, and dynamic aspects of the program and its context, this evaluation examined three aspects of complexity: home country context, post-program activities, and the global COVID-19 pandemic. Fellows hail from 11 Southeast Asian countries with immense social and political diversity within and between them. The influence of these varied contexts[5] on alumni outcomes was difficult to specify in advance. Post-program activities in each country also vary notably. The evaluation explored the complex relationship between fellows' home country contexts with post-program networking activities to shed light on whether and how post-program activities sustain and amplify benefits of the five-week program. The evaluation also examined participant experience during the COVID-19 pandemic.

5. Fellow home country context includes: 1) fellow socioeconomic status and personal situation; 2) fellow academic or work situation and/or pathways; and 3) social/political/economic events in the United States and/or home countries.

EVALUATION DESIGN, METHODS & LIMITATIONS

The evaluation team applied a complexity-aware lens throughout the investigation, teasing out the trends in outcomes and the variable cause-and-effect relationships behind them. With that lens came an inherent open-endedness toward emergent findings and dynamic aspects of the YSEALI Academic Fellowship. Put another way, the inquiry was expected to be fundamentally inductive in nature, following the evidence wherever it led.

Table 1. Evaluation design overview

Evaluation Component	Data Collection Methods	Evaluation Questions[6]
Discovery Phase	• IDIs with key DoS and program leaders (8 interviews) • Document review of internal and public program records, including those shared later by interviewees	To confirm the evaluation questions and inform the evaluation plan
Phase 1: Study of YSEALI Post-Program Activities: Alumni Networks and Community Projects	• Literature review on network typologies • IDIs with posts' alumni and YSEALI coordinators (11 interviews) • IDIs with alumni about their community projects (22 interviews)	**2, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3**, 2.4, and 2.5; alumni interviews also provided preliminary data for 1, 3, 4, 4.1, and 5
Phase 2: Alumni and Participant Survey	Survey of alumni and current participants of the Academic Fellowship (n=802, see details below)	**1, 2, 2.2, 2.4, 2.5, 3, 4, 4.1, 5, 6**

6. Bold indicates that the main source of data for this question comes from this evaluation phase.

Evaluation Component	Data Collection Methods	Evaluation Questions[6]
Phase 3: Alumni Focus Group Discussions	16 FGDs segmented strategically: • Institute/Implementing partner (2/ Institute) • Virtual program participants (2) • Country-specific contexts (1 the Philippines, 1 Thailand) • Groups segmented by membership in different types of alumni networks (6)	**1**, 2, **2.2**, 2.3, 2.4, **3, 4, 4.1, 5, 6**
Complexity-Aware Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (CAMEL) Capacity Building	Facilitated discussions throughout the evaluation; recommendations documented in final memo	To build capacity among MELI Unit for complexity-aware evaluations

As shown in the table above, the evaluation was conducted in phases, with each phase informing subsequent tasks. A phased approach allowed the evaluation team to adapt data collection tools to explore areas of interest that arose in earlier phases. The Alumni and Participant Survey design (Phase 2) drew heavily on the findings from the Study of YSEALI alumni post-program activities (Phase 1), while the alumni FGD design and sample selection (Phase 3) were based on results from the survey.

The overall analysis process was an iterative one, with several rounds of interim findings reports drafted after each round of fieldwork and periodic meetings of DCG's analysis team to capture insights, recommendations, and relevant findings to include in the final report. This report includes a synthesis of findings from all data sources and methods.

DATA COLLECTION METHODS

Data collection was conducted remotely, with the assistance of local coordinators and moderators. It included both qualitative and quantitative fieldwork, as well as desk research.

- Web survey: The evaluation team conducted a survey of alumni and participants of the YSEALI Academic Fellowship to explore a) how the YSEALI program and networks have contributed to academic and professional goals, perceptions of the United States, and building an ASEAN identity, and b) the perceived benefit of adding a reciprocal exchange

component to the YSEALI program for young leaders in the United States. The survey was fielded over a six-week period between June 22 and Aug. 1, 2022. The survey achieved a response rate of 58 percent (802 valid complete responses out of 1,374 potential respondents).

- Unless otherwise noted, all survey analysis included herein is reflective of all survey responses.

Table 2. Survey response rate by country

Country	Available Universe	Final Completes	Completion Rate
Indonesia	275	159	58 percent
The Philippines	178	127	71 percent
Vietnam	176	112	64 percent
Thailand	169	78	46 percent
Burma	150	58	39 percent
Malaysia	143	90	63 percent
Cambodia	94	71	76 percent
Laos	71	35	49 percent
Singapore	47	14	30 percent
Brunei	47	33	70 percent
Timor-Leste	24	20	83 percent
Grand Total	1,374	797[7]	58 percent

- **Semi-structured IDIs and FGDs (remote)**: IDIs were conducted as described in Table 1 above. For the FGDs (conducted between Aug. 1-13, 2022), the evaluation team identified groups of alumni and participants, or segments, qualified to represent specific participant experiences (Table 3). FGD data collection instruments were tailor-made for each segment; analysis compiled findings both within and across segments to answer evaluation questions.

7. There is a difference of five between total completes by country and total completes, because five responses did not provide information about country.

Table 3. Focus group segmentation and participation[8]

	Segment	Attendees
Group 1	Segment 1: Environmental Issues-focused alumni at the University of Montana (including the East-West Center and other partners)	6
Group 2	Segment 1: Environmental Issues-focused alumni at the University of Montana and the East-West Center	7
Group 3	Segment 1: Civic Engagement-focused alumni at the University of Nebraska, Omaha (and other partners)	2
Group 4	Segment 1: Civic Engagement-focused alumni at the University of Nebraska, Omaha (and other partners)	7
Group 5	Segment 1: Social Entrepreneurship and Economic Development-focused alumni at the University of Connecticut (UConn) (including other partners)	3
Group 6	Segment 1: Social Entrepreneurship and Economic Development-focused alumni at the University of Connecticut (UConn) (including other partners)	6
Group 7	Segment 2: Online participants	3
Group 8	Segment 2: Online participants	5
Group 9	Segment 3: The Philippines	6
Group 10	Segment 3: Thailand	5
Group 11	Segment 4: Any alumni from Indonesia, Laos, Singapore, Timor-Leste (not alumni network members)	5
Group 12	Segment 4: Members of Malaysia (YCOM), Thailand (TYN)	3
Group 13	Segment 4: Members of Philippines YSEALI AMPLFY	2
Group 14	Segment 4: Members of Cambodia FUSAAC	1
Group 15	Segment 4: Members of Thailand (TUSAA) and the Philippines (USGAAs)	2
Group 16	Segment 4: Members of Malaysia MAAP, Vietnam VUSAC North, and Vietnam VUSAC South members	3
	Grand Total of Participants	66

The evaluation team went through NORC's review board (IRB) and received a non-human subject research designation for all data collection tools and procedures.

8. Quotes from the qualitative data collection throughout this report reflect the group and segment numbers, as well as the relevant characteristics of the speaker, according to this breakdown.

ADAPTATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

This evaluation provides self-reported evidence of outcomes for program participants and alumni who completed the program since 2013. It also provides information about alumni networks in the 11 countries and the value-add the networks contribute to alumni. The evaluation was designed to provide valid and reliable data related to the evaluation questions; however, some limitations were factored into analysis and findings.

Findings from both the alumni and participant survey and the alumni focus groups and in-depth interviews may be subject to selection bias, where the characteristics of those that participate in the evaluation may be intrinsically different from the overall universe of program alumni. In this situation, those that agreed to provide information may be more positively inclined to the program and thus more willing to participate in the evaluation. The evaluation team mitigated this with several strategies to ensure a high survey response rate, including email reminders, social media group notifications, and personalized outreach via phone and email by local coordinators in each participating country. For the focus groups, the evaluation team mitigated potential selection bias by building relevant sample frames and randomly sampling alumni, as opposed to including an opt-in question in the survey or snowball sampling.

There was limited information available about the YSEALI Academic Fellowship program's performance to date. A pre/post survey of the Academic Fellowships was conducted from 2016-18. However, this data was not sufficient to support a longitudinal analysis of program outcomes over time. Because there is no baseline data or the existence of a control group or counter-factual aside from self-reported feedback which may be subjective, it is difficult to state conclusively that any changes demonstrated/reported by alumni can be attributable directly to the program. The evaluation team has ensured that reporting accurately reflects respondents' depiction of their lived experiences.

The evaluation used a complexity-aware lens to explore the effect of factors outside the program's control (e.g., the home country setting and the COVID-19 pandemic) on participant experience and outcomes. In accounting for real-world complexity, the evaluation does not intend to isolate the effect of the program by controlling for variation in 1) participant background and characteristics, 2) program activities and experiences, 3) the 11 alumni in-country networks and post-program activities, and/or 4) country contexts. Instead, the evaluation explores these areas of complexity. For data reported from the survey, there were no significant differences across demographic characteristics such as gender, country, and institute except where otherwise noted.

Qualitative data collection took place through remote platforms (e.g., phone and video conferencing software such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams). Some respondents may have been unable to communicate their experiences in a virtual setting based on local censorship/political considerations.

Throughout the evaluation, the evaluation team and MELI made decisions about how to iterate on proposed approaches and balance time constraints. As a result, some evaluation elements (for instance, ripple effect mapping workshops and joint analysis sessions with program alumni) were ultimately removed from the design.

Table 4. Methodological limitations by data source

Data Source	Limitations/Caveats
IP and post IDIs	Post and IP interviews were only able to provide secondhand information about aspects of EQs from the perspective of alumni, such as the impact of networks and post-program activities on alumni.
Alumni community project IDIs	Alumni interviewed for community project IDIs were selected purposively to discuss community projects and were thus not a random or representative sample of alumni; in particular, data from these IDIs are not representative of all alumni. Alumni community project IDIs were not intended to comprehensively cover EQs apart from EQ2, but they do provide preliminary data on several other EQs.
Alumni and participant survey	Some questions about experiences in the United States were only asked of cohorts prior to 2020, to account for the fact that later cohorts' travel to the United States for the exchange portion of the Fellowship was delayed due to COVID-19 and they would not have experienced these aspects. Even if these alumni traveled to the United States in 2022 on their rescheduled exchange, their experiences in the United States would be different than earlier cohorts due to COVID-19. For data reported from the survey, there were no significant differences across demographic characteristics such as gender, country, and institute, unless otherwise noted.

Data Source	Limitations/Caveats
Alumni FGDs	Comparisons between in-person and online program experiences were not always possible because by the time the FGDs were conducted most respondents had completed the in-person exchange.

EVIDENCE AND FINDINGS

This section synthesizes what was learned during the evaluation and presents analysis of aggregated evidence, organized by evaluation question.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO PROFESSIONAL AND ACADEMIC GOALS

EQ1: How has the YSEALI program and experience in the United States contributed to the advancement of fellows' professional and academic goals? What specific aspects of the YSEALI experience do fellows perceive as the most important contributors to their professional and academic pathways?

The majority of YSEALI respondents reported that the YSEALI program contributed positively to their professional and academic goals by improving their knowledge and skills and expanding their ability to collaborate with others in their field. Sixty-four percent of survey respondents suggested that the program contributed to both their academic and professional goals, while another 32 percent of respondents said it contributed to either their academic or professional advancement (Figure 1). More than half of survey respondents indicated that YSEALI improved skills and helped them connect and collaborate with networks of people who share their interests. FGD respondents noted that the overall experience widened their perspectives and clarified paths forward for them to be able to contribute meaningfully to their areas of interest in their home countries.

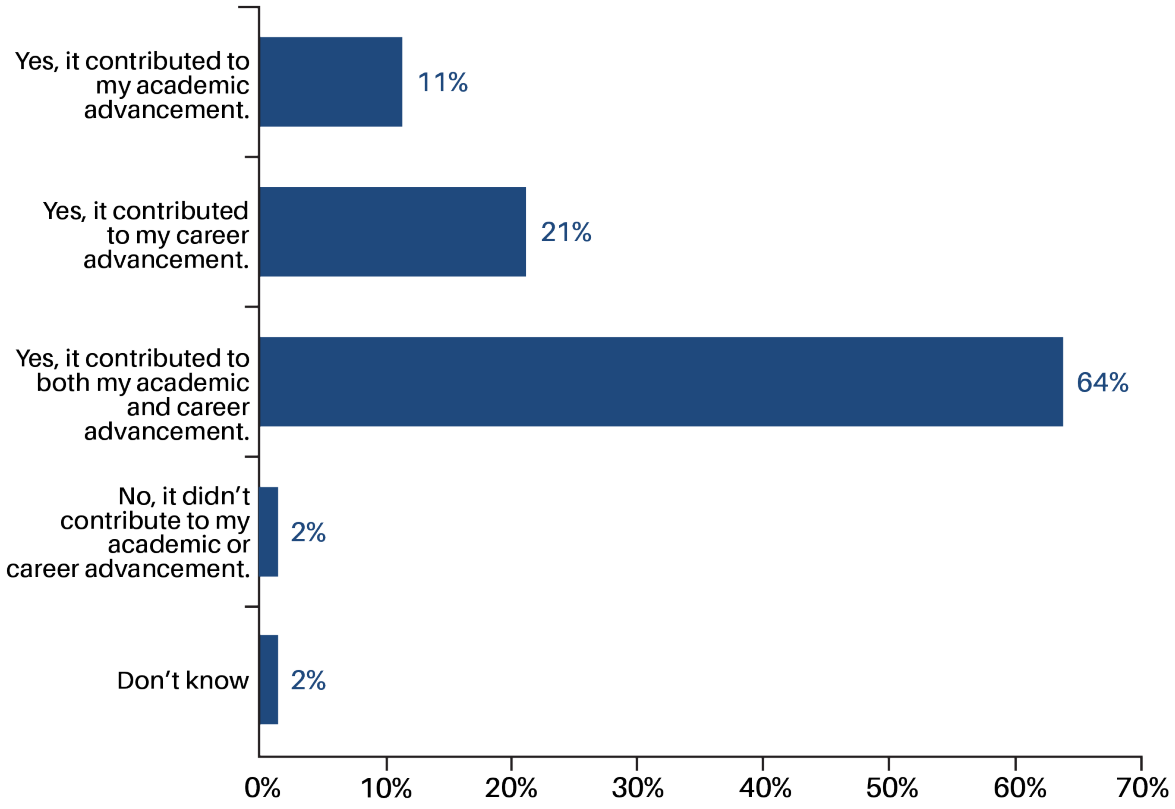


Figure 1. Did YSEALI contribute to your academic or career advancement? (n=788)

More than half of survey respondents suggested that the program most contributed to their *academic advancement* by:

1) helping them better understand YSEALI themes (73 percent),
2) increasing their skills and competence in their studies (62 percent), and
3) helping them collaborate with others with similar academic interests (56 percent).

Several FGD respondents noted that the YSEALI program has increased their knowledge in their academic fields or provided them with skills and networks important to their academic studies and careers:

"[YSEALI] it helped me to maintain my GPA because some of the materials I've learned in the virtual sessions actually apply to my home university courses." (FGD 7, Segment 2, virtual).

"Academically, I was able to have a lot of networks [because of YSEALI]. I am also focusing on my advocacy in agriculture. I am an agri-business graduate, and I had a lot of networks in the agriculture sector. I also had this opportunity to meet agriculture students in the

United States for our virtual engagement for our program wherein we were exposed to some students of the University of Connecticut before we were able to fly into the United States. I was able to have a quick chat with them, ask them for some resources which I was able to use in my academics." (FGD 15, Segment 4d, USG alumni-led associations with post support).

Some respondents also noted that the program provided opportunities to access higher-level education, scholarships, and grants. Forty-four percent of survey respondents indicated that the program increased their opportunities for graduate studies and 27 percent suggested it connected them to research and grant opportunities. A few FGD respondents described how the program helped them further their studies and apply for research grants:

"After YSEALI I have gained more practical experience in the environment field so now I'm continuing, pursuing a master's degree in Environment Development and Peace. But this time, we will study more about peace and the policy in the world so that in the future I hope that I can contribute to solving environmental problems in ASEAN and across the world as well." (FGD 1, Segment 1, Environmental Issues).

"I think one of the other important things is proposal writing and how to apply for grants. I think that's also a very good part of it [the Fellowship]. I think it did help me when I was trying to get a research grant before this, and with all the modules and lectures, I think it's really, really helpful." (FGD 6, Segment 1, Social Entrepreneurship and Economic Development).

Similarly, more than half of survey respondents suggested that the program most contributed to their *professional advancement* by:

1) deepening their commitment to leadership in the workplace (72 percent),
2) preparing them with skills and qualifications that are valued in the job market (57 percent),
3) connecting them with networks of experts and leaders in their field (53 percent), and
4) helping them collaborate with people with similar professional interests (52 percent).

Several FGD respondents stated that they use the technical knowledge from the program in their current jobs. Moreover, some alumni shifted their professional focus or area of practice based on what they learned during the Fellowship, such as working more with social enterprises or incorporating more fieldwork into their work.

"What I noticed is that my workplace seems to be redirecting activities related to the

environment to me because I was handling the volunteer program. And whenever there's an environmental project or program, they want me to lead the project. So, professionally, I have been given opportunities to really apply what I have learned from the program." (FGD 9, Segment 3, the Philippines)

"In work life, most of the time, I've worn a research tag, which makes my work experience a bit limited when it comes to doing fieldwork, and based on what I've learned from the YSEALI Fellowship, it made me try another hat, someone who goes to the field or does groundwork, which did help me after the Fellowship by looking for funding, doing the groundwork, all the nitty-gritty. And afterwards, it's learning the process of helping a community by doing the groundwork itself." (FGD 13, Segment 4b, YSEALI post/alumni co-led associations).

YSEALI respondents suggested that improvements in soft skills such as leadership, collaboration, and confidence, were an important, long-lasting outcome of the exchange program. More than 90 percent of all alumni survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the program prepared them for future leadership roles and improved their ability to collaborate with others in their field. Several focus group respondents gave concrete examples of how improved confidence in their own leadership skills led to professional development or action once they returned to their home country:

"I really think that the program taught me how to be more bold, and how to take action and enhance my leadership skills. It taught me how to communicate with different stakeholders. In 2018, when I came back to Malaysia, I built a team that would create sustainable livelihood practices for people in my local community. We did this project, like playing games to teach them about sustainable lifestyles. A game from Malaysia, which teaches about carbon footprint. I think the program was really the turning point of my life that triggered my personality or boldness to take action when I came back to Malaysia." (FGD 2, Segment 1, Environmental Issues)

"By joining YSEALI, I was able to pitch a project, and get ideas from people, not just our mentors but also from the people from other countries criticizing or giving possible criticisms to your project and then improving it. And then, showing it to them or presenting it to them was really a good feeling because I was able to continue doing that when I got back to the Philippines when I proposed projects to different organizations and then got something for it. I think that's what I loved the most about what I learned in my time at UConn." (FGD 6, Segment 1, Social Entrepreneurship and Economic Development)

"I applied those leadership skills everywhere, in every organization I've worked for, until now.

Even after six years, until now, I am still reminded of some of the lessons I learned from the university." (FGD 5, Segment 1, Social Entrepreneurship and Economic Development)

Analysis of survey responses as well as qualitative research revealed no significant differences between participants of the three YSEALI institutes in improvements in leadership, collaboration, and confidence.

Alumni voiced that the program's emphasis on cross-cultural communication and open exchange helped them expand personal and professional horizons and connect with people across the region and internationally. More than 90 percent of alumni survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the program helped them improve their intercultural communication skills and become more aware of how culture shapes behavior. Alumni FGD respondents noted that YSEALI's focus on the open exchange of views paired with the diverse nature of participants expanded their perceptions of professional and academic possibilities and helped them improve their interpersonal communication skills. Further, the teaching, leadership, and mentoring styles that they encountered in the United States made an impression on many participants, who said that they benefited from the more collaborative and less hierarchical educational culture. Several respondents detailed what they gained from open exchange of ideas with a diverse set of people:

"Honestly, I have never participated in a program where we have too many people from different backgrounds and it's very colorful. The way we talk, the way we express our opinions, the way we share our own experiences from how we do things in our country is very different … I'm really glad that I joined YSEALI because I learn the way things are done in other countries and how they can be done in my country." (FGD 1, Segment 1, Environmental Issues)

"It also elevated soft skills that I have currently such as being proactive in discussions, being critical towards any aspect or perspective, and leadership skills as well. I've led group discussions in the program as well and presented their points … and also just having the essential communication skills that you learn as a person. And not only that, also interpersonal skills, knowing how to interact with these people. And really, I think the program really touches on a lot of those aspects in a very productive sense. And from that program, really, I felt like I grew as a person, I knew a lot more about [the] region and became more self-aware about myself. I felt more confident because I've practiced all these skills that I've said to you, these personal skills and really polished them up more than it was ever polished before." (IDI, Brunei, UM, 2021)

"But I think there's so much on how [the YSEALI] program can really elevate who you are as a person because of the perspective. And I guess to put this in the context, when the only world that you've seen is the place around you, this is as far as where your aspirations can go. But when you see the possibilities, you then start asking yourself, 'Why can't we have this in our own country? Why not this? Why not that?' I think that's just some examples there, on a personal level." (FGD 5, Segment 1, Social Entrepreneurship and Economic Development)

Respondents generally spoke highly of the academic content of the program, suggesting that they gained knowledge via the program and are applying it. As noted above, 73 percent and 62 percent of alumni survey respondents suggested that the program helped them better understand YSEALI themes and increased their skills and competence in their studies, respectively. Moreover, 80 percent of alumni survey respondents who participated in the in-person program suggested that classroom activities (such as lectures, discussions, readings, and presentations) were a valuable aspect of the program. Several alumni specifically cited learning from the program or instances where they applied lessons learned from the academic content of the program to their careers:

"I've been working as a junior diplomat at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Thailand for two years now, so I believe that what I learned from the civic engagement track in Omaha directly contributes to what I'm actually doing currently. I'm working on at the Division of Public Diplomacy, so what I learned in class of civic engagement is actually translating into the agendas that we're working like soft power, like media influencing, like media monitoring, social media and foreign policy, foreign policy communications. So, those kind of things directly." (IDI, Thailand, UNO, 2019)

"My Fellowship exposure in the United States [in 2016] immensely helped me shape my career. My experiences in the United States actually gave me validation and confidence to really pursue entrepreneurship, and it also helped me professionally because, at the moment, I'm currently a professor teaching management and entrepreneurship. A lot of things and tools that I learned in the United States, I am also sharing with my students here in my community. It also helped me understand theoretically and exposed me to many business models and their practical applications since I'm also handling several small businesses as of the moment…" (FGD 6, Segment 1, Social Entrepreneurship and Economic Development)

"One of the best experiences I've had in the YSEALI Program is the environmental program in Timor-Leste. I learned that one of the problems that we face in our country is the plastic issue. When I joined the YSEALI Program, we didn't just learn about the problem, but also

the solution. I learned how to get an innovative idea and [transform] the problem into the solution. The other thing is learning different opinions from other fellows and sharing the experience about the environmental problem in their country, and how to find innovative solutions to solve the problem." (FGD 11, Segment 4f, informal post-led networks)

"I'm currently working at a socio-enterprise. I guess before I joined the program, I was a bit skeptical about these whole socio-enterprises, but I learned a lot through this program that we can really improve and develop our community through socio-entrepreneurs and stuff. So now it just keeps the fire inside me to keep working in this industry, in this field. It [YSEALI] really helped me with … my professional life …" (FGD 12, Segment 4a, YSEALI alumni-led associations with post support)

Participants of the three YSEALI institutes showed no statistically significant differences in their responses when asked about the ways that the YSEALI experience contributed most to their academic advancement.

Despite indications that alumni overall felt the program material was relevant to the ASEAN region, some expressed during qualitative sessions a wish for in-depth lessons on topics more relevant to their home country context. In the survey, alumni reported that the program addressed issues that are relevant to the ASEAN region. Ninety-four percent of respondents somewhat or strongly agreed that the YSEALI program addressed issues relevant to the development of the ASEAN region. However, several participants in IDIs and FGDs stated that the program presented information they already knew and that they were hoping for deeper and higher-level learning on themes related to their areas of interest. Relatedly, some participants explained that the program's classroom content was poorly suited to application in their regional or home country context. Alumni noted that since many of them were already recognized experts or leaders in their fields prior to selection for the Fellowship, they expected the level of learning to be higher than it was.

"I felt like I was being taught things at a very surface level. I didn't feel like it was any information that would've helped me grow my venture otherwise." (IDI, Malaysia, UConn, 2017)

"Well for me … it was a difficulty that a lot of us were having, relating it back to the region. When they talk, it's American culture, it's very Americanized, Westernized." (FGD 4, Segment 1, Civic Engagement)

"Everything we said or did in the classroom would not be easy to apply in our home country. We have different types of community and government. Not all would be applicable, some could be." (FGD 4, Segment 1, Civic Engagement)

"I felt like [the lessons taught] were a waste of an opportunity to really dive into the subject matter and approach it from a more ground-up perspective [relevant to the starting point most participants were at with their community projects]. (IDI, Malaysia, UConn, 2017)

Some alumni stated that practical skill building related to program management, proposal writing, and fundraising was particularly valuable in advancing their academic and professional goals and wished for a greater focus on these elements of the program. Several alumni FGD respondents spoke highly of the instances of practical skills-building through site visits and courses on enterprise/business models and proposal writing but wished for a greater focus on and skill building on project management, fundraising, social media promotion, and building partnerships. A few respondents specifically detailed how the practical skills they learned helped them after the program ended and noted a desire for more practical skill building.

"I was working with this NGO in one of the slum communities in Davao, and during that time, I realized that most of our programs really weren't sustainable, so we really wanted to rethink the way we did charity at that time … then I got to YSEALI, I learned a lot of things about launching a start-up and then … I learned about design thinking, so this is one of the main thinking models that really helped me refine the idea behind [NGO founded by alum]." (FGD 9, Segment 3, The Philippines)

"What I would have changed is to include some practical skills building sessions where we could learn more about: project management or fundraising; how to promote your initiative on social media; how to publicize them; how to build partnerships; or, how to communicate with your stakeholders." (IDI, The Philippines, EWC, 2015)

Alumni suggested that the prestige of participating in the YSEALI program opened professional and academic doors. Several alumni also noted that even more important than their own personal growth was how their participation in the program opened doors for them because of the prestigious nature of the exchange. Participants in the IDIs noted that being able to cite the YSEALI Academic Fellowship on their resumes and discuss the program was invaluable to their post-program professional and academic paths.

"When deciding [on] this course, for my scholarship, I think YSEALI has been very helpful for that. I even mentioned YSEALI in my scholarship application. And I guess, what made me selected for the scholarship is because of YSEALI and because I've been with YSEALI from 2017 so…[it] has helped me build up my career or my professional activities. I'm forever thankful to YSEALI for that." (FGD 7, Segment 2, virtual program)

"What I gained from the program, to be able to create friendships with different cultures and experiencing a global community, it's really something that job hunters are searching for. They want you to be able to communicate with international people … the hiring officer [for my job] told me that because I once went to the United States to experience this YSEALI program, they think it will be easy for me to be able to blend in with students from [school name]." (FGD 2, Segment 1, Environmental Issues)

ALUMNI NETWORKS

The evaluation determined that YSEALI stakeholders do not share a common definition of "network;" instead, a diverse array of alumni networks operate across the region. In the evaluation findings below, the term "network" refers to one of the six types of alumni networks identified through data collection. "Networking group" is a looser, unspecified term that may refer to any networking connection ranging from a one-to-one relationship to a network within the typology.

Nineteen networks of six distinct types connect YSEALI Academic Fellowship alumni. There is no one alumni group exclusively for participants of the YSEALI Academic Fellowship across countries. After completing the program, some YSEALI Academic Fellowship alumni stay connected with one another in networks to share and receive knowledge and professional, academic, or personal support, as well as connect to material resources, opportunities, and skill building and networking events. The six types of alumni networks display different arrangements of reach, formality, membership, and coordination (Figure 2). The networks are not necessarily mutually exclusive: each individual alumnus is theoretically included[9] in one or more home country networks, as well as the network associated with the YSEALI institute that they attended (coordinated by the corresponding IP). Network membership includes either alumni from all YSEALI programs or those from all USG programs. There are no networks specific to the YSEALI Academic Fellowship.

Some alumni also reported that they are not actively engaged in these six types of networks. Instead, they work in small, tight-knit, time-limited groups to carry out post-

9. Alumni inclusion in a network does not necessitate that they actively participate in that network.

program projects and serve as peer resources related to future academic and career choices; they report occasionally using some communication channels managed by IPs or posts. This is referred to as "networking" in the evaluation findings below.

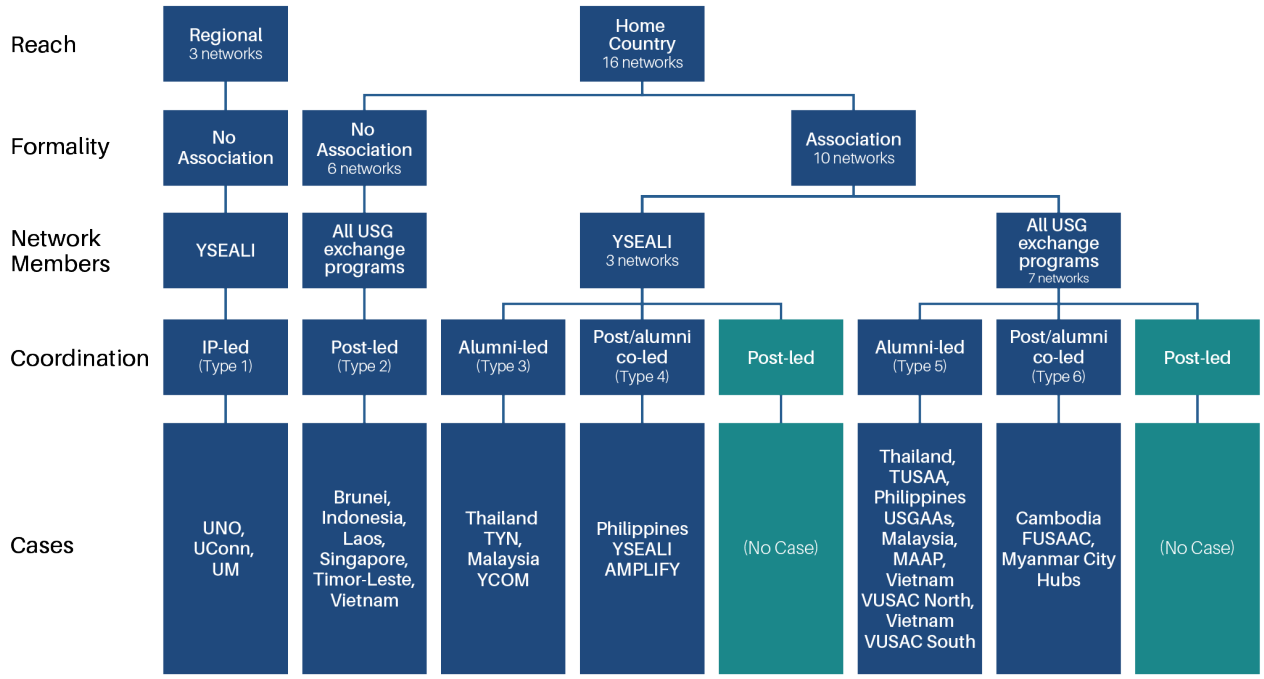


Figure 2. Types of alumni networks

EQ2: How have networks and other post-program activities contributed to alumni outcomes (academic, professional, and other)?

The majority of alumni report that relationships formed through YSEALI have contributed positively to their academic, professional, and personal outcomes. Alumni report interacting with alumni associations, posts, U.S. mentors, alumni in their home countries, and cohort-mates across ASEAN. These relationships connect them to other professionals in their fields, enable them to engage in professional development opportunities, and help them find opportunities to collaborate on projects. More than half of all alumni survey respondents noted that networking groups provided them with connections to other professionals in the field (65 percent), professional learning and development opportunities (58 percent), and opportunities to collaborate on projects or entrepreneurial ventures (57 percent) (Figure 3).

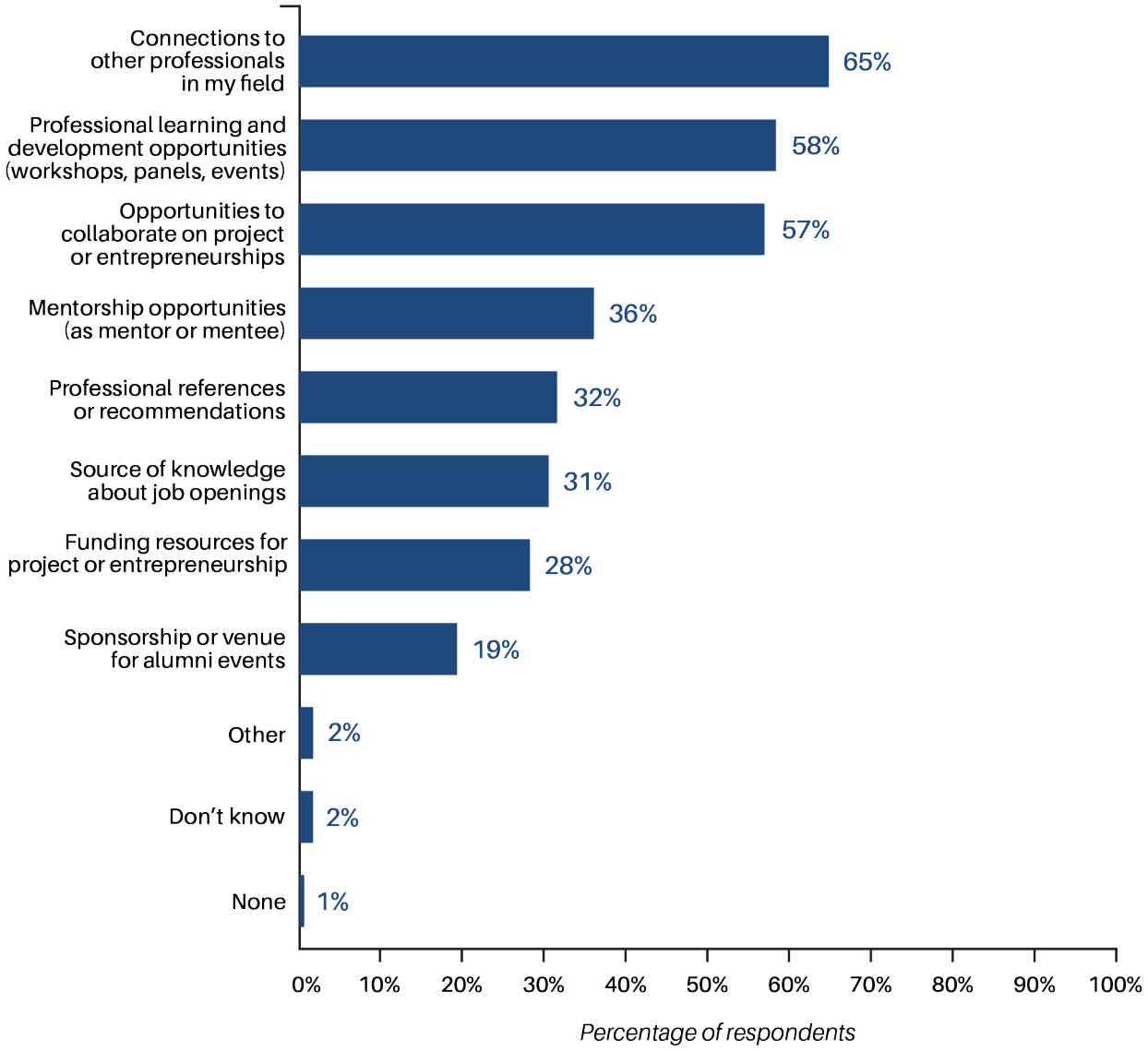


Figure 3. Resources or support provided by networking groups (n=759)

Alumni in FGDs designed to examine different network types (see EQ2.2) noted that formal associations contribute positively to their professional outcomes:

"USGAA Davao has opened a lot of doors for me. Professionally, I have met a lot of mentors and networks, specifically in the area of agriculture because that's my focus and advocacy because I was a YSEALI fellow back in 2015. I am still working in the agriculture sector. Most of my network, I have met during our programs and USGAA events. USGAA Davao was a really big part of the network I have now, so [the help it has provided] is really the network and the wealth of opportunities of giving back to the community. For example, I have been invited to a lot of training programs to be a speaker on programs related to agriculture

and that made me feel quite fulfilled, especially sharing my experience and knowledge in agriculture to the new generation of leaders in Davao." (FGD 15, Segment 4d, USG alumni-led associations with post support)

About a third of alumni survey respondents indicated that networks also provide more concrete benefits, such as mentorship opportunities, professional references, and funding resources. Some alumni survey respondents indicated that their most helpful networking group provided them with mentorship opportunities (36 percent), professional references or recommendations (32 percent), knowledge about job openings (31 percent), and funding for projects or entrepreneurship (28 percent).

Disaggregating the results by preferred networking groups sheds some light on the differences in resources that posts and host institutions provide. In the survey, alumni were asked to select a group that they considered most helpful for their networking; they were then asked to identify the most helpful resources that those groups provide. Alumni who chose U.S. embassies or consulates ("posts") in their home country reported that funding for projects or entrepreneurship was one of the most helpful resources (Figure 4). Those who listed faculty and staff from their U.S. host institutions reported that professional references or recommendations were among the most helpful resources (Figure 5). FGD participants echoed these findings:

"When it comes to my mentor [at the U.S. institution], I still talk to them … They ask me how I am doing and all, and whenever I ask them to write me a recommendation, or letter for a particular scholarship, job, or promotion, they're still helping me to do it and continue to inspire me to do more for the environment." (FGD 13, Segment 4b, YSEALI alumni-led associations with post support)

"During the actualization of the project, [the YSEALI program and post] are very much willing to help you fulfill your project. My project was in [city redacted] when there was a crisis. I requested the embassy if I could implement my project in [city], if I could just volunteer there and implement in any possible way that I could help the victims of the crisis. From there, it opened so many doors for me. It improved my leadership skills. I was able to inspire many young individuals despite the terrible experience that we had [during the crisis]." (FGD 4, Segment 1, Civic Engagement)

"While I was spending time in YSEALI before and after, I have more trust from the embassy itself. They are offering me different projects to deliver to communities."
(FGD 8, Segment 2, virtual)

"In December last year, we got [a grant] from the U.S. Embassy in Bangkok. We are spending this grant to organize our event. It mainly focused on the refugees and people with disabilities." (FGD 10, Segment 3, Thailand)

Alumni report that community projects provided an important opportunity to apply the lessons they learned during the program, representing a step toward alumni outcomes. In addition, alumni, posts, and IPs report that community projects are an effective means of supporting program impact by fostering alumni contributions to positive initiatives in their home communities. Several alumni FGD respondents noted that they were able to successfully carry out their community programs, many of which were directly related to what they learned during their time in the YSEALI program. These projects mostly focused on training programs on YSEALI themes within alumni's home communities.

The majority of alumni survey respondents indicated that they implemented or were continuing to implement community projects. Seventy-eight percent of alumni, surveyed from cohorts 2021 and prior, reported implementing or continuing to implement a community project in the last year. Eighty percent of alumni reporting that they implemented or are implementing a community project (or 62 percent of total respondents) reported successful implementation in some measure: 40 percent noted that their community project was successfully completed, 26 percent reported that it evolved into a longer-term initiative, and 14 percent reported it was ongoing and was expected to be completed on the estimated timeline.

Small grants from posts and IPs appear to be contributors to post-program community project success. In addition, ECA's Alumni Office, which manages the alumni website for all ECA exchange program alumni also disburses AEIF grants (to those who are selected to receive funding). As grants are also offered by IPs and posts, greater coordination, information sharing, and record keeping regarding the provision of grants might enable these resources to go further.

However, funding is not available to cover all the expenses of all alumni who would like to implement projects; some shared that a lack of funding was a barrier to implementing their projects. It appears small grant funding is an important part of community project startup and sustainability for some alumni. Several FGD and IDI participants noted that grant funds from IPs are small and not available to all alumni. Further, they expressed that limited access to IP small grants and/or lack of financial support beyond the small grants for those who do receive them was a barrier to implementation and sustainability:

"During the Fellowship, we're given a task to create a project which can be implemented in our own country. However, you're not guaranteed that you can do it. The plan that you've worked on for weeks, you're not guaranteed that you can implement it in your own country because you need to apply for a small grant competition. I wish every fellow would have the funding. Based on my experience, when I came back here to [my home country], I was full of passion. It's like the fire in me was ignited. The good part on my end is I got the funding. However, my other fellows didn't get the funding, so they weren't able to continue what they've learned from the Fellowship." (FGD 13, Segment 4b, YSEALI post/alumni co-led association)

"I think our barrier is whether [the community project] will be sustainable in the long term … We only have a small amount of funding - which is, I think, mostly sustainable for the short-term, in terms of what we are trying to implement." (IDI, Malaysia, UNO, 2021)

"The challenge I would say is that some of our alumni are in rural parts of Thailand. We want to do some activities in person and it's kind of hard sometimes. We have a lot of costs to pay for … especially about the time, costs, and place for them to stay all night. I guess that would be our first challenge because some of our alumni stay a little bit far from our capitals." (FGD 15, Segment 4d, USG alumni-led associations with post support).

Some alumni can carry their projects out independently, that is, without funding from posts, IPs, or AEIF. When asked more broadly about financial resources (not necessarily for community projects), less than a third of alumni survey respondents reported accessing small grants from posts (29 percent) or IPs (26 percent), while forty-two percent noted that they did not access any financial resources after the Fellowship (Figure 6). Given that 42 percent of surveyed alumni did not access any financial resources, but 62 percent reported successfully implementing a community project in some way, it appears that a minority of alumni have been able to complete or are on track to complete projects without funding assistance.

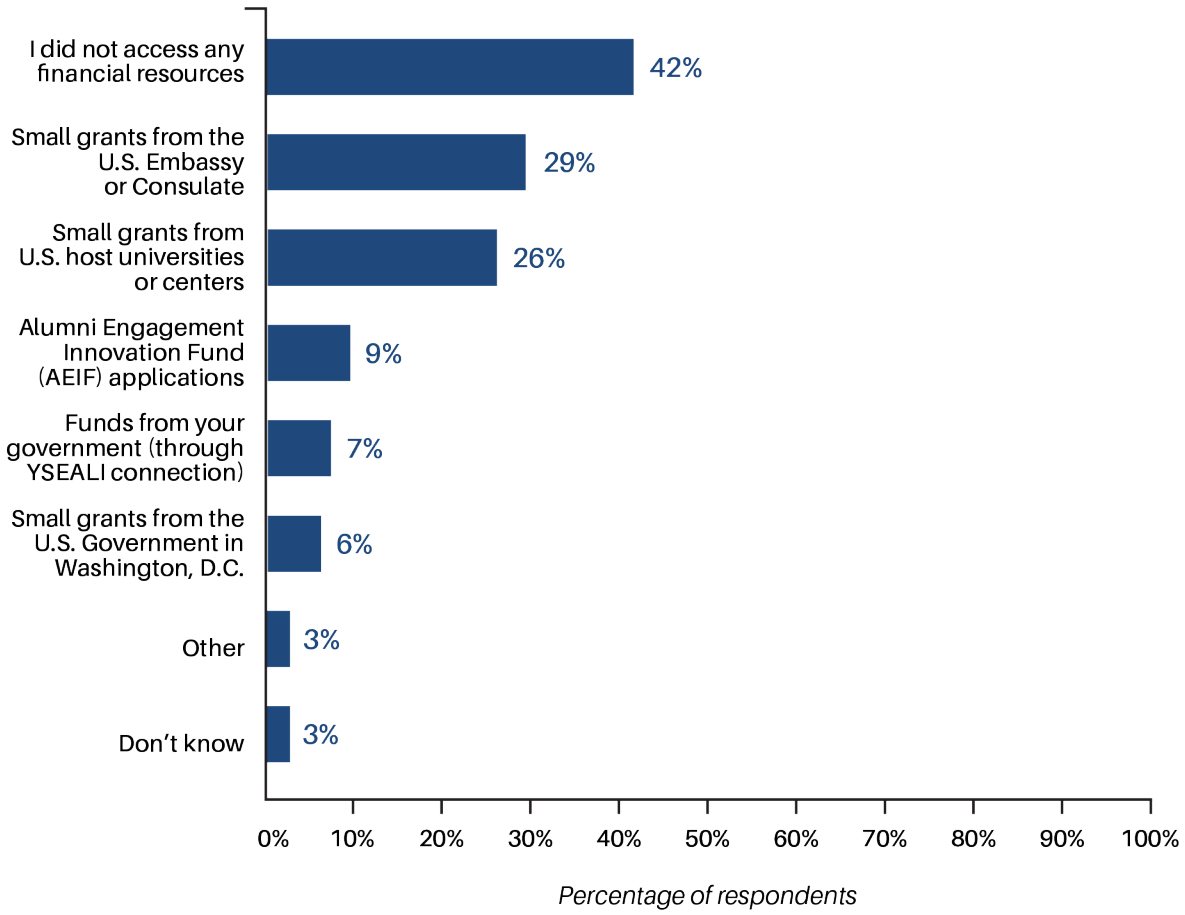


Figure 6. Which, if any, of the following financial resources did you access after completing the YSEALI Academic Fellowship (multiple selection) (n=786)

Qualitative data also indicates that some alumni were able to independently fund their community projects and did so through their own financial resources:

Even though we got only $500 total for the project, our members contributed our own money for our tickets to travel from Thailand to Myanmar. When we went to the U.S. there is some allowance that we got for that time and when knew we wanted to do this project so we saved that budget for our ticket. And everyone just committed to it … Even one of our friends from Laos, he had to take a bus from Vientiane to Bangkok. (IDI, Thailand, UM, 2019)

Some alumni suggested that more IP support and feedback would improve the success and sustainability of community projects. A few alumni expressed that their U.S. institution did not provide enough guidance throughout project design and implementation. Several alumni detailed the challenges of translating expectations of the community project to the practicalities of implementation once they returned home:

"I agree with [FGD participant] that I don't know what my project is doing. I want some comments regarding my project … but I cannot fit it in the YSEALI time span … maybe they also don't have room for a [feedback] session, too." (FGD 3, Segment 1, Civic Engagement)

"We got an internship as a team to conduct, run, and execute the program that we proposed [after the Fellowship]. It took us some time because of the unclear instructions on how we implement our project. They [the IP] offer the mentorship, but instructions are unclear, like what step we should take to implement our project. I think they need to give more instructions in the future." (FGD 11, Segment 4f, no associations)

"There's no program pressure. Rather, it is a one-time experience, and then [the program] hopes you can implement the project at home. But I think the message from the program wasn't clear that they're expecting us to really continue what we were doing in the United States." (IDI, Thailand, UNO, 2019)

EQ2.1: How does YSEALI contribute to network development and health?

All YSEALI stakeholders appear to contribute to network development and health in some way, but levels of involvement and coordination vary. A number of YSEALI stakeholders, including IPs, posts, alumni, and ECA's Office of Alumni Affairs, contribute to network development health. However, IDIs with program stakeholders revealed that these various actors do not always collaborate strategically to align on network and alumni activities, most likely due to either limited resources or the number of stakeholders involved. Some stakeholders have differing levels of information and opinions about the nature and purpose of post-program alumni activities. For example, several posts noted that they do not know what alumni community projects are being funded by IPs.

Posts play an important role in supporting YSEALI alumni networking primarily through nonfinancial means. Posts provide staff time, management of email listservs and/or social media pages or groups, and access to physical spaces for events. Some posts reported also providing financial resources to host events. A few posts indicated that they have dedicated funding to support alumni association operations, projects, and alumni participation (e.g., financial support for alumni outside of the capital to travel to events). Sixty percent of survey respondents indicated that posts sponsored resources and activities for all types of networking groups.

IPs provide nonfinancial support to their regional networks, but this support could better reach YSEALI alumni. IPs provide staff time, management of email listservs, and/or

social media pages or groups for the YSEALI institutes that they implement. However, only 18 percent of survey respondents said IPs support networking activities.[10] This potentially indicates a disconnect between the brands and funding source of the various programs, given how much more aware of post support the alumni were. Alumni shared a strong desire for more active alumni engagement, with those from the earlier years of the program explaining that they have fallen out of touch with their cohort-mates without more formal efforts to keep the alumni relationships and networks alive in the long term.

"It's hard to stay in touch; I still have difficulty finding the other alumni who are doing the same thing unless I join any activity of the association. I cannot just go online … it's a bit hard to reach out to alumni of YSEALI … I'm not sure [if] there exists a website or something that we can go and take a look, who works previously in the program or not." (FGD 14, Segment 4c, USG post/alumni co-led associations).

"I would like to agree that when it comes to the local alumni because, after the Fellowship, a lot is missing in action. I guess we need to do some of the reactivation, doing alumni mixers and all, just to spark all the passion within all the past alumni again." (FGD 13, Segment 4b, YSEALI post/alumni co-led associations).

Paricipants shared that their time in the United States did not allow for a great deal of interaction with Americans. Aside from the few professors that they worked with directly from the IPs or casual social time even among their cohort members, participants did not appear to forge meaningful connections with people from the United States. They explained that they spent almost all their time with other participants from Southeast Asia but due to their extremely full schedules, there was little social time or time to informally discuss or process their experiences with one another. Participants expressed a desire to have more time to get to know their fellow participants as well as make connections with Americans – they also suggested being paired with an American or ASEAN student that had similar areas of academic interest. (See EQ 2.2 for additional insights into the value of social time and relationships.)

"The schedule for the five weeks was very packed with everyday activities [to the point] that I didn't have enough time to reflect on what I have learned. [I would recommend], focusing on self-reflection as a part of the study … [and] also group reflection. So, as a group of four to five people, we [could] do weekly group reflection. At the end of the day, we sit down, we connect the dots of what we have learned. We ask ourselves what we can improve to make the most of the rest of the trip and as well as prepare for [an] action plan." (FGD 16, Segment

10. Respondents could select multiple organizers/sponsors.

4e, mixed associations without post support).

"I'd like to connect more with people [Americans] from the same age bracket as me, so we can connect more and discuss what is happening with them. I feel like I was able to interact with a lot of Southeast Asians but with the Americans, frequency was low. Even though we lived in the dorm with the U.S. students, and well, if they [the implementing partner staff] don't facilitate the activity, we wouldn't connect." (FGD 2, Segment 1, Environmental Issues).

For some that participated virtually, they were given the opportunities to partner with an American counterpart, an experience they appreciated and felt added a lot of value. However, in terms of the overall relative benefits of virtual versus in-person programming, alumni that were able to travel to the United States report considerably higher personal growth and stronger relationships than those who carried out the program online.

EQ 2.2: What types of networks effectively contribute to alumni outcomes? Do regional and international network connections contribute to alumni outcomes?

Many participants forge strong ties with a select group of cohort-mates and those they interact with during the program. Even though they wish for more time and opportunities to connect, focus group respondents still noted that the personal connections they made during the YSEALI exchange were one of the most beneficial aspects of the program.

"I think what I'm most proud of, or maybe the most valuable thing that I gained from YSEALI is — sounds cheesy, but friends because in the community work that we're doing, engaging with teachers and things like that, I think I've gained a lot of YSEALI friends who you can count on not only for projects but also, let's say personal circumstances and just bond over stuff." (FGD 9, Segment 3, the Philippines)

"[The best part was] definitely the people. The YSEALI fellows and also the lecturers or guest speakers in different YSEALI sessions. I've learned a lot from different people throughout the program." (FGD 12, Segment 4a, YSEALI alumni-led associations with post support)

For a minority of YSEALI Academic fellows, their cohort-mates do play an important a role in helping some alumni achieve academic and career goals. Thirty-four percent of survey respondents reported that academic fellows from their cohort are most helpful for achieving their goals (Figure 7). Some alumni spoke of regular communication, both with their cohort as a group and individual cohort-mates from the region. Alumni suggested that cohort-mates provide support, learning, and resources, especially related to implementing

community projects. Alumni interviewees describe brainstorming together and sharing contacts and best practices to advance career and academic goals. A few focus group respondents detailed their close relationship and the outcomes of those relationships.

"I go way back to 2015. The connection is still there, and my cohort-mates have really become my lifelong friends. For example, just last month, one of my cohort-mates from YSEALI visited here in the Philippines because of a regional program that is also for YSEALI good governance. We were able to meet, tell stories for the past seven years, and [talk about] what happened to our cohort-mates and friends … actually, my most memorable [connection] was with my roommate. She's from Thailand and from way back 2016-2017, we still communicate every day. She asked me for help for recommendation for an exchange program and I was very happy when she got accepted. Those kinds of things, it's really a lifelong friendship." (FGD 15, Segment 4d, USG alumni-led associations with post support)

"For a few years, I always reached out with my friends in other countries like the Philippines, Indonesia, and Malaysia to get more insight about the market there, how the businesses are doing there. For example … I want to get more feedback, even I ask for how many dollars would a company spend on employee in certain aspects … that kind of information [allows] me to synthesize and also come up with the right direction to develop the product. And that really helps … without YSEALI, I would never have that connection." (FGD 5, Segment 1, Social Entrepreneurship and Economic Development)

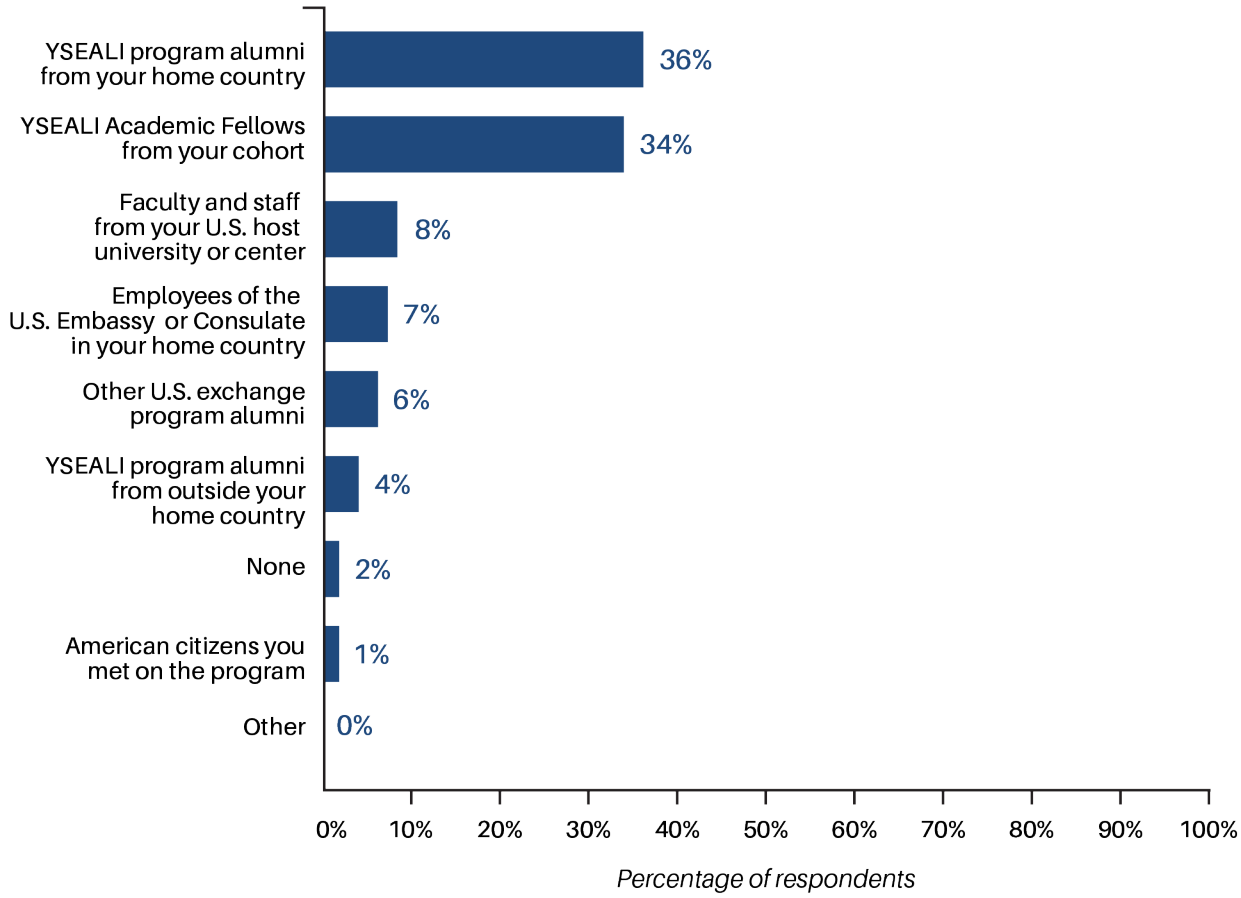


Figure 7. Which networking groups were most helpful for achieving academic or career goals? (n=778)

Connections between cohort members, especially those from different home countries, are primarily sustained by self-organized efforts. Triangulation between qualitative data from alumni, evidence about the networks in operation, and survey findings support the conclusion that alumni themselves are providing the time and resources to communicate, meet, or undertake activities with their cohort-mates across the ASEAN region, suggesting that IPs do not play a significant role in sustaining the connections established in their topic-specific institutes. Alumni do not report interacting with other YSEALI program alumni outside of their cohorts in the region in either qualitative or quantitative findings. As noted in Figure 7 above, only four percent of respondents selected YSEALI program alumni from outside their home country as their most helpful networking group.

Connections with U.S. individuals do not seem to contribute strongly to alumni outcomes. Some alumni reported maintaining personal connections with individuals in

the United States, particularly mentors at host institutions who have provided support such as academic or professional advice and references. However, these results do not seem generalizable, as less than 10 percent of alumni surveyed reported that faculty and staff from their host university was their most helpful networking group regarding achieving professional and academic goals.

Home country alumni associations[11] appear to be particularly effective in connecting YSEALI alumni and furthering alumni professional and academic goals. A higher percentage of alumni who are association members reported that YSEALI home country alumni was their most helpful networking group compared to non-members (41 percent vs. 24 percent). This suggests that alumni associations are particularly helpful in connecting YSEALI alumni to colleagues from different cohorts within the same country. Alumni FGD respondents detailed instances where YSEALI home country associations helped them with post-program work:

"[The association provides] a lot of input to my career as well. You know, we can share a lot of experience to what we are doing … right now, I'm one of the project coordinators for environmental protection so there's a lot of people doing the same thing so we can share the experience, we can share the challenges doing our job in the workplace and also personal life, so it's a good network in exchanging information and learning in process as well." (FGD 14, Segment 4c, USG post/alumni co-led associations)

Membership in a home country alumni association supports alumni goals by facilitating networking with peers and connecting them to resources. When participants return home, alumni associations help to expand their connections beyond their cohort-mates by providing resources and opportunities for connection. Six countries did not have an alumni association at the time of the evaluation; qualitative data suggests that alumni from those countries show generally weaker connections to home country alumni and posts. Ninety-two percent of respondents who reported an alumni association in their country reported participating in the association in some way, with almost one-third volunteering to organize association events, activities, or communications, and 10 percent noting that they serve on the association committee or board. Data suggests that formal associations support many types of networking: survey respondents reported that the resources and activities leveraged by their networking groups are sponsored and/or organized by formal alumni associations in 17 to 41 percent of cases.

Although country-specific, all-ECA alumni networks provide a rich community of alumni

11. Network Types 2-6, per Figure 2

and exchange experiences in one centralized place, two challenges emerged. First, they lack the ability to form or sustain connections to participants in other countries. Second, their diversity necessitates that they be topically general rather than linked to the core content of the individual exchanges themselves. As such, they are important but cannot answer for all alumni's needs.

No single home country association type is most effective in supporting alumni's professional and academic goals, suggesting that different models may be better suited to particular contexts. Posts and alumni outlined pros and cons of different network types. Post considerations for potential types of associations in their countries include resources available to support alumni engagement, geographic considerations, alumni interest and priorities, and size of alumni pools. Alumni who are members of associations that receive post support[12] expressed in FGDs that having access to post funding and nonfinancial support for events are key benefits of their associations' leadership structure. Associations that are co-led by alumni and posts are particularly well positioned to receive post financial support, with a few associations receiving dedicated annual funds within the posts' budgets. However, some FGD respondents noted that the alumni-led leadership structure with post support may present some challenges for associations, such as an overreliance on one source of support and a lack of long-term sustainability. In terms of membership,[13] alumni from associations that include all USG exchange programs in a given country reported in FGDs that networking opportunities with a wide range of peers was the key benefit of this membership structure, but that a broader membership base sometimes presents challenges in meeting the needs of all members.

"Whenever there's a new program or new engagement in YSEALI, [the association is] the one who can get the opportunity first. They can apply and they can also disseminate the information. Another thing is whenever [the association] wants to implement something, they have the funding since it's under the U.S. Embassy, so most of the plans from the planning session will be funded by the U.S. Embassy." (FGD 13, Segment 4b, YSEALI post/alumni co-led associations).

"One challenge would be the priorities, because sometimes I do not see if we have the same priorities, especially with those Fulbright [alumni] or those older than us who are actually

12. Alumni associations fall into two models of leadership: post/alumni co-led (Types 4 and 6) and alumni-led with varying degrees of post support (Types 3 and 5).
13. Associations serving alumni of the YSEALI Academic Fellowship fall into one of two categories: all USG exchange programs (Types 5-6) or all YSEALI programs (Types 3-4).

busy doing something in their work. Sometimes they don't have time to share with us and for me, their presence during meetings would definitely be very beneficial to guide us as well." (FGD 15, Segment 4d, USG alumni-led associations with post support).

"For me, [the benefit of the all-USG exchange program membership structure] will be the network and the wealth of opportunities that the alumni have to offer. For example, a lot of our Fulbright alumni and Humphrey alumni are a little bit older than us so they are already leaders of these very important departments here in the Philippines and they are a part of the USGAA alumni and it's a big help for us." (FGD 15, Segment 4d, USG alumni-led associations with post support).

Members of alumni associations that receive post support expressed that access to post funding and nonfinancial support are key benefits of membership. FGD respondents noted that posts that help with nonfinancial resources, such as facilities, coworking spaces, information dissemination, and program licenses (such as Zoom) are valuable resources for alumni associations. Further, post funding aids association projects, activities, and alumni participation (via financial support for alumni outside of the capital to travel to events). A couple alumni FGD respondents detailed the value of post support for their alumni associations:

"We have support from the U.S. Embassy and usually when we have events … officials at the embassy connect with the YSEALI alumni … I feel like I'm not only connecting with the YSEALI alumni but also the people who work at the U.S. Embassy. I think [the networking is] really all [organized] together and I think it's really nice." (FGD 12, Segment 4a, YSEALI alumni-led associations with post support)

"We have a YSEALI [regional] hub wherein all alumni in [region] can go together and have an activity. The ones that I attended were hosted by the YSEALI in [regional] hub with the U.S. Embassy … also [the embassy has] social media on Facebook, and they share it and also share it with other youth organizations within [region] and invite those youth organizations to come together in one event." (FGD 9, Segment 3, the Philippines)

However, the "alumni association with post support" network type may also come with a downside. Networks dependent on inputs and resources from posts may lack wide adoption and long-term sustainability due to limited funds and the potential for policy priorities to change out of step with the focus areas of older alumni. Longer-term alumni engagement is likely best achieved through greater cooperation and collaboration between posts, IPs, and the ECA program team.

EQ2.3: To what extent are YSEALI alumni networks formally or informally structured?

Data show that alumni connections take place within, across, and outside of 19 formal and informal networks.[14] Survey respondents report participating in activities sponsored and/or organized by posts (60 percent), self-organized alumni groups (44 percent), and formal YSEALI alumni associations (41 percent). Ninety-two percent of survey respondents with an alumni association in their country reported participating in the association.

- **Ten home country alumni networks have formed associations with explicit governance structures.** All 10 formal networks are led by alumni or share leadership roles with post. Some associations exhibit a high level of formality with an elected, hierarchical leadership committee and advisory boards (Cambodia's FUSAAC), while some operate with a more horizontal structure (the Philippines' YSEALI AMPLIFY or Myanmar's City Hubs). Posts reported that at least two associations (YCOM and TUSAA) are legally registered as NGOs in the country. VUSAC Ho Chi Minh City has oversight by Ho Chi Minh City People's Commission, making it a quasi-government entity. At least three countries have a somewhat decentralized association, with subnational associations or chapters (YSEALI AMPLIFY Hubs and USGAAs in the Philippines, City Hubs in Myanmar, and VUSAC Hanoi and VUSAC Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam).
- **Six posts coordinate informal home country networks.** These informal post-led networks facilitate communication between posts and alumni but provide little or no opportunity for official or regular alumni leadership. These exist in Brunei, Indonesia, Laos, Singapore, Timor-Leste, and Vietnam.
- **Three regional networks are informal; none is represented by an association.** The regional networks are associated with specific YSEALI institutions and are coordinated by the relevant IP for the duration of their contract with ECA. These regional networks include the alumni who attended the institutes hosted by the coordinating IP.

Qualitative sources indicate that alumni often collaborate in small, tight-knit, and time-limited groups to carry out post-program projects and serve as peer resources related to future academic and career choices. Alumni FGD respondents reported that the continued connection and communication that they have related to YSEALI is generally with a few people with whom they were close during their program. These groups sometimes include a few alumni from other ASEAN countries but are mostly among participants from the same country and cohort. As such, sustained communication is often among small and informal social groups and is driven by the alumni themselves.

14. Networks were designated as "formal" if they had formed an association or operate with an explicit governance structure.

"My favorite part of the program was the social element. I think I became really good friends to some of my cohort-mates, who I keep in touch with still today, from Singapore, from the Philippines. I think [these friends] were the people that I learned the most from … from their own experience as entrepreneurs in their own home country. (IDI, Malaysia, UConn, 2017)

"We have a chance to interact with the other participants and cohorts as well, but when I try to initiate my project … that is the time when it comes to the alumni network within the Thailand community which helped me a lot. They led me to the client, they helped me in [finding] the people who can suggest [to] me on how to go and continue forward, so I will say they are the most precious piece of the YSEALI program." (FGD 10, Segment 3, Thailand)

EQ2.4: How does the effectiveness of networks vary over time?

The majority of alumni across cohorts report that their engagement with other USG program alumni has either increased or stayed the same, but data suggests that engagement declines over time.[15] In each cohort, dating back to 2014, more than half of respondents suggested that their engagement with alumni has either increased or stayed the same. However, there is a clear declining trend in alumni engagement over time: 40 percent of alumni from the 2015 cohort noted that they are less engaged, compared to only 10 percent from the 2021 cohort (Figure 8).

15. Findings for this question rely on alumni's self-reported experiences collected at a single point in time. Without longitudinal data collected over time, the findings cannot conclude if these self-reported estimates play out in reality.

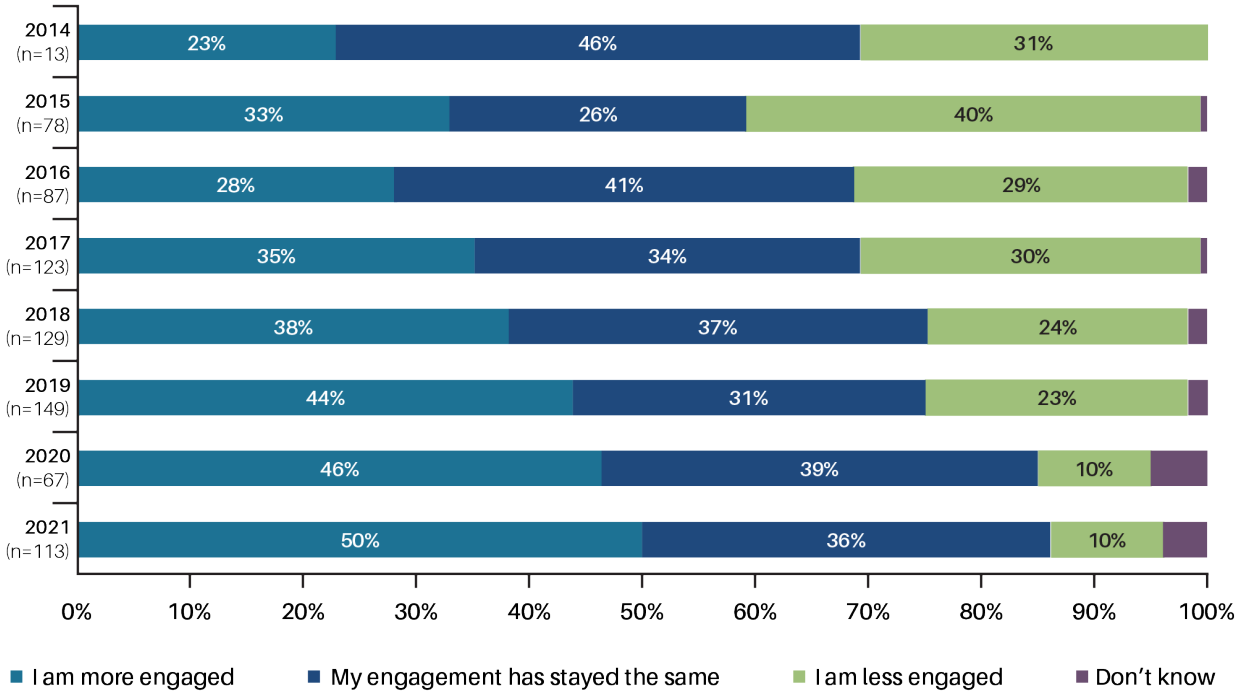


Figure 8. Alumni engagement levels after completing the YSEALI Academic Fellowship, by cohort (n=759)

Alumni who participate in associations reported higher engagement than those not in associations. Forty-two percent of alumni surveyed who participate in associations reported that they were more engaged after completion of the program, compared to only 31 percent of alumni who do not participate in associations. Qualitative research indicates that in countries without associations or less active formal networking mechanisms, continued engagement is dependent in large part on alumni's own efforts and personal relationships.

In alumni IDIs and FGDs, respondents shared anecdotes of decreased engagement with large cohort-wide alumni chats and online groups over time. Some posts and alumni suggested that alumni may decrease engagement as life circumstances arise or change – career advancements, marriages, etc. However, several alumni indicated that they have kept in touch, often with more select groups of fellow alumni in smaller group chats or personal messages.

"We don't talk as actively anymore, but maybe a year ago, we still kept in touch quite a bit. And there was hosting the reunion in 2019 … But otherwise, I did try to apply for the YSEALI Seeds for the Future. It's a grant program as well. So, I tried to apply for that a couple times. But I think that's been challenging because you need three people on your team who are

part of YSEALI, which I don't have. Otherwise, no, I haven't been very engaged with the network." (IDI, Malaysia, UConn, 2017)

EQ 2.5: How might post-programming activities amplify the resources in fellows' home country contexts to achieve outcomes?

Data suggests that posts provide some formal post-programming support that helps alumni achieve outcomes. Takeaways and evidence from EQ 2 suggest that posts' grants aid fellows in initiating and completing their community projects. Further, a number of posts reported providing alumni with grant writing and proposal writing workshops to boost their skills in capturing external funds (though the availability of these workshops is country dependent). Fifty-nine percent of alumni survey respondents noted that they attended workshops or events hosted by the post in their country and 42 percent indicated they utilized embassy networks of experts and leaders, suggesting that posts most engage alumni through formal events. However, most participants in the qualitative research share that these are a once-a-year event for them and that they would welcome additional opportunities to connect, both online and in person.

"There's not a lot of engagement. There's one event coming soon, but this happens once a year. One day, I hope there's an opportunity to have more of this to be less of a group but more of a community. That's the kind of interaction that I hope to experience." (FDG 11, Singapore)

"The alumni website for the U.S. globally is not that good, I would say, because if we log on, I cannot see the other alumni from the other countries. It's an intangible way that I can reach all alumni." (FGD 10, Segment 3, Thailand).

"I still have difficulty finding other alumni who are doing the same thing unless I join any activity of the association. I cannot just go online … it's a bit hard to reach out [to] the alumni of the YSEALI … I'm not sure [if] there exists a website or something that we can go and take a look, who works previously in the program or not." (FGD 14, Segment 4c, USG post/alumni co-led associations).

It also appears that alumni could use more personal and professional support for reentry after the program ends. Less than a third of alumni respondents indicated that they accessed informal support from post or use American Spaces. Moreover, less than 10 percent indicated that they received support from another U.S. organization, supplies or equipment from post, or support from other non-U.S. organizations or businesses. **Alumni**

also suggested that a formal YSEALI re-entry program to help them connect with other alumni and receive support upon their return home would be useful. They also asked for more support in dealing with adapting to their home contexts more generally. Some alumni in IDIs and FGDs shared that the dramatic differences between their time in the United States and in their home communities led to some mental health challenges. This was especially the case for those that felt that they were not able to apply their learnings at home. This feedback indicates that the program could do more to connect alumni to sources of support, both personal and professional, as their time in the program ends.

"The depression after the program, it was unexpected. After the program, I came home and expected the people to have the same mindset as me. And actually, they didn't. It was really hard to communicate with other people. Since I was a junior employee at that time, I didn't really have the power to create my own project in the office … At that time, what I expected wasn't happening. Like after the project, I saw my fellows on social media doing great things all over the world, but I wasn't." (FGD 2, Segment 1, Environmental Issues).

"I know in the universities in the U.S., they have a psychology center … maybe they can have a session for the fellows before going back home. In the U.S., we feel like we can do anything. Then we come back home, it's different. What do we do now? Some preparation might help. In some SEA countries, meeting psychiatrists would be an issue for some people. Maybe it would be good for the next batches." (FGD 2, Segment 1, Environmental Issues).

"Because the culture context is so different, the political system is so different. You kind of feel like you can't do anything more and the program we are going through somehow pumps in a little bit of that confidence in us, but for me, it just felt like no matter if there's a million YSEALI Alumni, it wouldn't be enough to change the fundamental state of where I am in [Malaysia]." (FGD 8, Segment 2)

HOME COUNTRY CONTEXT

EQ3: How does the fellows' home country context (such as their social network, work or academic setting, or broader social/political context) help or hinder fellows as they apply lessons learned from the YSEALI program?

The majority of alumni survey respondents agreed that it was easy to apply lessons learned from YSEALI in their home countries. Eighty-eight percent of alumni agreed or strongly agreed that applying lessons from YSEALI in their country was easy for them.

Moreover, 70 percent noted that there were many opportunities in their profession, and 74 percent suggested that younger generations were encouraged to take initiative in their countries. Some alumni in FGDs described implementing impactful projects in their home countries. For example, alumni from Vietnam, the Philippines, and Indonesia detailed successful projects mobilizing youth around civic engagement, teaching children about waste management, and organizing campaigns against early marriage:

"What I experienced in Hawaii encouraged me to apply different ways of learning into my work. [...] Coming back to Vietnam, my team and I created a comic book for children that teaches different waste management processes [and] waste management issues in the island, and we distributed this to children so they can learn about waste management and plastic pollution in a creative way. [The] comic book I mentioned earlier was so accepted by the children in the island that it was republished for over 10,000 dockets all over Vietnam. I was working for an international organization then. Then that international organization also found out about that comic book ... [it] was translated into five different languages including Thai, Mongolian, Swahili, and Hindi. It provided a lot of impact for children." (FGD 2, Segment 1, Environmental Issues).

"We conceptualized it in 2017, so basically, we call ourselves 'youth mobilizers' in Bukidnon. We do sessions for schools and organizations. We ask them what they want to do, then we invite mentors and experts, especially from the alumni network of YSEALI to talk about a certain topic." (FGD 9, Segment 3, the Philippines)

"I probably wouldn't have achieved what me and my fellow friends back then in West Papua had [without YSEALI]. Thankfully, we managed to engage with more local youths and encouraged them to achieve their dreams without hesitation, especially to diminish [the] patriarchy since in my hometown patriarchy is very high and young girls are often traded for marriage. And then thankfully, through YSEALI and social media, I could create a social campaign by myself and then try to encourage more young women ... to achieve education, or how to pursue your degree or pursue your jobs without having to be obliged to the norms that require you to get married before 20 and something like that." (FGD 7, Segment 2, virtual)

At the same time, a majority of alumni survey respondents suggested that home country contexts made it difficult to access concrete funding and resources, though there was variance across program countries. More than half of alumni survey respondents either strongly disagreed or somewhat disagreed that there is adequate funding and resources for projects (52 percent) or that it is easy for new projects to find support (57 percent)

in their home countries. That said, perceived ability to access funding, resources, and entrepreneurial support varied across program countries. More than 60 percent of respondents from Myanmar, Malaysia, Cambodia, and the Philippines indicated that funding, resources, and entrepreneurship support were somewhat or very difficult to find. However, in Singapore, more than 90 percent of respondents from Singapore found it easy or somewhat easy to access those same resources and funding opportunities.

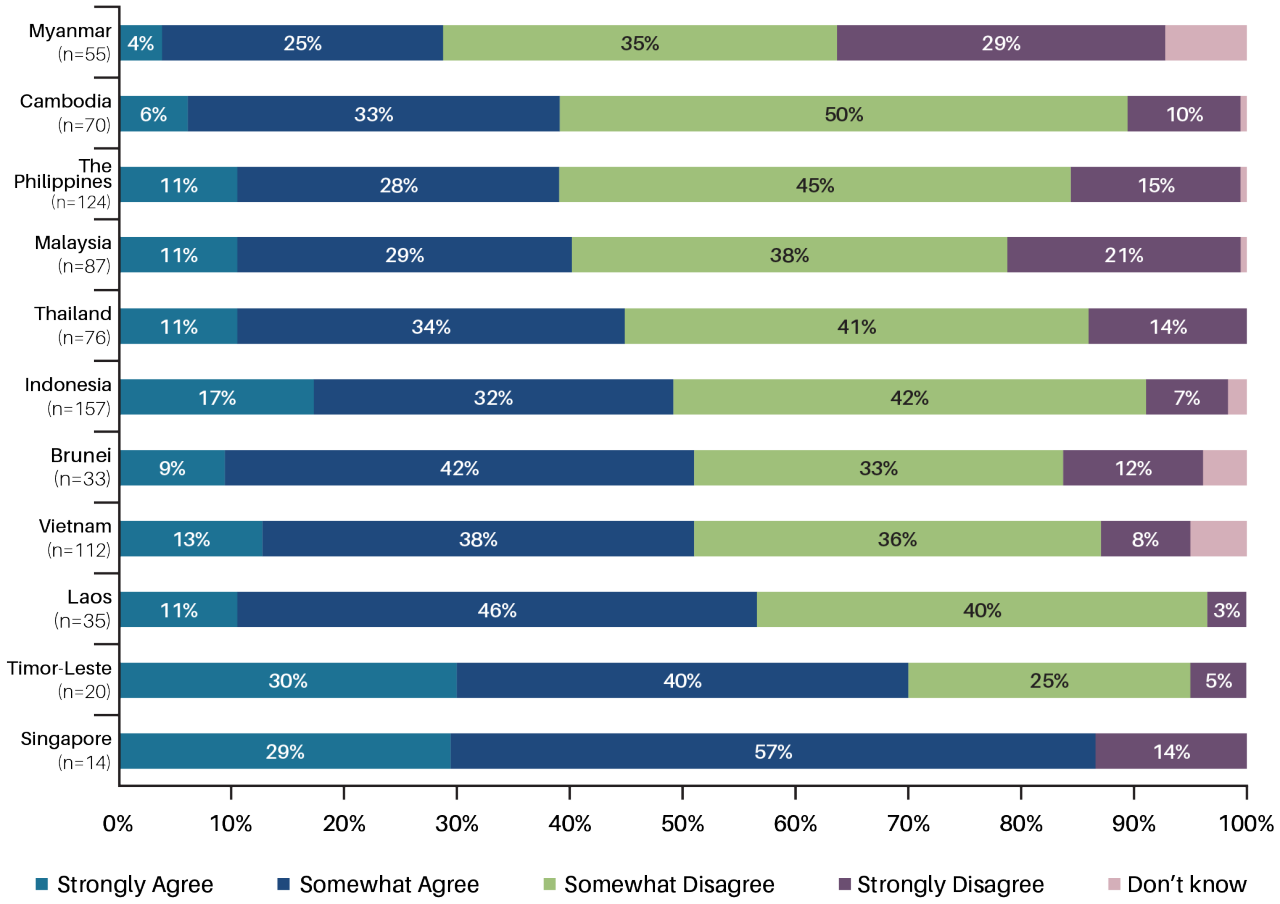


Figure 9. Agreement and disagreement with, "In my home country, it is easy for new projects or professional ventures to find support," by country (n=783)

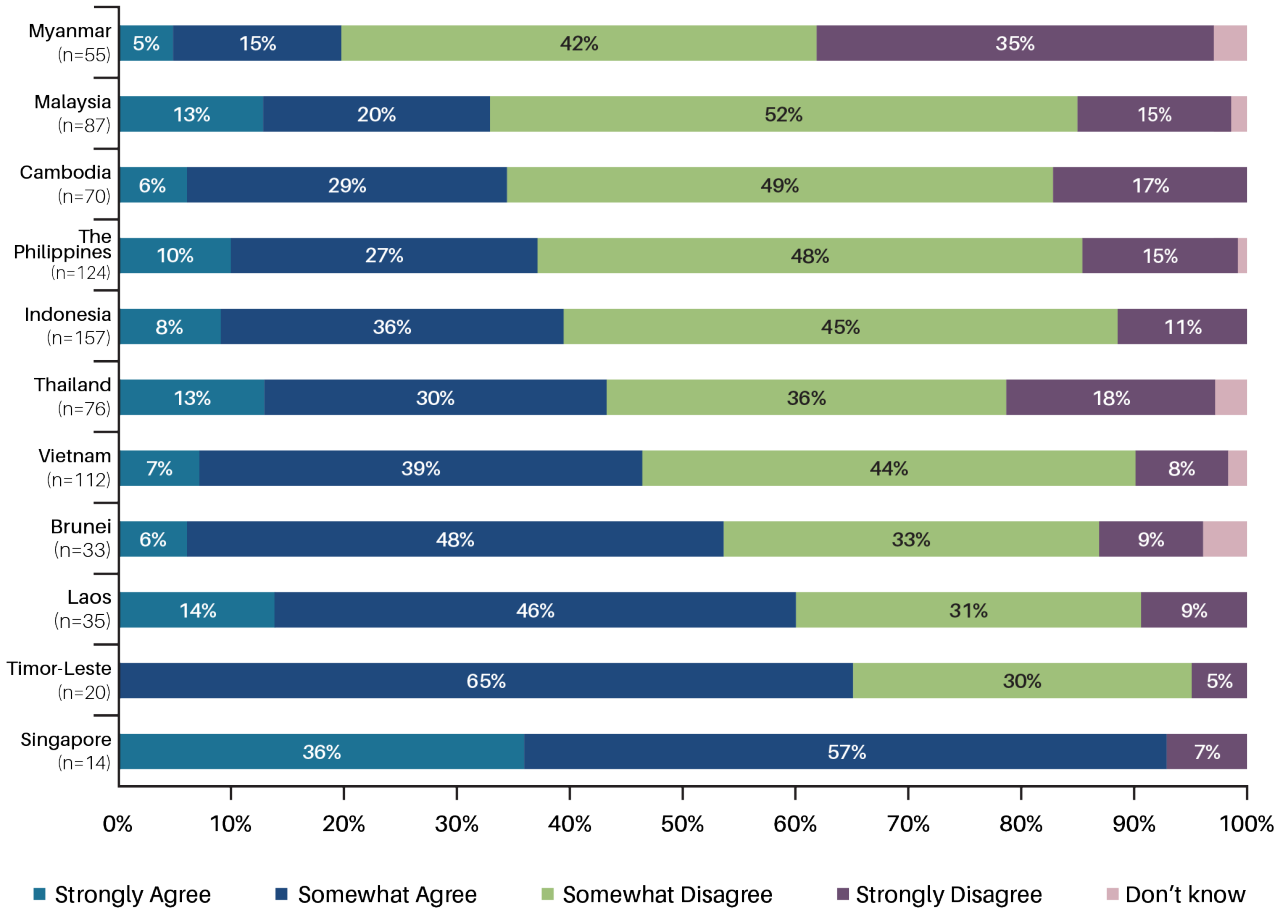


Figure 10. Agreement and disagreement with, "In my home country, people in my profession have adequate access to funding and resources," by country (n=783)

Moreover, 31% of alumni survey respondents suggested that they knew an alumnus that faced challenges applying lessons in their home country. Taken with the finding that a majority of alumni respondents felt it was easy to apply lessons learned in their home country, this suggests that respondents may be overly optimistic about their ability to apply lessons learned in practice, given local contextual challenges. Several alumni FGD respondents noted that government restrictions on activities and disconnects between U.S. and home country laws and cultural norms made it challenging to carry out post-program activities. A few respondents specifically detailed challenges in shifting cultural norms and barriers to organizing events:

"I don't know about the other countries but in Vietnam, it is the policy, [that you need] the permission from the government. There was one time when YSEALI alumni tried to organize an environmental workshop, but the government considered it as a sign of rebellion, so

they stopped it without any clear explanation. They just said that they don't allow American applications for tourists, things like that, in Vietnam." (FGD 1, Segment 1, Environmental Issues)

"There were some issues or topics that were actually restricted in my hometown, especially in Indonesia. There's a lot of pros and cons about it, especially about the specific rise of LGBTQ communities, disabilities, and HIV and AIDS, which not all parts of Indonesia are agreeing with that or even aware of that issue. [...] It's really going to be a challenge if we are applying for another connection with the local government because they absolutely reject it because they have resistance of that issue due to the religious beliefs or the community norms itself." (FGD 7, Segment 2, virtual)

"I'm leading youth to join their community project and other necessary activities. But most of their parents consider it as a useless thing. They do not do the community activity because they think it is related to politics. And most of them are traumatized from the civil war [in Myanmar], so they see politics as not safe for the kids." (FGD 8, Segment 2, virtual)

Alumni success in applying their knowledge or starting youth-focused projects related to YSEALI themes after the program should be interpreted in the light of similarly high numbers reporting local constraints. This leads us to believe that the majority of alumni left the program feeling empowered to bring general lessons home in some new way, despite limits on funding and concrete support.

PERCEPTIONS OF THE UNITED STATES

EQ4: How has participation in YSEALI influenced fellows' perceptions of the United States?

The vast majority of alumni expressed that the YSEALI program led to a significant increase in favorable views of the USG and American people. Eighty percent of alumni survey respondents stated that their perception towards the USG became either somewhat or much more favorable. Moreover, 89 percent of respondents suggested that the United States is a trustworthy partner for their country, and 88 percent stated that their views of American people were somewhat or much more favorable. Notably, nearly 45 percent of survey respondents said they had much more favorable views of American people. Several alumni FGD respondents mentioned that their encounters with people in the United States defied stereotypes they had seen in popular culture, and remarked on the cultural diversity, religion, and attention to persons with disabilities. In particular, they said they gained

an appreciation through attending the YSEALI program – and the homestay element in particular – that America is a more diverse place than they originally believed, noting differences between the North and the South, as well as urban and rural communities.

"I visited a lot of communities like Latin-American, Asian-American, Indian-American. I can see like the United States consists of a diversity of people from different backgrounds, different beliefs. How they manage as a group and also provide benefit to the whole nation of the United States is so amazing." (FGD 8, Segment 2, virtual)

"I come from the tribe from my home country, so I can resonate with [Native Americans in the United States] … They are also having the same difficulties so what I can learn from that is that I can take something from their effort to bring to my home country for our tribes. Specifically, I would say that their persistence of fighting for their rights, for their tribe is exceptional … I'm very inspired by them to bring to our tribe as well." (FGD 7, Segment 2, virtual)

"Even though I am not part of their religion, we can see in their expression and body language, the way they express themselves to their God. I am really interested. After the program, I am more interested in learning new things about people in Alabama." (FGD 3, Segment 1, Civic Engagement)

"When I first step into the American airport, I realize that there's many wheelchairs in line with assistance ready to help people in disability … all the people and I have never seen this before in my country or in another country, like Qatar, or China. This is really amazing for me! They are really inclusive not only to people of disability but all the people." (FGD 8, Segment 2, virtual)

The majority of alumni reported that they gained a better understanding of free speech, religious and ethnic diversity, values and culture, and democracy in the United States. More than 60 percent of alumni survey respondents reported that they had a stronger understanding of U.S. values and culture (82 percent), freedom of speech (77 percent), religious and ethnic diversity (71 percent), and democracy (63 percent). Several alumni FGD respondents specifically detailed that their understanding of U.S. democratic values and free speech was enhanced by their experience:

"I think they really take their First Amendment second to none. I really appreciate that. One thing that I appreciate is that I can speak my mind." (FGD 7, Segment 2, virtual)

"I've never attended a rally in the Philippines. The very first rally that we attended was in the

United States. And the euphoria that you get like seeing how they fight for democracy. I was just amazed to be honest. We're all amazed! When we were first told 'Hey, do you want to attend a rally?' 'Really, we're here to attend a rally?' When we finally joined, we saw how organized it was. Some of the rallyists were scolding us – 'Hey, don't block the road. Respect the motorists.' It's just how they practice democracy. That's just inspiring." (FGD 5, Segment 1, Social Entrepreneurship and Economic Development).

Alumni expressed that the cultural exposure, homestays, and community service aspect of the program provided them positive, valuable exposure to U.S. culture. Of the alumni that participated in the in-person program, 94 percent suggested that tours to local, state, private, and nonprofit organizations provided them valuable opportunities to interact with Americans; 61 percent noted that local community volunteer work did the same. Further, 98 percent of alumni who participated in the in-person exchange reported a small or large increase in their understanding of daily life and voluntary community services in the United States. A few alumni FGD respondents detailed positive experiences with U.S. cultural exposure:

"The best part of my Fellowship for me is the homestay and the volunteer work that we did … those two things are what I enjoyed the most because it allowed us to get exposed to the culture in the United States and meet new people doing volunteer work as well." (FGD 6, Segment 1, Social Entrepreneurship and Economic Development)

"I think for me, it was definitely eye-opening. We got to visit some places that allowed to see the relations of [the United States'] history, issues, and how they resolve it. We can correlate the issues or the projects that happen in our region … It's also very eye-opening that you see the classroom experience in the United States … It's a good experience to mingle with U.S. students as well." (FGD 4, segment 1, civic engagement)

EQ4.1: Has the program motivated fellows to take action inspired by their perceptions of the United States? If yes, what kind of actions?

Many alumni reported that participation in the YSEALI program has led them to take action or introduce new ideas in their home countries. More than 60 percent of alumni survey respondents suggested that the program inspired them to:

1) Start or organize new activities with alumni or in their community (70 percent),
2) Introduce new ideas on how to do things where they work (67 percent),
3) Provide training or mentorship to others (67 percent),

4) Raise awareness on issues that affect their community or country (67 percent), and
5) Volunteer in the community where they live (61 percent).

After witnessing how American civil society works to solve issues during their exchange, numerous alumni said they were inspired to bring this structure to their home countries. Some of the projects they created with their knowledge and experience from YSEALI include:

- "Schools for the Planet," which trains teachers to engage their students about the environment,
- "Hectares of Hope," which helps farmers develop rural farms,
- "Mangrove Manager," which does mangrove restoration and employs refugees,
- "Going Beyond Limitations," which advocates for people with disabilities and refugees, and
- "Thresher Shark Indonesia," which conserves an endangered species of shark.

Alumni largely linked the themes, networks, and lessons from the YSEALI program to their post-program actions, rather than perceptions of the United States. That said, a few respondents did note that visits to U.S. political events, like rallies or city council meetings, inspired them. Program alumni also expressed appreciation of the free expression and exchange of ideas that they experienced in the United States. One alumnus specifically noted that they drew on the experience of local level democratic processes in the United States to start a project where they include youth in community meetings:

"When I joined the YSEALI program, I went to a city council meeting … [citizens] can join and they can raise their concerns … [about a] rising problem in the community. The level of freedom of speech of the people in America [is impressive] and it also triggered me to initiate the project [to include youth in community meetings]. Now I'm working to include youth in the monthly community meetings." (FGD 8, Segment 2, virtual)

ASEAN

EQ5: How do alumni see themselves in relation to the regional ASEAN community?

Alumni resoundingly expressed positive perceptions of the ASEAN community. Ninety-three percent of alumni survey respondents reported that they either somewhat or strongly agreed that being a member of ASEAN is beneficial to their country. Myanmar appears to be somewhat of an outlier: 31 percent of respondents from Myanmar either

somewhat or strongly disagreed that being a member of the alliance is beneficial to their country, which is not surprising considering the growing rift between ASEAN leaders and Myanmar's democracy movement under the current repressive military government regime.

Alumni expressed that interactions with cohort-mates from other ASEAN countries helped them to understand cultural similarities and differences in the region, thereby fostering a stronger connection to the ASEAN region. Ninety-two percent of all alumni survey respondents also somewhat or strongly agreed that other ASEAN countries share similar challenges with their countries. Moreover, 85 percent of alumni survey respondents strongly agreed that their participation in the YSEALI program increased their network of peers from ASEAN countries. Several alumni FGD respondents suggested that the interaction with their cohort-mates helped them learn more about the history, current events, and cultures of other countries in the region and increased their sense of solidarity.

"This program has made us extend our solidarity to each other, I mean between me and my fellow Southeast Asian friends. We share our collective experience as Southeast Asians in which we face a similar challenge to uphold our democracy in our country." (FGD 8, Segment 2, virtual)

"I had the chance to interact with my cohorts from 11 other countries. It was so different. I learned a lot about the culture of people and ways of thinking. I was learning so much from my friends within the cohort. I was so impressed with my Timor-Leste friend who can speak a lot of languages. It was so exciting to be able to know people from different countries and see everything in a bigger picture." (FGD 2, Segment 1, Environmental Issues)

FUTURE RECIPROCAL PROGRAMMING

EQ6: The program is considering the addition of reciprocal component of the program in the United States. Do fellows see it as valuable to their careers to bring American fellows to their countries? What do fellows recommend as impactful ways to set up such a program?

The vast majority of alumni saw value in a reciprocal exchange that brought American fellows to their countries. Among survey respondents, 88 percent somewhat or strongly agreed that they saw it as valuable to their careers to bring American fellows to their country. Alumni FGD respondents noted that a reciprocal exchange would be a great opportunity for students from the United States to be exposed to the histories and cultures

of countries in the ASEAN region. Several respondents noted that American fellows could learn more about the history and diversity of ASEAN countries and that the exchange could provide opportunities to collaborate:

"I think there would be a value [in the reciprocal exchange] because one time when we were in a lecture, we have other American students studying journalism and other programs in the university. We asked them if they are aware that the Philippines was a former U.S. colony, but sadly, they were not aware of that side of history … In terms of ASEAN, they are not really that knowledgeable about culture and the relations between the two countries. That would add, I think, value to them, knowing more about ASEAN and the former connections between the countries in ASEAN and the United States." (FGD 1, Segment 1, Environmental Issues)

"Actually, I really want to host them. I really support the idea. It's a good experience for me and for my business also if people from the United States come here. So, we are not just Southeast Asian students going to the United States to learn. If they can come, we can share about my country, about the culture, and actually, when I'm in the United States I also come to this place in YSEALI, and I'm asking about how to get a follow-through from the United States to Indonesia because I see a lot of projects that we can do, a lot of opportunity of the task that we can work together and I'm so glad if I can host them." (FGD 6, Segment 1, Social Entrepreneurship and Economic Development)

Alumni recommended that the program highlight daily life in their country and ensure that American fellows experience their country through homestays and excursions. Several alumni suggested that the program take American students beyond the main urban and Westernized areas to experience the daily life of people in their countries. For example, they suggested educational excursions, homestays, and visits with Indigenous people and those living in rural areas. Some alumni suggested topic areas to cover, and others recommended highlighting important aspects of their countries' culture and history in the program.

"Getting them to experience the daily travails that a lot of Filipinos go through for them to really understand the social issues that they fight for." (FGD 5, Segment 1, Social Entrepreneurship and Economic Development)

"Maybe the program could set up something like having them live with a host family and live in the provinces and experience traditional cultural practices. Then, go to challenged communities so that they can grasp how they can improve their advocacies. I believe that the university was able to share with us that they have exchange programs in other countries.

I'm hoping that they can do it in Asian countries." (FGD 4, Segment 1, Civic Engagement)

"If America wants to learn something from Indonesia, maybe diversity, culture, and nature. These are the greatest things in Indonesia. Maybe we can make it into an educational trip not only because they go there to learn something, but they could also give something to the young people in that area. We could learn about environmental and cultural diversity. The Americans can share the way they think, the way that they can communicate, and speak in English. That's kind of basic but it's needed." (FGD 3, Segment 1, Civic Engagement)

However, alumni pointed out various challenges to implementing the reciprocal exchange, ranging from administrative and logistical considerations to cultural concerns. Alumni FGD respondents noted that bureaucratic and political environments in their countries may present challenges to reciprocal exchange. Alumni also mentioned logistical concerns, such as difficulty sustaining a five-week exchange in some countries, internet, and electricity connectivity in certain remote areas, and finding appropriate material to cover in the program. Further, FGD respondents suggested that cultural considerations be taken into account, such as: social conservatism in the ASEAN region; the need for Americans to respect religious and cultural beliefs and spaces in the region; less permissive environments in the region regarding freedom of speech and democratic values; potential language barriers; and issues adjusting to different cuisines.

CONCLUSIONS

The evaluation demonstrated that the YSEALI Academic Fellowship influences participants' opinions and trajectories in several desired ways. A majority of alumni indicated in both the survey and FGDs that the Fellowship has supported them in achieving professional and academic goals, including career advancements, increased knowledge and skills in their areas of interest, the pursuit of higher degrees, and access to professional and academic networks. Alumni credited the program with a greater sense of solidarity with the ASEAN region, and more positive views of the United States and the American people. Additionally, evidence gathered during the evaluation indicated that participants developed a suite of soft skills and confidence that strengthened their academic and professional interests and abilities.

Yet some alumni struggled to put their passions into action upon returning to their home countries. Sustained engagement and ability to employ their new knowledge can be dependent on the support they receive when they return home, leading to mixed legacies of the program in alumni's home countries, particularly those that are in the most politically repressive environments. Grants that support alumni in launching such community projects are competitive and serve as a critical lifeline in communities and among alumni that lack resources. However, the data also suggests that funds available through the YSEALI program itself may be insufficient, as alumni often turn to external resources to fund ongoing projects upon their return home or struggle to launch their projects due to fund constraints.

Additionally, qualitative research suggests that the exchange's busy schedule may leave too little time to build strong foundational relationships, which in turn makes it harder for alumni to maintain longer-term relationships upon their return home. Some also suggested that the large cohort sizes made it more challenging to create close relationships, sharing the idea that the use of more breakout groups or sub-groups within the cohort might foster the creation of friendships across the cohort as well.

Alumni connections take place within, across, and outside of the 19 formal and informal networks and these connections contribute positively to academic, professional, and personal outcomes. Home country alumni associations (Types 2-6) appear to be

particularly effective in connecting YSEALI alumni and furthering their professional and academic goals. No single home country association type is most effective in supporting alumni's professional and academic goals, suggesting that different models may be better suited to particular contexts. Alumni who participate in associations reported sustaining higher engagement over time than those not in associations.

Outside of networks, alumni often collaborate in small, tight-knit, time-limited groups. For a minority (about a third) of YSEALI Academic Fellows, their cohort-mates play an important a role in helping them achieve academic and career goals; however, those connections, especially cohort-mates from different home countries, are primarily sustained by self-organized efforts and are often time-limited, suggesting that IPs do not play a significant role in sustaining the connections established in their topic-specific institutes. Connections with U.S. individuals do not contribute strongly to alumni outcomes; several alumni reported that overcrowded schedules during the exchange program provide little time to interact with U.S. connections.

All YSEALI stakeholders appear to contribute to alumni network development and health in some way, but levels of involvement and coordination vary. Posts play a particularly important role in supporting alumni networking in their respective countries, primarily through nonfinancial means, while IPs provide limited nonfinancial support to their regional networks.

The evaluation indicates that the YSEALI Academic Fellowship Program meets its intended goals overall and underscores the importance of strengthening post-program activities, such as community projects and alumni networks, through resources and coordination support.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The evaluation yielded several actionable recommendations for program stakeholders at various stages of implementation.

PRE-PROGRAM

- Leverage the prestige of the YSEALI brand in Southeast Asia to expand outreach and access to the program. The program is highly respected and carries cache among those that know about it, but awareness across and within countries could be increased. Increased awareness and wider recruitment efforts will ensure that the program reaches more marginalized groups, especially those outside of capital cities. Alumni associations could serve as valuable partners in outreach and awareness efforts.
- Strengthen communication and collaboration between various stakeholders, including participating posts, IPs, the U.S. Mission to ASEAN, and the ECA program team. With a program that spans so many disparate countries and that involves multiple IPs with distinct specialties, creating strategic touchpoints is critical for creating a shared understanding about the priorities of regional and policy bureaus and reconciling with the realities and challenges of the posts in-country.
    - Request that each IP provides a thorough overview of the curricula and field trips entailed in the program to staff at all posts during a collective briefing so they can more accurately answer applicants' questions and help to set expectations.
    - Provide opportunities and channels for staff at each post to share lessons learned about outreach, alumni management, and other program components among counterparts in different countries.
- To encourage early relationship building and comfort – and to ultimately foster longer-lasting relationships after the program – IPs should consider opportunities to match each participant with a "buddy" or small group of buddies from their cohort prior to participants' arrival in the United States. Ideally these small groups will include participants from multiple countries and be grounded in a shared interest, which could foster more deep and multinational collaborations after the program.

DURING THE EXCHANGE

- Consider decreasing the amount of formal scheduled time during programming in the United States, to allow for more socializing among YSEALI participants and facilitation of strong cross-country and cross-cultural relationships. More downtime for participants would also allow for more time to meet, connect with, and create relationships with Americans to foster mutual understanding. Likewise, scheduled but informal social activities should intentionally include American students. As the strength of the relationships formed during the program is directly connected to how likely alumni are to maintain them, it is critical to adjust the program schedule to allow time and space for these friendships and mentorships to form during their time in the United States.
    - Consider expanding or lengthening the elements of the program that involve interactions with Americans, including homestays, field trips, volunteer opportunities, and social gatherings.
    - IPs should provide dedicated time and coaching about how to reflect on the Fellowship experience throughout, with activities such as goal-setting, journaling, and group discussion.
- Encourage IPs to incorporate more contextualized curriculum into their lessons. Drawing from detailed Southeast Asian case studies will make the material more relevant and engaging for participants. For example, the social entrepreneurship and economic development IPs could organize a panel of speakers who have experience operating social entrepreneurship ventures in the participants' home countries and speak to the particular challenges and opportunities they encountered.
    - These panelists could also be incentivized to serve as reviewers of concepts for community projects, providing mentorship, feedback, and encouragement about how to realize real-world applications of the academic knowledge participants gain.
- Where possible, tailor the curriculum to the participants' knowledge level, specific interests, and skills applicable to their chosen field. Some alumni wished for higher-level academic learning in the program as well as more practical skill-building, both of which alumni find valuable in advancing their academic and professional goals. While the diversity of expertise may not always allow for a fully customized experience, getting participant input prior to attending the program may be helpful, as would setting expectations and leveraging participant expertise within seminars and networking sessions.

POST-PROGRAM

- Consider adding a "re-entry" session upon alumni's return home. This session should include a workshop on the diverse options for sustaining and expanding their connections with fellow alumni from YSEALI and other USG exchange programs. Provide specific information about the formal associations in each country, especially leadership opportunities within them; ways to sustain informal connections with cohort-mates; any relevant laws or policies locally that may impact their community projects; and activities supported by posts, IPs, and other YSEALI stakeholders. Share examples of the power of expanding their connections within the broader YSEALI alumni world and how keeping in touch with fellow alumni may also be helpful in easing some of the "re-entry blues" that some alumni reported upon their return home.
    - Consider inviting alumni who have successfully executed a community project in the relevant home country, who can speak to the challenges and provide encouragement to alumni.
    - MELI should record an on-demand learning module for exchange alumni on applied best practices for how to design and measure small-scale community projects, including the basics of theories of change, evaluation, and using data to demonstrate value. Exchange alumni would also benefit from a short library of relevant resources in basic English (either drafted by MELI or compiled by them but published by other reliable sources).
- Consider increasing the number and total value of grants for alumni to carry out community projects upon their return to their home communities. The relatively small amount of financial resources needed to fund these projects can have long-lasting positive impacts in alumni home communities. In addition, these programs allow alumni to apply the skills they have gained as well as increase their personal growth and confidence, creating a foundation for them to continue to serve as leaders in their home countries.
    - Include in the Academic Fellowship one or more modules on nonprofit or small business management, fundraising, setting up governing boards for organizations, and engaging local communities in project work and ownership.
- Seek all opportunities to create lasting formal structures to support longer-term engagement with program alumni. This can take the form of continued provision of resources like financial grants, additional events such as workshops or trainings, or the creation of online portals for continued education. Alumni strongly desire continued technical and expert assistance, especially as their efforts and skills deepen post-program.
- Create formal and structured ways to bolster the strength and cohesion of alumni

networks at the conclusion of the program. In-country posts are best suited to lead these efforts due to their continuity and proximity to alumni, with support from IPs and ECA. The goal of these longer-term efforts should be to keep alumni actively in touch with one another, rather than one-way information dissemination.

  - Consider creating a full-time position, possibly within the U.S. Mission to ASEAN, that is solely devoted to supporting the existing more informal networks, both online and offline. Coordinating YSEALI alumni efforts across participating posts would be especially valuable.
  - Emphasize the value of cross-country community projects. To facilitate this, increase instruction on collaborative project management and sustainability. Add tailored workshops on nonprofit management, setting up governing boards for organizations, engaging local communities, fundraising and joint leadership.
  - YSEALI organizers should utilize the efforts and strengths of the various program stakeholders to build on existing relationships and communication methods to better meet alumni needs and program objectives. Where existing messaging or collaborating spaces exist, support those organically, with the understanding that the more avenues there are for connection, the stronger the overall networks will likely be in the long term. Make networks and events inclusive of locations outside capital cities to increase access for alumni outside the largest cities.
  - Empower and incentivize alumni to create one formal regional YSEALI alumni organization (for Academic Fellows or both Academic and Professional Fellows) with a leadership structure across all participating posts to allow for most cross-country sustained connections. These leadership positions could be elected by alumni and could serve over a set period, ideally longer than one year, to enable more continuity of plans and projects. Leaders may be provided a stipend for their efforts as well given a budget to organize events and contests and share resources, as well as to cover their time to moderate online alumni messaging boards. This will shift some of the burden of alumni engagement from posts and IPs to the alumni themselves, while empowering alumni and giving them real-world leadership experience. This would also help build stronger alumni-driven engagements, a support group for program implementation, and pan-ASEAN collaborations. Leaders of this organization would also be responsible for liaising with in-country all-ECA alumni networks in each country. This also creates a model for democratic governance for alumni themselves.

- Highlight success stories of leaders that embody the values and spirit of the YSEALI program. This can take the form of featuring stories or alumni profiles more widely on social media, or the creation of more formal mentorship programs. Identifying, investing in, and creating longer term relationships with influencers and organizers within the YSEALI alumni has multiple benefits, including: creating an impetus for alumni to stay

engaged with the program long-term; demonstrating the longer-term outcomes of ECA program participation; and attracting new interest and applicants to the program.

- Clarify and demonstrate to program stakeholders as well as to alumni themselves the purpose and benefits of sustained YSEALI networks. A strong YSEALI alumni network not only brings together future ASEAN leaders but also potentially provides a model for democratic governance. It also enhances the power and influence of citizen voices in advocating for policies and improving governance on a variety of key policy areas. These networks have the potential to create strong forums for youth leaders to share experiences, express identities, discuss and debate needed changes, and craft strategies for action. The potential positive impact of these processes is significant and as such, investment in longer term sustenance of these networks is critical.

ANNEX I: EVALUATION STATEMENT OF WORK

EVALUATION DESIGN AND METHODS

This evaluation will seek to answer the above evaluation questions through a mixed-methods design. As noted above, complexity should be considered throughout the evaluation process, including the evaluation design and selection of methods.[16] Below are suggested methodologies that may be appropriate for this evaluation. These suggestions should not be considered a final or complete list. **In developing the final evaluation design, the ECA MELI unit will work closely with the Contractor to determine the best methodologies and approaches required to meet the needs of this evaluation.**

Key stakeholders to include in the inquiry:

- YSEALI Academic Fellows from 2013 to present
- ECA Program Staff – the Contractor should plan to speak with the ECA program team in the Study of the U.S. Branch (ECA/A/E/USS) at least twice: during the kick-off meeting and separately for an interview after background documents have been reviewed
- Embassy/Regional Bureau Staff – Embassy staff and regional bureau staff who have been substantively involved in the YSEALI program should be interviewed. This is expected to include at least one staff member based in each of the 11 participating countries.
- Staff and faculty from each of the U.S. higher education partner institutions (both current and past partners). This will include University of Montana, East West Center of Hawaii, University of Connecticut, Brown University, University of Texas-Austin, University of Nebraska-Omaha (UNO), Arizona State University, and Kennesaw State University.

16. Methods refers to data collection, analysis, and interpretation.

Methods may include:

Document, records, and literature review – As a first step, the Contractor will undertake a review of existing program documentation. This phase will include initial interviews with ECA program and implementing partner staff. At this stage, the Contractor should also plan to conduct 2-3 interviews with ECA staff and two interviews (one with staff, one with faculty) from each university partner, with interviews lasting approximately one hour and conducted in-person where possible (via teleconference or zoom if remote interviews are required). This initial research will help inform survey and interview questionnaire development. The program team will be responsible for providing all relevant programmatic documentation.

Surveys (web-based and/or in person) – All of the YSEALI Academic program alumni should receive a survey (total population around 3300). The program team, YSEALI coordinators at posts, and implementing partners will be responsible for providing all available contact information for alumni. However, it is expected that these contact databases will be incomplete; the Contractor will be required to propose and execute a plan for additional follow-up to locate and survey alumni.

In-depth, key informant interviews and focus groups (remote and in person) – Relevant stakeholders listed above, identified during the document review and in discussions with the program team, should be contacted for in-person and/or remote interviews and focus groups. It is expected that these inquires will include a subset of alumni, plus representatives of participating higher education institutions, embassy staff, regional bureau staff, and any other stakeholders deemed relevant to the investigation. The program team will provide all available contact information for relevant stakeholders and make any necessary introductions; some contacts may require additional follow-up by the Contractor. All overseas fieldwork should be conducted with the assistance of local independent Contractors/sub-Contracting firms.

Case studies – To further illustrate the diverse cultural contexts in which the program operates, the Contractor should develop a set of case studies focusing on alumni that illustrate their experience participating in YSEALI, demonstrate any personal change and professional growth. The case studies are expected to be qualitative in nature, but the particular of the methodology are open to the Contractor's interpretation. All overseas fieldwork should be conducted with the assistance of local independent Contractors/sub-Contractors. The Contractor should submit at least one case study per country visited.

Complexity-aware methods - The YSEALI evaluation may employ one of more expressly complexity-aware monitoring, evaluation, and learning (CAMEL) methods, selected as part of the collaborative process involving ECA and Contractor staff in the evaluation's design phase. Potential methods will include but will not be limited to the following: Contribution Analysis, Outcome Harvesting, Most Significant Change, and Ripple-Effect Mapping. Creative approaches to CAMEL methodologies are encouraged, though the Contractor will be responsible for executing and applying the selected method(s) in a robust and fully developed manner, consistent with standards of current research practice.

Data collection should include **both** domestic and overseas fieldwork. The Contractor should plan to collect data remotely for all required fieldwork where possible (see sections 7.8 and 7.10 below for additional details) with the assistance of local Contractor(s)/sub-Contractor(s) for international fieldwork.

EVALUATION TEAM

The Contractor should propose a team with a combination of qualifications as outlined in this Statement of Work to provide the best possible product. Requested skills of key and non-key personnel are outlined below. ECA expects Evaluation Team members to have relevant prior experience in the region the program operates in, familiarity with international exchange programs, and prior evaluation/assessment experience.

5.1 Key Personnel

Key personnel will include:

Evaluation Team Leader (1)

This person (can be senior- or mid-level) will have served as a team leader in the past (preferably with a USG agency and ideally with cultural exchange programs), will have research design expertise and significant experience collecting and analyzing qualitative and quantitative data, will have overseas fieldwork experience (Southeast Asia a plus), and preferably will have some experience with complexity-aware evaluation.

Key personnel will be expected to be available for the entire period of performance. **The ECA MELI unit must approve any key personnel change in writing.**

Non-Key Personnel

Evaluation Team (multiple)

The Evaluation Team also may include mid- or junior-level evaluation consultant(s) to support the key personnel. Combined, these individuals should have experience working with preferably with USG-funded evaluation programs and ideally with cultural exchange programs, overseas fieldwork (Southeast Asia a plus), ability to analyze quantitative data, strong qualitative analytical capabilities, and (should the proposal include it) experience with virtual data collection. At least one Evaluation Team member is expected to have expert-level SNA expertise, if the Evaluation Team Leader does not.

Additional personnel to assist in copy-editing the report, designing, and developing infographics, and support in the overall management of the evaluation are also welcomed. If these roles can be filled by the evaluation personnel above for added cost savings, the ECA Bureau would find that acceptable (and preferable).

Use of Locals/Sub-Contractor
The ECA MELI unit strongly encourages the use of local consultants or local sub-Contractor(s), as they can offer budgetary and key logistical advantages during the implementation of the evaluation. In-country partners enable the Evaluation Team to locate alumni and can better facilitate the interaction between the Evaluation Team and study participants.

The Contractor should include documentation of institutional capacity and staff experience for any potential sub-Contractor(s) and local consultant(s) listed.

ECA MELI unit Participation. One ECA MELI unit staff member will participate in the fieldwork, assist with the evaluation, and facilitate interactions with representatives of the USG, implementing organizations, and other key personnel. The cost of this individual will be borne by ECA.

PERIOD OF PERFORMANCE

The Contractor will be expected to present a delivery timeline in their technical proposal based on the tasks and deliverables outlined in Section 7 below.

Estimated period of performance: October 2021 through June 2022

The Contractor must be responsive to ECA needs and remain flexible with regard to possible delays or prolonged timing. All work must start within two weeks of contract award.

Below is a detailed summary of all tasks and deliverables required under this contract:

	Description
7.1	**Regular Communication with the ECA MELI unit** Provide status meeting notes that summarize discussions and decisions. Upon award, the ECA MELI unit and the Contractor Evaluation Team shall communicate on a regular basis (i.e., weekly, bi-weekly, monthly) as deemed necessary.
7.2	**Kick-off Meeting** The Contractor will meet with ECA to discuss the obligations and responsibilities under the contract before data collection begins. The ECA MELI unit will provide guidance in terms of meeting with ECA program offices or outside agencies and grantees.
7.3	**Monthly Reports and Meetings** Monthly Progress Reports include status of ongoing and completed tasks, brief summaries of significant meetings or briefings held during the month reported on, next steps to be undertaken by the Contractor, and any pending actions to be taken by the ECA MELI unit. Monthly reports should also highlight any delays or expected delays based on the timeline (i.e., when a benchmark or deliverable was not met) as well as remedies or significant challenges which impede the timeline. The ECA MELI unit can provide a monthly report template upon award. The ECA MELI unit would also like to schedule a monthly meeting to discuss any CAMEL-related items to continue to build the capacity of the team.
7.4	**Program Document Review** Upon award, the Contractor will begin preliminary research and review of the YSEALI website/media, program documents, monitoring data from implementing partners and the ECA MELI unit (EGOALS data), and other materials to gain a better understanding of the program and begin developing the evaluation plan. The ECA MELI unit will assist the Contractor with identifying and collecting program documents and materials to be reviewed.

	Description
7.5	**Evaluation Plan** The Contractor will work in close collaboration with the ECA MELI unit to develop a final evaluation plan that includes the following elements: Data collection methods Quality Assurance Plan (which should consist of a participant contact information management plan, testing plan for data collection instruments, translation plan, and survey administration plan) Planned analysis techniques Timeline **NOTE:** The ECA MELI unit must approve any changes in the evaluation plan.
7.6	**Data Collection Instruments Development and Administration** Development: The Contractor will draft and submit data collection instruments to the ECA MELI unit for approval. The Contractor will revise all draft data collection instruments in collaboration with the ECA MELI unit. All instruments must be approved by the ECA MELI unit prior to finalization and use. In some cases, the Program Office and participating U.S. Embassies may want to review and approve data collection strategies and/or instruments; the ECA MELI unit will manage all internal clearances. The ECA MELI unit created the Monitoring Data for ECA (MODE) Framework to measure programmatic outcomes at both the program and Bureau levels. The MODE Framework includes a standardized Bureau-wide Results Framework with goals, objectives and indicators designed to track program performance and the direction, pace, and magnitude of change for ECA programs, leading to strengthened feedback mechanisms resulting in more effective programs. The Contractor should utilize MODE Framework survey questions where relevant (particularly those in sub-objective 3.1). All survey questions can be found in the MODE Framework Indicator Book. **Data Map**: The Contractor will be required to submit a data map of the data collection questions (items on survey questionnaire) to the evaluation questions listed in Section 3. This will be submitted with the data collection instruments. This "map" can simply be a marker next to the question with the corresponding evaluation question. For example: "Were you satisfied with the networking opportunities provided by the program?" (Evaluation Question XX). An example will be provided upon award.

	Description
	Consent Language and Scripts: The Contractor will draft and submit the initial introductory contact/cover letters/e-mails/scripts as well as any follow-up or reminder correspondence language related to all data collection instruments, as well as any contact or script language related to the location verification of alumni to the ECA MELI unit for revision and approval. The ECA MELI unit will provide the Contractor with pre-approved consent language upon award. **Instruments Pre-Test:** The Contractor will conduct a pre-test(s) of data collection instrument(s). *Any subsequent revisions must be reviewed and approved by the ECA MELI unit.* **Survey Administration:** The Contractor will provide the ECA MELI unit with a survey administration plan with details on strategies to regularly monitor survey response rates and methods to increase response rates. Methods to reach survey respondents may include but are not limited to reminder e-mails, domain adjustments, phone calls, contact through WhatsApp, contact through alumni pages, etc. Contractors will be required to utilize the ECA MELI unit's Qualtrics account for survey administration (ECA will provide access to the Contractor). In addition to proposing its own measures to ensure adequate response, the Contractor will be required to implement the following, informed by the current evidence base on best practices in survey research (see ECA's research on survey response rates and non-response bias in paper sent as separate attachment): Announcement of the survey to participants via email from person(s) in position of authority at ECA (ECA MELI unit staff will arrange this). Design of survey invitation within Qualtrics consistent with documented best practices (ECA will explain and convey detailed requirements). Use of "nudges" to follow up with individuals slow to respond (an automated feature available in Qualtrics). In addition, the Contractor will be required to implement a pilot program on the use of incentives to promote survey response. The pilot will consist of offering compensation, likely in the form of airtime, to 300 randomly selected individuals in the survey population. ECA will work closely with the Contractor on the details and logistics of this plan. Proposal budgets should include projected costs for this pilot, including compensation for the 300 individuals valued at $5 per person.

	Description
	The Contractor should aim for an overall response rate of at least 60 percent. If that mark is not reached, the Contractor will be required to submit a brief to ECA detailing the reasons for a lower response (to the extent it is known or can be speculated). Furthermore, the Contractor must remain open to additional follow-up measures to improve the response rate, as appropriate and as agreed-upon with ECA. The Contractor will be required to perform diagnostics to ensure adequate survey coverage of key groups is represented in the study population (e.g., gender, program year, program language, and host country). The Contractor will work closely with the ECA MELI unit to determine key groups and the ECA MELI unit will sign off (approve) on the threshold of representation of the agreed to key groups. Upon completion of the survey (regardless of whether the 60 percent mark was reached), the Contractor will be required to report the following information: The number surveys distributed and/or the number of people interviewed or participating in focus groups (respondents). The number of surveys/interview requests returned/undeliverable/declined, etc. The percentage of total number of responses collected electronically (versus by phone or in-person). The total average time (in minutes) it took all respondents to complete the survey. An example survey administration deliverable can be provided upon award; this deliverable is expected to be submitted to the MELI unit once the survey is complete and included as an annex in the final report. **Translation:** It is the expectation that not all key informants outside of the U.S. who may have interacted with the alumni during the program will speak English well enough to complete a survey or participate in an interview, etc. Therefore, the Contractor may need to have all approved/finalized data collections instruments translated into relevant languages and submitted to the ECA MELI unit. See Section 9.4 for translation requirement related to any instruments used for overseas stakeholders. **Institutional Review Board (IRB):** Formal review of the study's methods, protocols, and instruments by an IRB is a requirement of the award. The IRB may be internal to the contracting firm or enlisted externally for the task. The Contractor will need to furnish proof of the IRB submission, plus a summary of review findings and any actions taken, before the start of fieldwork

	Description
7.7	**Updated Alumni Contact Lists** Upon contract award, the ECA MELI unit will provide a list of program alumni, as is, to the Contractor. This list will consist of information the ECA MELI unit is able to collect from within the Department of State, namely from the ECA Alumni Archive only. This will not represent the most up-to-date information for all alumni. The Contractor will be fully responsible for finding, securing updated/current contract information for alumni involved in this study, and verifying to the greatest extent possible beyond what is initially provided. This includes, but is not limited to, contacting implementing organizations for their alumni records for the period covered by the SOW and merging with the DOS contacts provided by the ECA MELI unit. Additionally, the firm will need to determine where there is any duplicate information due to some alumni having been on the program more than once. Methods to reach alumni may include but are not limited to e-mails, postal mailings, phone calls, scanning of social media sites, address directory searches, etc. The Contractor should provide a short description of the evaluation o share with program alumni, host organizations, and implementing partners prior to contacting the alumni. All alumni contact information must be provided as a deliverable to the ECA MELI unit at the completion of the evaluation. This should include an alumni contact inventory which outlines the number of program participants / alumni with contact information and type (e-mail, phone etc.) as well as the number of alumni without contact information. Differences in contact information by group (e.g., Demographics: fiscal/program year, gender, thematic focus, country, etc.) should also be noted in the inventory.

	Description
7.8	**Overseas Data Collection** International fieldwork will include remote fieldwork in all 11 countries in the YSEALI program, as follows: • Brunei Darussalam • Cambodia • East Timor • Indonesia • Lao People's Democratic Republic • Malaysia • Myanmar • Philippines • Singapore • Thailand • Vietnam Please note: The Contractor is required to research and determine whether research permits required by the host country and/or IRB approvals are required for the in-country data collection for this evaluation. The Contractor will be solely responsible for obtaining the necessary approvals and permits to ensure compliance with all local regulations, prior to the start of fieldwork. **Remote data collection**: The Contractor should also plan to use remote data collection methods as a means of engaging with alumni if the Contractor is unable to travel to locations in-person due to external factors beyond the Contractor's control. All countries are subject to change, contingent on security conditions, other events, or State Department interests that require selection of a different country. The ECA MELI unit can amend the selection of fieldwork countries at any point during the evaluation, and the Contractor will be expected to remain flexible at all times. The ECA MELI unit will work with Embassies in all countries to facilitate fieldwork initiation. **The Contractor will take full responsibility for fieldwork implementation** (i.e., preparation for fieldwork and data collection logistics). **In-country debrief** for each fieldwork country, the Contractor should plan on a one-hour in-person debrief with the U.S. Embassy (and the program team, if desired) to outline preliminary findings from the fieldwork. See Section 9.4 for translation requirement related to any instruments used for non-U.S. stakeholders.

	Description
7.9	**Interim Report and Briefing** The interim report and briefing provide the opportunity for the program team to learn of early findings and to provide any additional context to the evaluation (such as which findings should be explored further and the stakeholders that should be probed for additional information). **For evaluations with a period of performance greater than 9 months:** The Interim Report should present the preliminary or initial evaluation findings from the overseas data collection. The Interim Report should be submitted within four (4) weeks after completing international fieldwork. The interim report should be no more than 10 pages. The summary should include the following: Purpose of the evaluation and questions addressed Current status of the evaluation Methodology International fieldwork preliminary findings **Note:** The ECA MELI unit and program office will provide feedback on the report. Note that not all feedback provided by the Evaluation Manager and User Group has to be incorporated into a second draft; rather, the report should be lightly edited to make the report more readable for the Program Office, while any overarching/more involved comments received shall be considered and responded to in the final report.
7.10	**Domestic Field Work** It is expected that the fieldwork in the U.S. (e.g., interviews with university partners) will be conducted remotely. No travel is anticipated.
7.11	**Evaluation Report Outline** Prior to drafting the Evaluation Report, the Contractor must submit a detailed draft report outline for approval by the ECA MELI unit. A template will be provided by the MELI unit.
7.12	**Initial Draft of Final Evaluation Report** As part of the report review process, the Contractor will submit multiple drafts of the Evaluation Report, and adequate time shall be incorporated into the project schedule. Below is an outline of the expected review/approval process: ECA MELI unit review (1 week) Program Office (2 weeks) ECA senior management (DAS level) final approval (2 weeks) The Contractor must remain flexible as the time it takes to gain the appropriate approvals can vary.

	Description
7.13	**Briefing** After approval of the draft version of the Evaluation Report, the Contractor will be expected to present a briefing (most likely format will be 45-60 minutes of presentation; 30-45 minutes of questions) of the report findings to key stakeholders identified by the MELI unit. Stakeholders may include members of the Office of Policy and Evaluation, Program Offices in ECA, staff from other offices in the U.S. Department of State, ECA senior leadership, or staff from implementing organizations. **NOTE:** Prior to the briefing, the Contractor will be required to submit the PowerPoint presentation and any associated materials to the MELI unit for review and approval. Briefing materials should be a stand-alone presentation (i.e., with appropriate slide notes/script) which can be used by the MELI unit after the completion of the Evaluation. A template for the presentation will be provided upon award
7.14	**Evaluation Final Report** The Final Evaluation Report should include an Executive Summary that includes key findings, and a detailed analysis of the data collected, as well as any conclusions, recommendations, and lessons learned. As per DOS evaluation guidelines, the final report should be between 25-30 pages (not including appendices). Case studies and detailed information on analysis, data, survey administration, and/or research instruments can be placed in appendices. The Contractor should use non-technical language that is understood by lay audiences. Any academic and/or technical language used must be clearly explained in the report. The report should be organized around evaluation questions. For each major evaluation question, the report should have a separate section presenting findings and conclusions. Examples of previous evaluation reports can be found here: https://eca.state.gov/impact/evaluation-eca/evaluation-initiative/completed-evaluations. Language in the Final Report should be clear and easily understandable by a lay audience. The Evaluation Report should follow the U.S. Government Printing Office Style Manual (www.gpo.gov). Electronic copies in Microsoft Word and PDF of these documents will be submitted in an e-mail to the ECA MELI unit prior to the conclusion of the contract. A single file must include the executive summary and the full report, with any relevant appendices (plus a cover sheet) in a separate file.

	Description
7.15	**Infographic Brochure Report** After the Final Evaluation Report has been submitted and approved, the Contractor will be expected to meet with the ECA MELI unit, and possibly other ECA stakeholders (e.g., the Program Office) to determine which specific data points from the Final Report will be shared with which audiences and for what purpose. These data sets will be included in a brief infographic style report, etc. This report should be no more than five (5) pages. The data points used in this infographic will be used solely at the discretion of ECA. The infographic report provided by the Contractor should reflect these discussions and should be visually appealing and accessible by a variety of different audiences. This Report should utilize minimal text and conveying the data through infographics. Example infographics can be found here: https://eca.state.gov/impact/evaluation-eca/evaluation-initiative/completed-evaluations. Additional design guidance will be provided as necessary. Electronic copies of the approved final infographic will be submitted by e-mail to the ECA MELI unit prior to the conclusion of the contract in multiple file types (i.e., PDF, Illustrator). The file delivered must consist of a high-quality infographic report in PDF format with high-resolution images that are 300 dpi (dot per inch).
7.16	**CAMEL Briefing and Reflection Document** The contractor will hold one final briefing session with the ECA MELI unit on the evaluation and CAMEL approaches, and formulate a memo on what was learned, how the MELI unit can incorporate these practices into its policies and standard operating procedures, and how the MELI unit can conduct CAMEL approaches to their evaluations in the future.

ANNEX II: DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

The following are the evaluation's data collection instruments, including the survey, interview questionnaires, and focus group discussion moderator guides.

IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW GUIDE

Introduction (3 minutes)
Thank you for agreeing to speak with us today.

Purpose: We are conducting an evaluation of the YSEALI Academic Fellowship program, mainly to better understand post-program engagement and activities for alumni. This study is being conducted by The District Communications Group (DCG), an independent organization, in collaboration with NORC at the University of Chicago and the Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning and Innovation (MELI) Unit of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) of the U.S. Department of State.

In our conversation today I'll be asking you specifically about what you have been doing since you were in the YSEALI program and any lasting impacts of your participation. We want to learn about your experiences since you completed the program. Your ideas and feedback will help us understand the program's impact and to improve it for future participants.

There are no right or wrong answers – constructive feedback is as important as positive. Be as specific as possible with real-life examples when you can. Our discussion should take roughly an hour. Your participation is voluntary, and you can choose to answer or skip any of my questions and to stop the interview at any time. However, your comments and insights are key materials for this study and for our understanding of the post-program experience. All participant information is managed confidentially and any quotes used for the reports for this evaluation will be anonymous. No names nor other personal identifiable information will be disclosed.

Explanation of and consent for recording: We would like to record this conversation to remind us of what you said later when we write a report. Again, your responses are totally anonymous. We'll conduct interviews with many participants and stakeholders like you and our analysis will be written based on what we learn during all these discussions. Do you consent to my recording of our conversation?

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Experience with the YSEALI program overall (approx. 8 minutes)
Aim: Understanding of experience during program to contextualize insights on program impact

- To start, please tell me a little bit about yourself. Where are you from, when did you participate in the YSEALI Academic Fellowship and where did you go when you went to the United States?
- What led you to participate in the program? How did you hear about it and decide to apply? *(Listen for: Why did you want to participate? What connections did you have to the US prior to this program?)*
- There are several topics of the YSEALI fellowships: civic engagement, environment, and social entrepreneurship and economic development. Which of these did you study? How did you select that topic?
- What was the best part of the program for you? *(Listen for: friendships, learning, travelling to the US, skills, language experience, etc.)*
- Did participating in the YSEALI program help you achieve your professional and academic goals in any way? How?
- If you were in charge of the YSEALI Academic Fellowship, what is one change that would make the program better and more impactful?

Experience with Action Plans (approx. 25 minutes)
Aim: Understand their post-program activity in home community

- We understand that you worked on an action plan or community project when you returned home and would like to learn more about that. First, can you tell me whether it was a part of your curriculum at the university? How did developing your project fit into the YSEALI Fellowship?
- Please tell me a little bit more about your project itself. Why was it important to you?
  - How did you get the idea for it? How did you develop the plan?
  - Did you work with anyone else on developing your project *(Look for: other YSEALI participants, American students, IP university faculty/staff)*
  - Did you have a mentor or professor who you consulted or worked with on the plan? If so, who was that and how did they support you?
    - Are you still in touch with them? How do you communicate?
- After you returned home, were you able to carry out the project in your home community as planned? Can you tell me about how that went?

- What's been the result of your project? Do you feel like it was a success?
- Did you partner with other YSEALI alumni to implement it? What about anyone else? *(Look for: Americans, members of the embassy community, IP, local NGOs or community support)*

- What kinds of support did you receive on the project once you were back at home? Did anyone work with you to carry it out? *(Listen for: Financial, training, personal connections, promotion through USG channels)*
  - How did you ask for support? Who were your main points of contact?
- What were the barriers in implementing your project? What support could you have received to have made it even more successful? *(Listen for: Specific assistance in project implantation, funding sources, in kind donations, size of the project, time period of the project)*
- Were there other challenges you faced upon returning home that affected your ability to carry out your project? *(Listen for: Social/political/economic context, social network, work or academic setting)*
- Are you still involved in the project now? How so? If not, why not?
  - What other support or conditions would you need to ensure that your project continues to be successful into the future?
  - Where do you see yourself/this project in five years?
- Do you think your action plan /community project had any lasting impact on the people in your community? If so, how so? *(Listen for: Benefit from the project, any increase in knowledge or awareness, building local capacity, increased interest in/understanding of YSEALI thematic topic)*
- Did working on your action plan project lead to any other opportunities or interests for you? How so?
- If there was one thing you would change to make your Action Plan project more successful, what would it be?

Experience as Alumni, As a Part of YSEALI Network (approx. 10 minutes)
Aim: Understand their involvement in networks, alumni activities, sharing

- Have you participated in any alumni activities since you returned home? *(Listen for: What sorts of activities? How formal were the activities? Who organized them and how were they organized? How did you hear about them? Who were included?)*
- Have you maintained contact with other YSEALI participants? How do you stay in touch? *(Listen for: methods of communication, types of relationship, frequency of contact)*
  - Do you mostly stay in touch with other alumni from your own county? Are you in touch with alumni from any other countries?

    - Are you also in touch with YSEALI alumni from other program components like the professional fellowship or the regional workshops?
    - Are you ever in touch with alumni from other US government-funded scholarship programs? How so?
- Are you still in touch with people at the university you attended in the US? Who are you in touch with? How do you communicate? (Look for: American students, professors, members of program staff, other American citizens)
- What about with staff from the US Embassy in your country? Are you still in touch with anyone there? When do you hear from them? *(Look for who they are in touch with, LES/FSO, how they communicate, what level of contact)*
- Has being in touch with people from the program been beneficial to you in any way? How so? *(Listen for: Connections helping with job, status, mentoring, funding, training opportunities)*

Wrap-up (approx. 2 minutes)
Aim: To elicit open feedback to potentially raise points of importance that were not addressed earlier in the discussion

- Anything else you would like to share with us about what it's like to have participated in the program that I did not ask about?

Thank you so much for your participation!

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDES

Consent Language – use for all sessions [5mins]
Thank you for agreeing to join us today! We are conducting an evaluation of the YSEALI Academic Fellowship program to understand how successful the program has been in meeting its goals and objectives on behalf of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) of the U.S. Department of State.

In our conversation today, I'll be asking you about your experience with the YSEALI Academic Fellowship, what you have been doing since you came back home, and any lasting impacts of your participation. Your responses and your comments to what is said here will help us understand the program's impact and to improve it for future participants.

There are no right or wrong answers – everybody's opinions are valuable. We ask that you respect everyone's right to participate and share their experience. Feel free to answer directly after I pose a question or to chime in about what the other fellows are saying. Please speak one at a time and ensure that everyone has a chance to speak. When commenting, please use specific examples of your experience as an academic fellow and as a professional in your home country.

Our discussion should take roughly an hour. Participation in this discussion is voluntary. Each of you can choose to answer or skip any of my questions and to stop participating at any time. However, your comments and insights are important to this study. All quotes used for the reports for this evaluation will be anonymous, and the evaluation team will not disclose any names or other personal identifiable information. We ask each of you not to repeat today's discussion to others. Please be mindful when you express your opinions that we cannot guarantee full confidentiality because of the group setting.

If you have any questions, you may ask them now or later, even after the discussion has started. If you have any further questions about the study, feel free to contact Aylin Talgar Pietz at the District Communications Group (DCG) at aylin.pietz@dcgcommunications.com *[MODERATOR: ADD AYLIN'S NAME AND EMAIL TO THE ZOOM CHAT.]*

We would like to record this conversation to remind us of what you said later when we write a report. Again, your responses are confidential, and we will destroy all recordings and transcriptions after completing the analysis.

Do you consent to my recording of our conversation? *[MODERATOR: GO AROUND AND*

ASK FOR EVERYBODY'S VERBAL APPROVAL]

Do you have any questions before we begin?

RECORD AND CONTINUE using specific guide for each session.
Each focus group discussion session has a specific discussion guide tailored to the program participants taking part in the discussion as summarized in the table below.
FGD Guides are tailored to each program participant segment

Program Participant Segment	# FGDs	Specifications	Guide p.#
#1. YSEALI institutes (civic engagement, social entrepreneurship, environmental issues)	6	Alumni of recent, pre-COVID, US-based cohorts (e.g., FY 2017-18)	p.3
#2. Online cohorts	2	2020/21 cohort	p.3
#3 Country context	4	Success and challenges • The Philippines • Thailand	p.6
#4A. Alumni associations: YSEALI-specific; alumni-led	1	Malaysia YCOM (YSEALI, alumni-led) and Thailand TYN	p.9
#4B. Alumni associations: YSEALI, shared U.S. Embassy/Alumni leadership	1	Philippines YSEALI AMPLIFY	p.9
#4C. Alumni associations: Mixed United States Government, shared U.S. Embassy/Alumni leadership	1	FUSAAC - Cambodia (registered, governance)	p.9
#4D. Alumni associations: Mixed United States Government; U.S. Embassy-support	1	Thailand (TUSAA) and Philippines USGAAs	p.9
#4E. Alumni associations: Mixed United States Government; limited or no U.S. Embassy engagement	1	Malaysia MAAP, Vietnam VUSAC North, Vietnam VUSAC South	p.9
#4F. No association, U.S. Embassy-led	1	Indonesia, Laos, Singapore and Timor-Leste	p.12
Total FGDs	18		

⁎ Option to sample from survey responses.

SEGMENTS 1 & 2

Background (do not read aloud)

This section includes focus group discussion guides for:

- YSEALI institutes (Civic engagement, Social entrepreneurship, Environmental issues) (Segment 1)
- Online cohorts (Segment 2)

Warm up [5 mins]

Let's start by getting to know each other a little bit. Let's go around the group and each one tell me your name, home country and YSEALI cohort year and season, and one thing you like to do for fun. I'll start: *[Moderator states their name, home country, and one thing they like to do for fun. Give each respondent a chance to speak. Please ask for home country and YSEALI cohort year if they forget to state.]*

Discussion Questions [55-65 mins]

[EQ1] To begin our discussion today, I'd like to talk about your experience in the YSEALI Academic Fellowship and the program's impact on your lives. [10-15 minutes]

1. What was the best part of the program for you? (Listen for friendships made, what was learned, traveling to the US, skills obtained, language experience, etc.)
2. What was the hardest part of the program for you? What were some of the challenges you faced? What part of the program do you wish was different? *(Listen for issues with program administration, insufficient of irrelevant program content, irrelevance to home context, lack of follow-up support or resources, inability to implement learning at home missing home, culture shock, food, language barriers, housing, etc.)*
3. If you were in charge of the YSEALI program, what is one thing that you would change that would make the program better and more impactful?

<u>Skills and Personal Growth</u> [10 minutes]

4. What specific skills did you develop or strengthen as a result of your participation in the program? *(Listen for: Professional skills, language skills, organization, goal setting, communication, problem-solving, etc.)*
5. Can you share any examples of how you were able to apply those skills in the years since the program?

<u>Overall Impact</u> [15-20 minutes]

Moderator, Questions 6 is a priority question. Please encourage all participants to respond.

6. Has the YSEALI program helped you achieve your professional or academic goals in any way? *(Listen for: access to scholarships, new connections, job referrals, academic resources, venues to present research, etc.)*
7. What about your personal goals? What personal goals of yours did the YSEALI program help you achieve? *(Listen for: Learning about other places and cultures, self-awareness of my own capacities, resilience in other contexts, assessed life goals, etc..)*
8. Were there any unintended outcomes of your participation in the program that you noticed? Anything that changed that was unexpected or surprising?
9. How might your personal life path have been different if you had not participated in the program? *(Listen for: academic, professional, relationship effects as well as in terms of personal growth that the program encouraged such as self-actualization, self-awareness, resilience etc.)*

[EQ 4 and 5] [20 minutes]

Thanks for sharing such interesting answers. Next, I'd like to ask you about how your participation in the YSEALI Academic Fellowship influenced your views of different cultures or countries.

10. Did your participation in the YSEALI program affect your understanding of other cultures? If so, how? *(Listen for their experience with other cultures prior to your participation in the program, increased understanding, tolerance, interest in other cultures, ways of life)*
    a. Has your views on cultural differences or cultural understanding changed since then?
11. *Moderator, Questions 11 is a priority question. Please encourage all participants to respond.*
12. Do you consider yourself as a part of the ASEAN community? How so?
13. Do you think the YSEALI program helped make you feel more connected to the idea of the ASEAN community and identity?" *(Look for what specifically prompted any change in ASEAN identity, if not, how did they connect or not with ASEAN as a concept/ community)*
14. Do you feel like you learned more about the US? How so?
    a. Do you feel like you better understand US government, society or values? Can you tell me a little about that?
15. What about Americans? Did your experience change your views of Americans in any way? How so?
    a. How much did you get to spend time with Americans while you were in the US? Did you make American friends? Did you get to meet and talk to and spend time

with Americans while in the US? *(Listen for: did they make close connections or was it just people they encountered in public, Also listen for if they would have wanted more connection with Americans)*

b. Did you have a homestay experience? What was that like?

16. [**EQ 6**]. The program is considering the addition of a U.S. reciprocal component of the program, which means Americans traveling to your home countries to complete a similar program. Do you see any value in bringing American Fellows to your country? What do you see as recommend as impactful ways to set up such a program?
    a. What topics would be strong subject areas to focus on in your country? What would the challenges be?
    b.

Closing [2 mins]

17. Is there anything else you would like to share with us about what it's like to have participated in the program that I did not ask about?

SEGMENT 3

Background (do not read aloud)

This section includes focus group discussion guides for:

- **Country context influence on success and challenges in the Philippines (Segment #3)**
- **Country context influence on success and challenges in Thailand (Segment #3)**

The primary objective of this session is to collect data on:

- EQ3: How does the Fellows' home country context (such as, their social network, work, or academic setting; or broader social/political context of home country) help or hinder Fellows as they apply lessons learned from the YSEALI program?

You will also collect data on the following evaluation questions; however, be sure cover the primary objectives adequately:

- EQ1 How has the YSEALI program and experience in the U.S. contributed to the advancement of Fellows' professional and academic goals? What specific aspects of the YSEALI experience do Fellows perceive as the most important contributors to their professional and academic pathways?

Warm up [5 mins]

Thanks so much being here with us today. I know that it's a bit strange for you all to be

speaking English when you are all Thai/Filipino so thanks so much for doing so for the purposes of this study. Let's start by getting to know each other a little bit. Let's go around the group and each one state your name, home country and YSEALI cohort year, and one thing you like to do for fun. I'll start: *[Moderator states their name, home country, and one thing they like to do for fun. Give each respondent a chance to speak. Please ask for home country and YSEALI cohort year if they forget to state.]*

Discussion Questions [45-50 mins]
[EQ1] [5-6 minutes] To begin our discussion today, I'd like to talk about your experience in the YSEALI Academic Fellowship and the program's impact on your lives.]

1. Today we'll be talking about both stories of challenges and successes. Both are equally important for this evaluation and improving the program. Let's start with your overall program experience. How was the YSEALI program experience for you overall?
2. Did the YSEALI program help you achieve your professional or academic goals in any way? *(Listen and probe for concrete examples linking program to career path)*

Moderator, Questions 3 and 4 are the priority questions for this session. Please encourage all participants to respond. Please allow approximately 25-30 minutes for these questions.

3. **[Challenge story, EQ 2.5:] Some alumni of United States Government academic exchange programs experience challenges applying lessons learned when they return to their home countries. Can you tell me about any challenges that you faced when you returned home and applied lessons you learned on the program. Or perhaps you know about challenges faced by other YSEALI Academic Fellowship alumni in accomplishing your academic and professional goals?**
   (Moderator instructions: Experiences of other alumni are OK.)
   a. What YSEALI lessons were you (or your colleague) trying to apply?
   b. Where were you (or your colleague trying to apply the YSEALI lesson? In your workplace, community, university, or other setting?
   c. What specific barriers or challenges did you face in this setting? *(Listen for specific examples and probe for more information. Welcome as wide a range of challenges as possible, including approval and permits, safety issues; local economic situations; cultural issues and understanding; technological limitations, etc. If the respondent describes lack of funding as the challenge, please Probe for more.)*
4. **[EQ2.5] Have you [or your colleague] been able to overcome these challenges to**

achieve your professional and academic goals? And if so, how?

   a. **What local people, resources or other conditions in your community or work setting helped you to overcome challenges and achieve your goals?**

Moderator, questions 6-9 should take about 10 minutes.

5. Considering the challenges that we just discussed, what could the YSEALI program do to make it easier to apply lessons learned in your home country context?
   a. Can you think of any connections you wish you would have been able to make, or types of lessons or activities you wish you could have done during the program?
   b. How could the YSEALI program improve the program so that it is more applicable to the Southeast Asian or country context?
6. Have you participated in any alumni activities since you returned home? Which ones? *(Listen for: Who hosted or organized them? How did you hear about them?)*
7. Have you maintained relationships with YSEALI alumni or alum from other US government exchange programs? Please, describe that engagement or give me an example. *(Listen for: specific network, types of relationships [i.e., professional, personal, etc.], frequency of contact)*
8. Considering the challenges we just learned about, what alumni activities would help you to achieve your academic and professional goals? *(Listen for: More intense events agenda, elevate the YSEALI AF alumni profile in media, academic and professional communities, more opportunities for alumni to present their work, more professional panels or networking events, others?)*
9. [**Success story**] [5 minutes] Thank you for this rich discussion. We talked a lot about challenges. Would any of you like to share an example of a really good success story from your YSEALI experience. Either for you personally or what you feel like you made a difference in your community? What are you most proud of? Looking back, please summarize for our discussion your most important example of achieving a professional goal or making a positive contribution to your community or workplace by applying lessons learned from the YSEALI program? *(Moderator instructions: Ensure that the respondent clearly describes 1) the positive contribution and why it is important; and 2) the setting where it took place (work, community, individual career).*

Closing [5 mins]

10. Thank you for your time today. We appreciate your input. As our final question, I'd like to ask: What do you want to make sure that the YSEALI program team knows? Is there anything else you would like to share with us?

SEGMENTS 4A, 4B, 4C, 4D, & 4E

Background (do not read aloud)

This section includes focus group discussion guides for:

- Alumni associations: YSEALI-specific; alumni-led (Segment #4A)
- Alumni associations: YSEALI, shared U.S. Embassy/Alumni leadership (Segment #4B)
- Alumni associations: Mixed United States Government, shared U.S. Embassy/Alumni leadership (Segment #4C)
- Alumni associations: Mixed United States Government; U.S. Embassy-support (Segment #4D)
- Alumni associations: Mixed United States Government; limited or no U.S. Embassy engagement (Segment #4E)

Each session will include representatives from one to three specific organizations (see table on page 2). The primary objective of each session is to learn about their associations and the influence participation in this associations has had on the participants' professional/ academic outcomes, specifically to answer the following evaluation questions:

- EQ2.2 What types of networks effectively contribute to alumni outcomes? Do regional and international network connections contribute to alumni outcomes?
- EQ 2.3: To what extent are YSEALI alumni networks formally or informally structured?
- EQ 2.5 How might post-programming activities amplify the resources in Fellows' home country contexts to achieve outcomes?

You will also collect data on the following evaluation questions; however, be sure cover the primary objectives adequately:

- EQ1 How has the YSEALI program and experience in the U.S. contributed to the advancement of Fellows' professional and academic goals? What specific aspects of the YSEALI experience do Fellows perceive as the most important contributors to their professional and academic pathways?

Warm up [5 mins]

Let's start by getting to know each other a little bit. Let's go around the group and each one state your name, home country and YSEALI cohort year, and one thing you like to do for fun.

I'll start: *[Moderator states their name, home country, and one thing they like to do for fun. Give each respondent a chance to speak. Please ask for home country and YSEALI cohort year if they forget to state.]*

Discussion Questions [50-60 minutes]

[EQ1] To begin our discussion today, I'd like to talk about your experience in the YSEALI Academic Fellowship and the program's impact on your lives. [7-10 minutes]

1. What was the best part of the program for you? *(Listen for friendships made, what was learned, traveling to the US, skills obtained, language experience, etc.)*
2. What was the part of the program that you wished was different? *(Listen for issues with program administration, insufficient of irrelevant program content, irrelevance to home context, lack of follow-up support or resources, inability to implement learning at home*
3. If you were in charge of the YSEALI program, what is one change that would make the program better and more impactful?
4. Has the YSEALI program helped you achieve your professional or academic goals in any way? *(Listen and probe for concrete examples linking program to career path)*

[EQ 2.2, 2.3, 2.5] Thank you for sharing your thoughts and experiences. Now, I would like to talk about your experience with YSEALI networking and engagement activities after you completed the program.

Moderator script: Several of you may be a member in more than one alumni association or network in your home country. Today, we're going to talk about [Name of association(s)] only. Please answer questions by referring to [Name of association] only.

Segment	FGD # (DCG schedule)	Associations
4a.	12	Malaysia YCOM and Thailand TYN
4b.	13	Philippines YSEALI AMPLIFY
4c.	14	Cambodia FUSAAC
4d.	15	Thailand TUSAA and Philippines USGAAs
4e.	16	Malaysia MAAP, Vietnam VUSAC North, Vietnam VUSAC South

<u>Alumni associations</u> [20 minutes]

5. We understand that each one of you is a member of an alumni association or organization. Is that correct? Please provide the name of the association(s) that you

are a member of?

6. What motivated you to join or get involved in an alumni association?
7. *[Moderator, Question 7 is a priority question. Please encourage all participants to respond.]* **Do you think that participation in an alumni association has helped you achieve or advance your academic and professional goals? If yes, please provide an example. If no, please explain why.**
8. [**EQ 2.2**] Have you maintained any connections in the ASEAN region or the United States? Please describe.
    a. Are those connections through your alumni association or through other channels?
    b. Have those connections been helpful as you work towards your academic or professional goals? Can you provide an example?
9. *[Moderator, Question 9 is a priority question. Please encourage all participants to respond.]* **Are there any challenges or drawbacks to participating in an alumni association? Are there any situations when an alumni association is not beneficial?**
    a. If a YSEALI colleague in another country that does not have an alumni association came to you and asked whether they should form an association in their country, what would you advise them? What should they consider about the benefits and challenges?

<u>Association leadership and coordination</u> [7-10 minutes]

10. Some alumni associations are led by alumni and others share leadership with the US embassies in each country. Do you know the situation in your association? Who leads the alumni association? Who do you hear from most often?
11. What are the benefits of this arrangement? What are the challenges?
12. If you could change or improve one thing about the management or leadership of your association, what would it be?

Association structure and formality [EQ 2.3] [10 minutes]

Moderator, Questions 13 and 14 are priority questions. Please ensure as complete an answer as possible for each association represented in the session.

13. Do you know if your association is registered? Is it formally recognized as an association according to the regulations in your country? What are the pros and cons of registering or not?
14. How are decisions made in your associations? Does your association have a leadership committee or board? Is it elected or appointed? Who elects or who

appoints the leadership?

15. What roles do regular members of the association play, i.e., those who are not in leadership positions? Do members pay membership fees?
16. How many alumni are members in the association? Would you consider that a reasonable number in comparison to the number of alumni in the country? Have alumni responded positively to invitations to join and participate?

Compare YSEALI-specific associations with mixed United States Government exchange program associations [7-10 minutes]

Moderator, Questions 17 and 18 are priority questions. Please ensure a complete answer for each association represented in the session.

17. **Some alumni associations include only YSEALI alumni and others bring together alumni from all the United States government exchange programs. Please tell us about the situation in your association.**
18. *[Refer to the specific arrangement of their association – either only YSEALI alumni or alumni from all exchange programs.]* **What are the benefits of this arrangement? What are the challenges?**
19. If you could change or improve one thing about the membership of your association, what would it be?

Closing [2 mins]

20. Is there anything else you would like to share with us about what it's like to have participated in the program that I did not ask about?

SEGMENT 4F

Background (do not read aloud)

This section includes the focus group discussion guides for:

- **No association, U.S. Embassy-led (Segment #4F)**

The primary objective of this session is to collect data on:

- EQ2.2 What types of networks effectively contribute to alumni outcomes? Do regional and international network connections contribute to alumni outcomes?
- EQ 2.5 How might post-programming activities amplify the resources in Fellows' home

country contexts to achieve outcomes?

You will also collect data on the following evaluation questions; however, be sure to cover the primary objectives adequately:

- EQ1 How has the YSEALI program and experience in the U.S. contributed to the advancement of Fellows' professional and academic goals? What specific aspects of the YSEALI experience do Fellows perceive as the most important contributors to their professional and academic pathways?

Warm up [5 mins]
Let's start by getting to know each other a little bit. Let's go around the group and each one state your name, home country and YSEALI cohort year, and one thing you like to do for fun.
I'll start: *[Moderator states their name, home country, and one thing they like to do for fun. Give each respondent a chance to speak. Please ask for home country and YSEALI cohort year if they forget to state.]*

Discussion Questions [60 mins]
[**EQ1**] To begin our discussion today, I'd like to talk about your experience in the YSEALI Academic Fellowship and the program's impact on your lives.] [10 minutes]

1. What was the best part of the program for you? *(Listen for friendships made, what was learned, traveling to the US, skills obtained, language experience, etc.)*
2. What was the most challenging part of the program, a part that you wished was different? *(Listen for issues with program administration, insufficient of irrelevant program content, irrelevance to home context, lack of follow-up support or resources, inability to implement learning at home missing home, culture shock, food, language barriers, housing, etc.)*
3. If you were in charge of the YSEALI program, what is one change that would make the program better and more impactful?
4. Has the YSEALI program helped you achieve your professional or academic goals in any way? *(Listen and probe for concrete examples linking program to career path)*

[**EQ 2.2, 2.5**] Thank you for sharing your thoughts and experiences. Now, I would like to talk about your experience in your home country after you completed the YSEALI program.

5. [**EQ 2.5**] [15 minutes] Thinking about trying to achieve your professional and

academic goals, what are some things in your community or work setting that made it easier for you to achieve your goals?

6. What are some things that made it harder for you to achieve those goals? What barriers or challenges exist for you in your communities and work settings?
7. What support or resources have been helpful? What support or resources might have been helpful?

Moderator, Questions 8 and 9 are priority questions. Please encourage all participants to respond. Please allow approximately 20 minutes.

8. [EQ 2.2] **Thinking about all the groups you interacted with as a result of the YSEALI program, who have you stayed in touch with?**
    a. **Are you in touch with individuals from the U.S. institution that you were engaged with?**
    b. **Are you in touch with individuals from the United States embassy?**
    c. **Alumni: Have you maintained connections with alumni in your home country?**
    d. **ASEAN: What about alumni in the ASEAN region?**
    e. **Is there anyone else from the program that you are in contact with?**
9. **Have those connections been helpful as you work towards your academic or professional goals? How so? Can you provide an example of how they were helpful?**
10. Since you finished the YSEALI Academic Fellowship, have you participated in networking activities? If so, how have you been involved?
11. Has participating in these activities helped you with any of your professional and academic goals? *(Listen for: finding co-authors for my academic research, gain access to resources in my home country.)*

Moderator, Questions 12, 13 and 14 are priority questions. Please encourage all participants to respond. Please allow approximately 15 minutes.

12. Is there a way that alumni communication and interaction could be improved to support academic and professional goals? How so? What could be done to facilitate and strengthen alumni communication and support for you?
13. In some ASEAN countries, alumni have joined or formed alumni associations. Some associations include YSEALI alumni only, and some bring together alumni of all United States Government programs. Are you a part of any such group? If not, if there was an alumni association in your country, would you join it? Why or why not?

14. If a YSEALI colleague in your country came to you and asked whether they should form an association, what would you advise them? What should they consider about the benefits and challenges? Are there any situations when an alumni association might not be useful or beneficial?

Closing [2 mins]

15. Is there anything else you would like to share with us about what it's like to have participated in the program that I did not ask about?

SURVEY INSTRUMENT

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the YSEALI Academic Fellowship Alumni and Participant Survey!
This survey is part of an evaluation of the YSEALI Academic Fellowship. As an alum of this program, your input is essential. The District Communications Group (DCG) and NORC at the University of Chicago are conducting this evaluation, which was commissioned by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) at the U.S. Department of State and is managed by the Bureau's Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning and Innovation (MELI) Unit. Its purpose is to understand how successful the YSEALI Academic Fellowship has been in meeting its goals and objectives. The information you and your fellow participants provide will allow ECA to improve the program's design and implementation, to maximize results and optimize the experience for past and future fellows.

CONSENT

Completing the survey should take about 15 minutes. By clicking the "Consent and enter survey" button below, you are consenting to the following:

1. Your participation in this survey is voluntary. We do not anticipate that participating in this survey will result in any risks or direct benefits to you. However, your inputs may lead to recommendations that benefit the YSEALI Academic Fellowship Program.
2. While all your responses are voluntary, the survey will remind you to provide an answer to each and every question as you move through the survey; your answers are very valuable to this study. You are free to end your participation at any time with no consequences to you or your relationship with the YSEALI program, ECA, NORC, or DCG.
3. NORC may contact you for a follow-up discussion after the survey.
4. Data from this survey will be reported to the U.S. Department of State. Any responses you provide will only be reported in an anonymized aggregated way for quantitative data or the qualitative analysis from open-ended responses with all personal identifying information removed.
5. NORC, DCG, and the U.S. government will take reasonable measures to protect privacy data, personally identifiable information, and other sensitive data obtained from the survey.
6. Responses to questions other than those about your connections with others may be reported by demographic category (i.e., field of study, employment status), country, or cohort year.

7. The data you provide may be reanalyzed at a later date for a follow-up study or other purpose approved by the U.S. Department of State. The data may be made available to third parties as required by law.

If you have any questions about this survey or the evaluation more broadly, please send a message to ECAevaluation@state.gov.

SECTION 1. YOUR FELLOWSHIP PARTICIPATION

1. Which YSEALI Academic Fellowship cohort were you in?
   - Year dropdown [2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022]
   - Spring/Fall
2. Which of the following was the focus of your YSEALI Academic Fellowship?
   - Civic Engagement
   - Environmental Issues
   - Social Entrepreneurship and Economic Development
   - Not sure/Don't know
3. Please select your U.S. host university or center for this program. *If you participated with more than one institution, please select all that apply.* [Dropdown list of host institutions]
   - Arizona State University
   - Brown University
   - East-West Institute, HI
   - Kennesaw State University
   - Northern Illinois University
   - Portland State University
   - University for Peace
   - University of Connecticut
   - University of Massachusetts-Amherst
   - University of Montana
   - University of Nebraska-Omaha
   - University of Texas at Austin
4. During the fellowship, did you participate in the in-person exchange program (i.e., visited the US-based campus of a U.S. host university or center)?
   - Yes
   - No
5. [IF NO] What are the reasons why you did not participate in the exchange in-person? *Please select all that apply*

- The exchange has been postponed due to COVID-19
- The exchange has been virtual
- Personal reasons
- Other [Please describe]
- Don't know

SECTION 2. YSEALI EXPERIENCE

In this section, we would like to talk about how your YSEALI program experience has contributed to your professional and academic pathways.

6. [EQ1] [FOR ALL COHORTS]: What specific aspects of the YSEALI experience were most valuable to you? Please rank the top three options.
   - Classroom activities *(in person lectures, discussions, readings, group presentations)*
   - Tours and visits to local, state, private, and nonprofit organizations *(in person)*
   - Volunteering with the local community *(in person)*
   - Expert guest speakers *(either in person or remotely)*
   - Online small group work *(either in person or remotely)*
   - Access to electronic academic resources, including journals, e-books and online course management *(either in person or remotely)*
   - Virtual lectures with faculty *(only remotely)*
   - Online discussion boards with other participants *(only remotely)*
   - Other [Please describe]
   - None
7. [ONLY COHORTS FY2021 AND PRIOR]: Do you know of at least one YSEALI Academic Fellow that has faced challenges in applying their lessons learned after returning to their home country?
   - Yes
   - No
   - Don't know
8. [ONLY COHORTS FY2021 AND PRIOR]: Did YSEALI contribute to either your academic or career advancement?
   - Yes, it contributed to my academic advancement.
   - Yes, it contributed to my career advancement.
   - Yes, it contributed to both my academic and career advancement.
   - No, it did not contribute to my academic or career advancement.
   - Don't know
9. [EQ1] [IF 8 = 1 OR 3] How has the YSEALI experience contributed most to your

academic advancement? *Please rank the top three options.*

- It helped me better understand the YSEALI themes (e.g., Civic Engagement, Environmental Issues, and Social Entrepreneurship and Economic Development).
- It increased my opportunities for graduate studies (a master's or a PhD).
- It increased my skills and competence in my studies.
- It connected me with faculty and researchers.
- It connected me with research and grant opportunities.
- It helped me to collaborate with people with similar academic interests.
- Other [Please describe]
- None
- Don't know

10. [EQ1] [IF 8 = 2 OR 3] How has the YSEALI experience contributed most to your professional advancement? *Please rank the top three options.*
    - It prepared me with skills and qualifications that are valued in the job market.
    - It provided me with information and connections about career opportunities.
    - It connected me with a network of experts and leaders in my professional field.
    - It deepened my commitment to leadership in carrying out the work of my workplace.
    - It helped me to collaborate with people with similar professional interests.
    - Other [Please describe]
    - None
    - Don't know
11. [EQ1] As a result of your participation in the YSEALI academic program, to what extent do you agree with the following statements?
    [Strongly disagree, Somewhat Disagree, Somewhat Agree, Strongly agree]

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
I have improved my leadership skills.					
I have improved my English language skills.					
I have become more confident in intercultural communication.					

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
I have become more aware of how my culture shapes the way I think and behave.					
I have become more prepared for future leadership roles in my school/ workplace/ community.					
I have a stronger awareness of my country as part of the ASEAN community of nations.					
I am more aware of resources that can support my academic and career development.					

SECTION 3. PERCEPTIONS OF THE UNITED STATES AND ITS SOCIETY

12. [FOR ALL COHORTS]: Before the YSEALI Academic Fellowship, had you ever traveled to the United States?
    - Yes
    - No
    - Don't know
13. [IF 11 = YES] Why did you travel to the United States before? *Please select all that apply.*
    - Tourism

- Visit friends/family
- Participation in another fellowship or program funded by the U.S. Government
- Participation in a fellowship or program not funded by the U.S. Government
- Study
- Work
- Other, please specify _____
- Don't know

14. [EQ4] Please indicate how much your participation in the YSEALI Academic Fellowship increased your understanding of each of the following topics.

	No Change	Small Increase	Large Increase	Don't Know
American democracy				
American economy				
Foreign affairs of the United States				
United States' values and culture				
Religious and ethnic diversity in the United States				
Freedom of speech and press in the United States				
[FOR COHORTS PRIOR TO FY2020]: Voluntary community service in the United States				
[FOR COHORTS PRIOR TO FY2020]: Daily life in the United States				

15. [EQ4] How did your views of the **US government** change as a result of your participation in the YSEALI Academic Fellowship?

Much less favorable	Somewhat less favorable	No change	Somewhat more favorable	Much more favorable	Don't know

16. [EQ4] How did your views of the **American people** change as a result of your participation in the YSEALI Academic Fellowship?

Much less favorable	Somewhat less favorable	No change	Somewhat more favorable	Much more favorable	Don't know

17. [EQ4] To what extent do you agree with this statement: "The United States government is a trustworthy partner for my home country"?

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know

SECTION 4. YSEALI IMPACTS

18. [EQ4] [ONLY COHORTS FY2021 AND PRIOR]: Has your experience in YSEALI Academic Fellowship prompted you to take any of the following actions in your school or workplace? *Please select all that apply.*
    - Volunteer in the community where I live
    - Start or organize new activities, for example, launching a new project with other alumni or in my community
    - Introduce new ideas on how to do things where I work
    - Advocate for new initiatives to support diversity and inclusion
    - Raise awareness on issues that affect your community or country
    - Establish joint ventures, organizational partnerships, or linkages
    - Provide training or mentorship to others
    - Other [Please describe]
    - I have not done any of the above
    - Don't know
19. [EQ2.5] [ONLY COHORTS FY2021 AND PRIOR]: Which, if any, of the following non-financial resources did you access after completing the YSEALI Academic Fellowship? *Please select all that apply.*
    - I did not access any non-financial resources.
    - Workshops/events hosted by the U.S. Embassy or Consulate in your home country
    - Embassy network of experts and leaders
    - Informal support from the U.S. Embassy or Consulate staff in your home country
    - American Spaces (either American Centers or American Corners)
    - Project Development toolkits from the U.S. Embassy or Consulate
    - Supplies or equipment from the U.S. Embassy or Consulate

- Help from other individuals or local organizations through YSEALI connections
- Support from another U.S. organization or business
- Support from other non-U.S. organizations or businesses
- Other [please describe]
- Don't know

20. [EQ2.5] [ONLY COHORTS FY2021 AND PRIOR]: Which, if any, of the following financial resources did you access after completing the YSEALI academic fellowship? *Please select all that apply.*
    - I did not access any financial resources.
    - Small grants from the U.S. Embassy or Consulate
    - Small grants from U.S. host universities or centers
    - Small grants from the U.S. Government in Washington, D.C.
    - Alumni Engagement Innovation Fund (AEIF) applications
    - Funds from your government (through YSEALI connection)
    - Other [please describe]
    - Don't know
21. [EQ2.5] [ONLY COHORTS FY2021 AND PRIOR]: As a result of your participation in the YSEALI Academic Fellowship, in the past year, have you implemented or continued implementing any Community Projects?
    - Yes
    - No
    - Don't know
22. [EQ2.5] [IF YES] Looking back on your Community Project, how much of it has been accomplished?
    - I was able to complete the Community Project as expected
    - I am continuing to implement the Community Project within the originally estimated timeline
    - My Community Project evolved into a longer-term initiative
    - I paused the Community Project because I ended up not having time to implement it.
    - I paused the Community Project due to lack of resources to implement it.
    - Other [please describe]
23. [EQ3] [ONLY COHORTS FY2021 AND PRIOR]: Please indicate the extent that you agree with the following statements: [Strongly disagree, Somewhat Disagree, Somewhat Agree, Strongly agree, Don't know]

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
Applying lessons learned from YSEALI was easy for me.					
In my home country, there are many opportunities for people working in my profession.					
In my home country, people in my profession have adequate access to funding and resources.					
In my home country, it is easy for new projects or professional ventures to find support.					
In my home country, the younger generation is encouraged to take initiative and leadership in their community and workplace.					

SECTION 5. ASEAN COMMUNITY

24. [EQ5] Please indicate the extent that you agree with the following statements:

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
Being a member of ASEAN is beneficial to my country.					
The YSEALI program increased my network of peers from other ASEAN countries.					
The YSEALI program addressed issues that are relevant to the development of the ASEAN region.					
Other ASEAN countries share similar issues and challenges with my country.					

[CURRENT PARTICIPANTS]: SKIP TO QUESTION 37 (Section 7)

SECTION 6. POST-PROGRAMMING NETWORKING

25. [EQ2.2] [ONLY COHORTS FY2021 AND PRIOR]: In your chances to network after participating in the YSEALI program, which one of the following groups did you find the most helpful to achieve your academic and career goals?
    - YSEALI Academic Fellows from your cohort

- YSEALI program alumni from your home country
- YSEALI program alumni from outside your home country
- Other US exchange program alumni
- Faculty and staff from your U.S. host university or center
- Employees of the US Embassy or Consulate in your home country
- American citizens you met on the program
- Other [Please describe]
- None [SKIP TO THE NEXT SECTION]
- Don't know [SKIP TO THE NEXT SECTION]

26. [EQ2.2] [ONLY COHORTS FY2021 AND PRIOR]: How often do you interact with this group?
    - Once a week
    - Once a month
    - Once every three months
    - Once every six months
    - Once a year
    - Less than once a year
    - Don't know

27. [EQ2.2] [ONLY COHORTS FY2021 AND PRIOR]: What communication channels have been the most helpful when interacting with this group? Please rank the top three options.
    - Facebook group
    - Group messages on private channel (WhatsApp, Viber, Telegram)
    - One-on-one messages (SMS, WhatsApp, Viber, Telegram)
    - Personal LinkedIn account
    - Personal Instagram account
    - Direct e-mail
    - Phone calls
    - Meeting in person
    - Other [Please describe]
    - None
    - Don't know

28. [EQ2, EQ2.5] [ONLY COHORTS FY2021 AND PRIOR]: What kinds of resources or support does this group provide? Please select all that apply.
    - Funding resources for project or entrepreneurship

- Sponsorship or venue for alumni events
- Connections to other professionals in my field
- Professional learning and development opportunities (workshops, panels, events)
- Mentorship opportunities (as mentor or mentee)
- Opportunities to collaborate on project or entrepreneurships
- Source of knowledge about job openings
- Professional references or recommendations
- Other [Please describe]
- None
- Don't know

29. [EQ2.2] [ONLY COHORTS FY2021 AND PRIOR]: Who organizes these resources or engagement activities? Please select up to three options.
    - ECA/U.S. Department of State (US Government in Washington, D.C.)
    - U.S. Embassy in my country
    - Staff from my U.S. host university or center
    - YSEALI formal alumni association
    - Formal alumni association of all the U.S. academic exchange programs
    - The government of my country
    - Self-organized alumni groups
    - Other [Please describe]
    - Don't know

30. [EQ2, EQ2.2] [ONLY COHORTS FY2021 AND PRIOR]: What was the most helpful resource provided by the group?

[Carry forward selections from the previous question 28] [Don't display this question if Q28 = None, Don't know]

31. [EQ2] [ONLY COHORTS FY2021 AND PRIOR]: Please indicate how much this group has helped to strengthen the following aspects:

	Not helpful	Somewhat unhelpful	Neither helpful/nor unhelpful	Very helpful	N/A	Don't know
Career results						
Academic results						
Personal growth						

32. [EQ2.2] [ONLY COHORTS FY2021 AND PRIOR]: Since completing the program, which **U.S. Embassy or Consulate** communication channels have been most useful to you? *Please rank the top three options.*
    - I do not use any communication channels with the U.S. Embassy or Consulate
    - Newsletters
    - Emails
    - Social media (for example Facebook group, LinkedIn, or Instagram official site)
    - Phone calls
    - Text messaging or private messaging applications (e.g., WhatsApp, Viber, Telegram)
    - Reunion and social events
    - Professional and academic events
    - Other [Please describe]
    - Don't know

33. [EQ2.2] [ONLY COHORTS FY2021 AND PRIOR]: Since completing the program, which **U.S. host university or center** communication channels have been most useful to you? *Please rank the top three options.*
    - I do not use any communication channels with the U.S. host university or center
    - Newsletters
    - Emails
    - Social media posts
    - Text messaging or private messaging applications (e.g., WhatsApp, Viber, Telegram)
    - Reunion and social events (virtual)
    - Professional and academic events (virtual)
    - Other [Please describe]
    - Don't know

34. [EQ2.2] [ONLY COHORTS FY2021 AND PRIOR]: Does your country have an association for alumni of YSEALI and/or other USG exchange programs?
    - Yes, we have an association for alumni of the YSEALI Academic Fellowship.
    - Yes, we have an association for alumni of all YSEALI programs (including YSEALI Academic Fellowship)
    - Yes, we have an association for alumni of all US Government academic exchange programs (including the YSEALI Academic Fellowship)
    - No
    - Don't know

35. [EQ2.2] [IF YES + ONLY COHORTS FY2021 AND PRIOR]: Do you participate in this

association? *Please select all that apply.*

- I serve on the committee or board of the alumni association.
- I volunteer to organize association events, activities, or communications.
- I attend events and activities hosted by the association.
- I am on the member list, receive communications from the association, or am a member of group chats.
- No
- Don't know

36. [EQ2.4] [ONLY COHORTS FY2021 AND PRIOR]: Since you have completed the YSEALI program, how would you describe your engagement with alumni from US exchange programs (including YSEALI)?
    - I am less engaged.
    - My engagement has stayed the same.
    - I am more engaged.
    - Don't know

SECTION 7. FUTURE EXCHANGE PROGRAMS IN YOUR COUNTRY

YSEALI is considering creating a new program that brings American fellows to the ASEAN countries.

37. [EQ6] [FOR ALL COHORTS]: To what extent do you agree with the following statement "I see value to my own career in bringing American Fellows to my country":

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know

38. Is there anything else you want to tell us about your YSEALI experience? [Open-ended]

SECTION 8: DEMOGRAPHICS

[FOR ALL COHORTS]: Finally, we have a few questions about yourself that help us know you even better.

39. What is your home country? [Drop down menu] [Add "Don't know"]
40. What is your age? ____ [NUMERIC, 18 – 36] [Allow "Don't know"]

41. Please select the option that best describes your gender.
    - Female
    - Male
    - Non-binary
    - I do not wish to respond
42. Which best describes the geographic location where you live?
    - My country's capital city
    - Another major city in my country other than the capital
    - A small city, town, or rural location in my country
    - I am currently outside of my country
    - Other [Please describe]
    - Don't know
43. Which of the following best describes your employment situation (primary activity)?
    - Undergraduate student, full time
    - Graduate or professional student, full time
    - Employed, full time
    - Employed, part time or seasonal jobs
    - Employed and studying undergraduate degree
    - Employed and attending graduate or professional school
    - Self-employed (own business, entrepreneur)
    - Self-employed (informal activity)
    - Not employed, but seeking employment, admission to graduate school, or other opportunity
    - Not employed, and not seeking employment or admission to graduate school (caring for family, travelling, volunteering)
    - Other [Please specify]
    - Don't know

Thank you for your responses. Your participation is highly appreciated. If you have any other comments about the YSEALI evaluation, please email us at ecaevaluation@state.gov
Have a nice rest of your day!

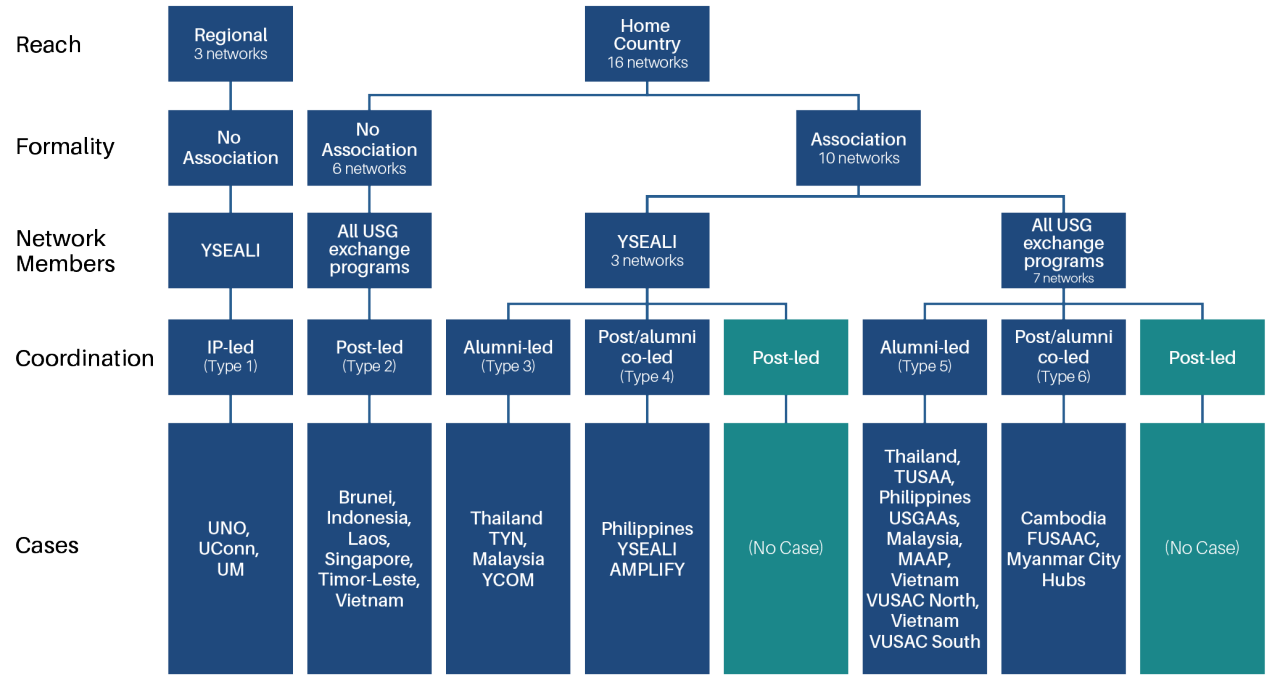
ANNEX III: NETWORK TYPOLOGIES SUMMARY

YSEALI alumni networks vary by reach, formality, membership, and coordination.

- Reach refers to the geographic span of a network (regional, country-specific)
- Formality refers to whether the network has formed an association with an explicit governance and/or decision-making structure.
- Membership refers to eligibility requirements related to the exchange program(s) of alumni (YSEALI-specific, all USG exchange programs).
- Coordination refers to the institutions or individuals who play leadership roles in managing networks (implementing partner [IP], post, alumni, a mix).

Nineteen networks of six distinct types connect YSEALI Academic Fellowship alumni. The six types of alumni networks display different arrangements of the four key characteristics (reach, formality, membership, and coordination). The networks are not necessarily mutually exclusive: each individual alum is theoretically included in one or more home country networks, as well as the network associated with YSEALI institute that they attended (coordinated by the corresponding IP). Network membership includes either alumni from all YSEALI programs or those from all USG programs. Posts, IPs, and alumni use varying resources to create, sustain, and influence these distinct and overlapping networks.

Types of Alumni Networks



Regional alumni networks (Type 1) are associated with specific YSEALI institutions and are coordinated by the relevant IP for the duration of their contract with ECA. The three regional networks are informal; none is represented by an association. Each regional network is YSEALI-specific and includes the alumni who attended the institutes hosted by the coordinating IP. All three IP-led networks are similar to one another with only negligible distinctions across network characteristics.

Home country networks exhibit considerable variety and can be grouped into five types (Types 2-6). Some countries have multiple home country networks of different types. Ten home country alumni networks have formed associations with explicit governance structures; at least three associations are formally registered in their country. Six posts coordinate informal networks which provide little or no opportunity for official or regular alumni leadership. Some home country networks define membership based on participation in one of the official YSEALI programs; others are open to alumni of any of the of the USG exchange programs. There are no home country networks that are exclusive to the YSEALI Academic Fellowship. Home country networks exhibit one of three types of coordination: alumni-led, post/alumni co-led, or post-led.

Regional IP-Led Networks

Key characteristics of regional, IP-led networks are determined by the YSEALI Academic Fellowship grant. Network characteristics specified by the grant framework or influenced by its conditions include:

- **Membership:** Network membership includes alumni of the YSEALI program components that the IP is implementing. The reach of the network is ASEAN-wide because each IP hosts Fellows from a range of ASEAN countries.
- **Alumni support time horizon:** IPs are required to propose a plan for follow-on activities for fellows after they graduate from the program, however, the period of support is constrained by the length of the grant.
- **Formality:** Formality refers to whether the network has formed an association with an explicit governance and/or decision-making structure. IP networks are informal; the time-bound nature of ECA grants reduces the likelihood that IPs will establish permanent, formal alumni associations, requiring financial and nonfinancial resources beyond the grant period.
- **Institutional staff time:** All three IPs have paid staff time for YSEALI alumni engagement. The University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO) employs a full-time Alumni Coordinator, and the University of Montana (UM) and the University of Connecticut (UConn) assign YSEALI

alumni engagement responsibilities as part of the job description of other full-time paid positions. It is unclear exactly how much time is spent on YSEALI alumni, or on YSEALI Academic Fellowship alumni specifically.

- **Institutional Financial Resources:** Per the grant proposal requirements, IPs must propose a plan for follow-on activities that is largely dependent on their own funds. IPs receive $5,000 per program for these activities. The evaluation has no further information about the amount of financial resources dedicated by IPs to alumni engagement.
- **Seed grants for alumni projects:** As reported in the Community Projects section of this report, all three IPs provide opportunities for alumni to win small-scale grants for home country projects. The grants are prestigious and competitive, with only a small minority of applicants receiving the award of $500 and technical assistance. Alumni interviewees report that the funds may cover project launch but are unlikely to fund their entire implementation.

Regional, IP-led networks are also similar in terms of the frequency of communication, personalized support they provide to alumni.

- **Regular communication:** All three IPs reported regularly communicating with alumni in formal (e.g., scheduled monthly newsletters) and informal (e.g., unscheduled social media posts) ways. The primary means of communication include email, Facebook and WhatsApp. All three IPs maintain Facebook pages, email listservs, and cohort-specific WhatsApp groups.
- **Personalized support:** All IPs mentioned that staff connect with individual alumni, often through phone calls or private messaging services like WhatsApp, to provide support in the forms of job references, letters of recommendation, and counsel.
- **Limited coordination with ECA and posts:** All three IPs reported limited coordination with ECA and posts. The primary purpose of communication with ECA and posts is updating alumni contact information.

Minor differences exist between the IP-led networks in terms of the robustness of alumni engagement, the types of support offered for alumni projects, and the specific communication channels established by IPs.

- **Robustness of engagement:** UM and its subgrantee partners, particularly the East-West Center (EWC), have generally been able to provide more robust opportunities for YSEALI alumni than the other two IPs. They provide an Alumni Impact Award with recognition and additional project funding. EWC has also established a formal teaching fellowship program that recruits its YSEALI alumni to serve as volunteer teaching assistants for the

current YSEALI Academic Fellowship cohort. In addition, EWC runs a competitive, non-residential, 5-month, US$60,000 Innovation for Sustainable Development Fellowship specifically for early career YSEALI alumni.

- **Types of support offered for alumni projects:** While all three IPs offered small-scale grants for alumni projects, the size of grants and extent of implementation support may vary. UConn specified that its grants average $500 each; the other two IPs did not specify the average size of their grants. UConn provides 6-months of technical support; UM provides guidance for the project duration.
- **Communication channels:** The IPs differ in how much they use certain communication channels over others. UNO was the only IP that reported sending out monthly newsletters, and they are also the only IP that does not have a dedicated website for alumni. UM focuses its regular communications through its email listserv, while UNO and UConn communicate primarily through Facebook.

Home country Networks

The sixteen home country networks vary considerably in terms of formality, membership, and coordination/leadership. Posts influence home country networks of all types.

Ten formal alumni networks engage former YSEALI Academic participants across the region. Networks were designated as "formal" if they had formed an association or operate with an explicit governance structure. While the evaluation team did not have enough data to define discrete levels of formality for the alumni associations, it is clear that some associations exhibit a high level of formality with an elected, hierarchical leadership committee and advisory boards (Cambodia's Fulbright and Undergraduate State Alumni Association of Cambodia [FUSAAC]), while some operate with a more horizontal structure (the Philippines' YSEALI Alumni Mobilization Program through Leadership and Influence to Filipino Youth [YSEALI AMPLIFY] or Myanmar's City Hubs). Posts reported that at least two associations (YCOM [YSEALI Council of Malaysia] and TUSAA [Thailand-United States Alumni Association]) are legally registered as NGOs in the country. Vietnam-United States Alumni Club (VUSAC) Ho Chi Minh City has oversight by Ho Chi Minh City People's Commission, making it a quasi-government entity. At least three countries have a somewhat decentralized association, with subnational associations or chapters (YSEALI AMPLIFY Hubs and USGAAs [United States Government Alumni Association] in the Philippines, City Hubs in Myanmar, and VUSAC Hanoi and VUSAC Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam). Annex IV summarizes the governance structures of the formal networks, where known.

Many posts supported the formation and management of alumni associations because they view associations as an efficient use of post resources and an effective channel for engaging alumni in support of post's policy priorities. Several posts fund and manage alumni projects through alumni associations because the associations are an effective means of both aligning projects with post policy priorities and managing the grants. Additionally, associations provide alumni with leadership positions, grant management opportunities, and a greater say over alumni activities. Two posts reported that alumni themselves had initiated or fully formed the associations on their own, so the posts supported this momentum. The two posts with decentralized alumni associations (the Philippines and Myanmar) explained that local hubs and chapters promote local priorities and facilitate alumni participation for those located outside the capital city. It is worth noting that the evaluation team did not receive a complete or clear explanation from every post.

Posts provided varied explanations for engaging alumni through informal networks. One post cited a desire to encourage ASEAN connections as opposed to country-specific program associations; at least one post expressed a preference for organizing engagement around activities and inviting alumni according to their known interests, and one expressed that setting up program-specific associations would be too difficult.

There are no networks that are specific to the YSEALI Academic Fellowship. Only three countries have YSEALI-specific associations; two of these associations open to alumni of all YSEALI programs (Thailand's TYN [Thailand YSEALI Network] and Malaysia's YCOM), while one association is led by alumni from all YSEALI programs, but engagement is broadened to include both YSEALI alumni and YSEALI-interested youth within the country (the Philippines' YSEALI AMPLIFY). In countries where there are no YSEALI-specific associations, alumni engagement tends to be broadly directed towards all USG exchange alumni, with post and/or the associations targeting particular groups of alumni based on interests/backgrounds, age, and/or subnational region. In one case, post alumni engagement activities include working with a citizen diplomacy association with alumni membership.

Posts in countries with YSEALI-specific associations cited a desire to engage on a program-specific level, while countries with associations for all USG exchange alumni generally expressed an intent to facilitate cross-program connections. As one of the two posts with a YSEALI-specific association, the Malaysia post reported that structuring engagement around programs made logical sense, and alumni had already formed other non-YSEALI alumni associations, resulting in a gap for YSEALI alumni. The Philippines

post's intent in forming YSEALI AMPLIFY was more broadly to incorporate YSEALI-interested youth in programming. Four posts whose alumni engagement was generally directed towards all USG exchange program alumni noted that this structure facilitates collaboration and networking across programs. Another post expressed limited capacity for program-specific engagement, and another one pointed to small cohort sizes as a barrier to creating program-specific associations.

As described in the typology, the data revealed three broad types of network coordination: alumni-led (with or without active post support), post/alumni co-led, and post-led. Alumni-led networks with post engagement (Thailand's TYN and TUSAA, Malaysia's YCOM, the Philippines' USGAAs) are those which receive or received support from post in discrete areas – such as technical support for founding the association, grant funding for projects, or assistance with strategic planning – but whose leadership is entirely made up of alumni and intended to function independent of post oversight. There are also alumni-led networks that function without any active post involvement (Malaysia's MAAP [Malaysia Alumni of American Exchange Program], Vietnam's VUSAC Hanoi and VUSAC Ho Chi Minh City). In post/alumni co-led networks, posts take a more active role, such as selecting the annual alumni leadership team (the Philippines' YSEALI AMPLIFY) or sitting on an advisory council for the association (Cambodia's FUSAAC). Post-led networks are informal and not tied to any alumni association or structure; post manages all official alumni engagement.

Posts appear to coordinate minimally with IPs and ECA on alumni engagement. Although the resulting data was incomplete, a few posts reported working with ECA on select alumni engagement topics, such as coordinating with ECA on the AEIF if alumni in a given country are awarded a grant. Most posts reported no coordination with IPs, especially with regards to IP-funded post-program community projects; several posts reported that they are often not aware of all IP-funded community projects being implemented in their countries. Although one post (Malaysia) did report regular communication with IPs on alumni affairs.

Posts influence home country networks of all types. Post has some degree of influence and level of interaction with alumni regardless of whether an association exists. Home country networks (YSEALI or all USG exchange) appear to prioritize home country policy goals over regional goals. Post engagement of alumni is ongoing and not bound by YSEALI grant cycles. In each country, posts carry out alumni engagement activities in coordination with associations or through informal post-led networks. All home country networks share similarities in post-supported activities and engagement programming, alumni support

horizon, communication modes and frequency, as well as post staffing and nonfinancial resources supporting networks.

All posts host alumni events. Typically, events provide opportunities for networking, learning, or skills-building. Events might include holiday celebrations at the post, dinners with visiting U.S. representatives, or alumni networking receptions. Learning events range from seminars and workshops to annual strategy sessions with alumni association leadership. Posts reported hosting both in-person and virtual activities, depending on COVID-19 circumstances. It is worth noting that all posts reported relying on alumni volunteers to help staff, or even help organize, post events.

All posts provide alumni with some funding opportunities. All eleven posts have grant pools for individual projects, although the Malaysia post's small grants pool is only open to legally registered NGOs. A few posts reported additional small grants pools for small programs in American Spaces (Malaysia, Lao People's Democratic Republic [Lao PDR]) or COVID rapid response activities (Myanmar). Small grants pools run by posts are distinct from project grants provided by IPs. While some alumni may apply for grants to continue implementing a community project originally funded by an IP, no post reported tracking this information.

Three posts have also provided full or partial funding for alumni association projects. The Philippines post has funds set aside in its annual budget to support both YSEALI AMPLIFY's and the USGAAs projects, while the Cambodia post partially funds FUSAAC's project every year. The Thailand post also noted that TYN has successfully received project funding from the post in past years.

Alumni associations also manage alumni engagement activities. Several alumni associations organize networking opportunities and other events, learning activities such as webinars, community service projects such as youth mentoring programs, or annual association meetings. Two alumni associations, Thailand's TUSAA and Malaysia's YCOM, hosted a large conference or summit to help kick off the association.

Posts and alumni associations appear to support alumni engagement both soon and long after graduation. Although the data surrounding this inquiry is incomplete, most posts indicated that they and/or alumni associations invite alumni from all years to events and activities. Some posts noted that they may even target less-recent alumni for certain events based on their experience or interests. However, at least two posts noted that sometimes alumni engagement does taper off with time or as alumni's academic,

professional, or familial circumstances change.

Most posts reported communicating with alumni over Facebook and email. Every post except for one explicitly noted that they maintain listservs of all USG exchange alumni, with many posts clarifying that they retain the ability to communicate specifically with all YSEALI program alumni if need be. All posts expressed that they communicate with alumni over Facebook, either in public-facing or private groups. Most posts indicated that Facebook is their main method of communication with alumni, although more formal communication often takes place over email. All posts except Myanmar and Timor-Leste also explicitly mentioned communicating with alumni via private messaging groups (WhatsApp, LINE, Telegram, Facebook Messenger), either in one-to-one messages or group messages. Frequency of post communication was difficult to determine because the data is sparse or not explicit. The data suggests that posts communicate more frequently with alumni via informal methods like social media, and some posts overall communicate more regularly with alumni than others.

Few posts reported contributing financially to managing alumni engagement. The Thailand post provides a small amount of funding for TUSAA's operating costs, as well as funding for the association's kickoff event. The Philippines post provides a modest honorarium for the alum who manages the YSEALI AMPLIFY project grants, who is chosen from the previous year's batch of Amplifiers, while the Malaysia post provides a small amount of money for alumni's time spent on projects under its American Corners Adoption Program. Overall, data on this topic was sparse, as it proved difficult to disentangle the concept of financial resources for managing alumni networking/engagement from financial resources contributed directly to alumni projects, such as through grants. It is likely that most posts contribute financially to alumni engagement via funding certain alumni events. However, only three posts explicitly noted that they make use of representation funds or other budget allocations to host activities and events to which alumni are invited. Although BUSA is not strictly an alumni association, the Brunei post did indicate that it often pays for venues or external speakers for events that organization runs, in which alumni participate.

Each post employs staff to manage alumni engagement for all USG exchange alumni, although few posts reported having dedicated Alumni Coordinators. Five posts – Cambodia, the Vietnam Embassy in Hanoi, Thailand, Myanmar, and Indonesia – have at least one full-time Alumni Coordinator. Conversely, seven posts – the Vietnam Consulate in Ho Chi Minh City, Malaysia, Timor-Leste, Singapore, Lao PDR, Brunei, and the Philippines – indicated that alumni engagement is one of many responsibilities under a different position. In the case of Brunei and the Philippines, it seems that alumni engagement is

intentionally split across multiple roles, with the Philippines having the most staff explicitly involved in these activities, at four people. It is worth noting that many of the smaller posts (Timor-Leste, Lao PDR, etc.) do not have designated Alumni Coordinators. All alumni coordination positions were reported as covering all USG exchange alumni; post staff were unable to estimate their time dedicated to engaging YSEALI Academic Fellowship alumni or overall YSEALI program alumni with any precision.

All posts help organize alumni events to some degree, and many posts reported supporting alumni engagement activities in other nonfinancial ways. Most posts reported providing alumni with access to physical spaces such as American Spaces to hold events or activities. The Timor-Leste and Brunei posts reported that they also provide in-kind materials for some alumni events. Three posts mentioned providing institutional backing for alumni-led events in the form of introductions or signatures from post staff, and four stated that they often promote alumni-led events and alumni profiles on their own social media.

Most posts also support alumni networks through managing and updating alumni contact databases/listservs and/or social media pages and private groups. The Lao PDR post also noted that staff periodically field an alumni survey to gauge what types of activities alumni would enjoy, while three posts reported producing alumni "swag" or products.

A small number of posts provide nonfinancial resources to support alumni associations. The Malaysia and Thailand posts provided technical assistance to alumni to help establish YCOM and TUSAA, respectively, while the Philippines post provides technical guidance to both YSEALI AMPLIFY and the USGAAs to develop their annual strategic plan. Two posts help oversee and manage an alumni association in their country, with Cambodia post staff serving on an advisory board for FUSAAC and the Philippines managing the annual application and selection process for YSEALI AMPLIFY's leadership and grants manager.

Posts often had difficulty describing the nonfinancial resources they contribute to support alumni networks. It is impossible for the evaluation team to say with certainty if every post provided a comprehensive list of the nonfinancial resources they provide; as such, the evaluation team acknowledges that a post not mentioning a certain resource does not necessarily mean it does not provide that resource.

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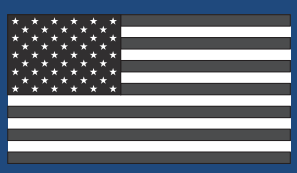

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