



Academy for Women Entrepreneurs

EVALUATION OF THE 2019 COHORT

JUNE 2021



ExchangeAlumni

CONNECT EMPOWER INSPIRE
U.S. Department of State

INTRODUCTION

The U.S. Department of State's (DOS) Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) established the **Academy for Women Entrepreneurs (AWE)** to support women entrepreneurs around the world. The AWE Program provides female entrepreneurs with the skills, resources, and networks needed to launch and scale businesses within an inclusive learning community. In June 2021, AWE joined ECA's Office of Alumni Affairs, bringing this innovative program to millions of alumni in ECA's #ExchangeAlumni network.

Key objectives include:

- i) providing resources for women to engage in U.S.-style online education with guided facilitation and localization;
- ii) fostering networks that support AWE participants' access to peer-to-peer mentorship and scaling opportunities; and
- iii) providing access to resources and ongoing ECA programs that will help women bring their business ideas to life.

U.S. Embassies' Public Diplomacy Sections design and implement their own AWE model based on local conditions, contacts, networks, and needs. The core of the AWE model is the DreamBuilder online course, which implementing partners supplemented with a variety of content such as guest speakers, presentations, and site visits. During its inaugural year in 2019, approximately 2,000 women across 26 Western Hemisphere Affairs (WHA) and African (AF) countries, as well as Spain and Papua New Guinea, participated in the AWE program.

DreamBuilder is an online entrepreneurship training program for women, developed through a partnership between Arizona State University's Thunderbird School of Global Management and global copper mining company Freeport-McMoRan.



THE EVALUATION

This evaluation assessed AWE's influence on 2019 alumnae and their businesses, determined if and how AWE furthers networking among participants and alumnae from AWE and other ECA supported programs, and identified best practices and lessons learned for improving the program.

This evaluation used both quantitative and qualitative methods: an online survey with AWE alumnae across all 26 countries in which AWE was operational in 2019, complemented with qualitative interviews in five countries. Respondents at times attributed business outcomes directly to AWE, but the lack of baseline or comparison group data prevented objective verification of these findings.

QUANTITATIVE SURVEY:

26
COUNTRIES

953
AWE ALUMNAE

QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS:

5
COUNTRIES

13
IMPLEMENTING
PARTNERS

17
MENTORS

73
ALUMNAE

6
EMBASSY
STAFF

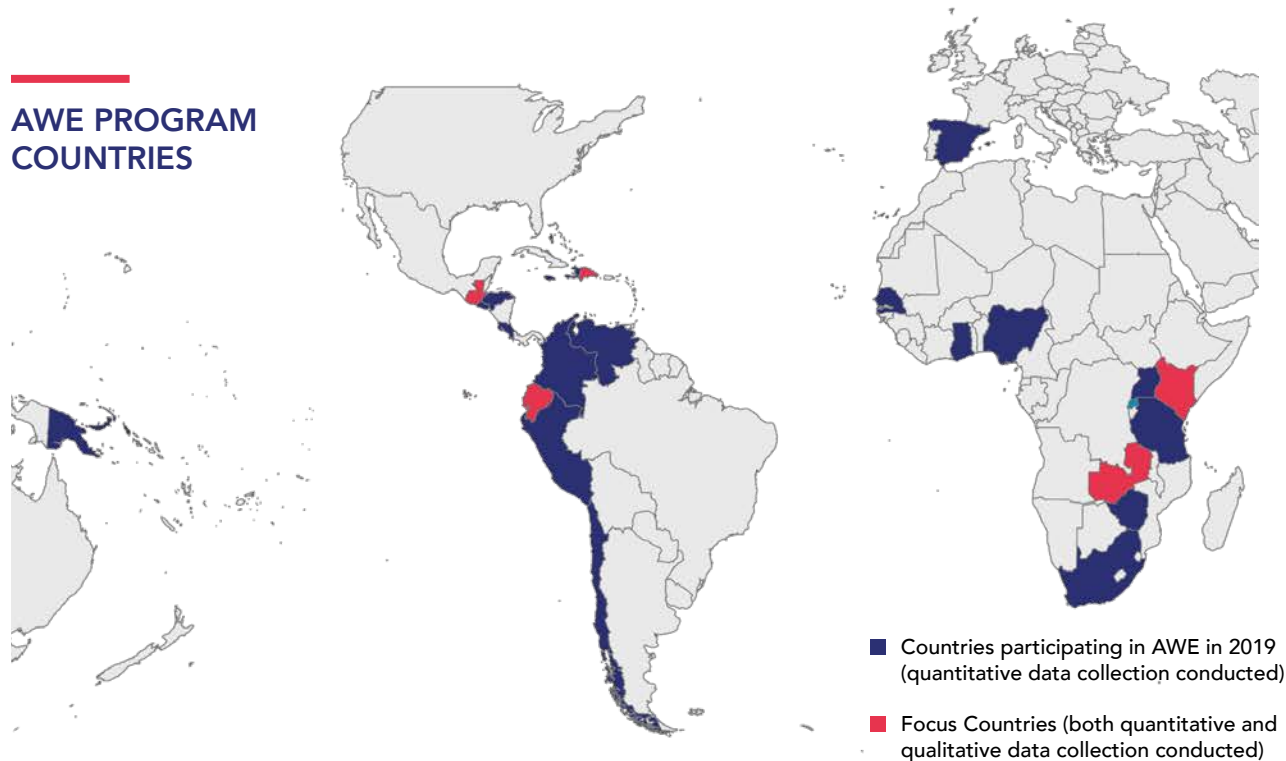
Dominican Republic
Ecuador
Guatemala
Kenya
Zambia

Bahamas
 Barbados
 Chile
 Colombia
 Costa Rica
 El Salvador
 Ghana

Haiti
 Honduras
 Jamaica
 Nigeria
 Papua New Guinea
 Peru
 Rwanda

Senegal
 South Africa
 Spain
 Tanzania
 Uganda
 Venezuela
 Zimbabwe

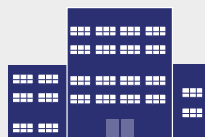
AWE PROGRAM COUNTRIES



PROGRAM COMPONENTS IN ADDITION TO DREAMBUILDER:



MENTORSHIP



SITE VISITS



FAIRS



NETWORKING



SPEAKERS



WORKSHOPS



BOOTCAMP

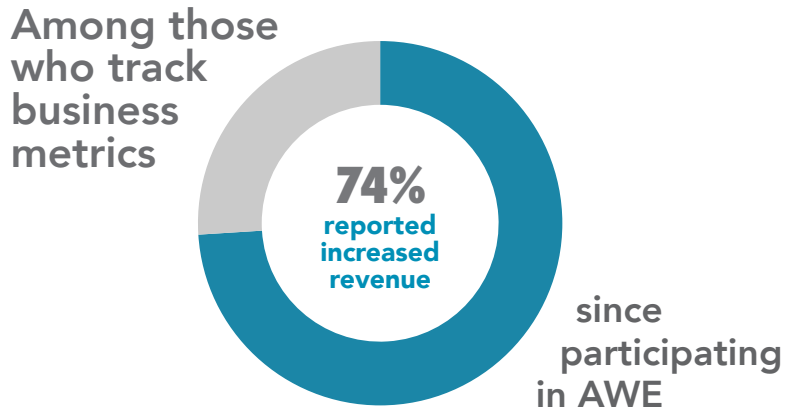


PITCH
COMPETITION

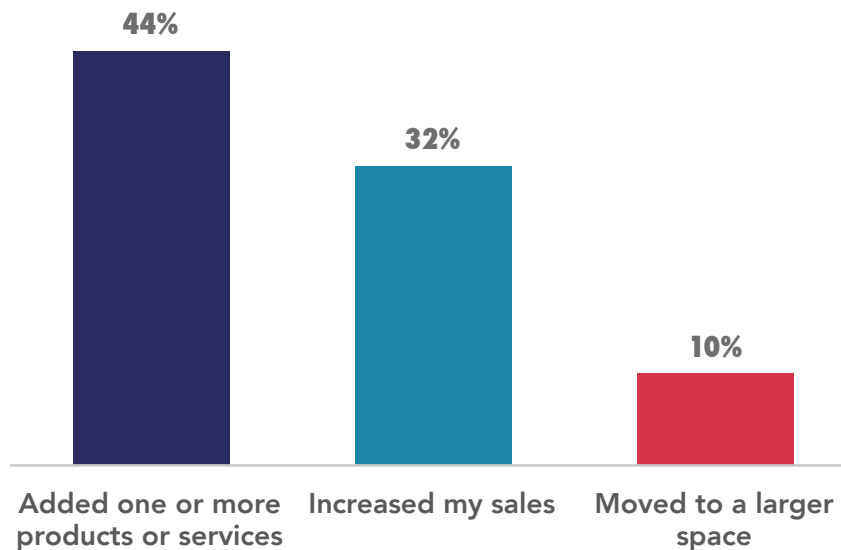


PITCH PRIZES

ALUMNAE REPORTED BUSINESS GROWTH AFTER PARTICIPATION IN AWE



BUSINESS CHANGES REPORTED AS A RESULT OF AWE



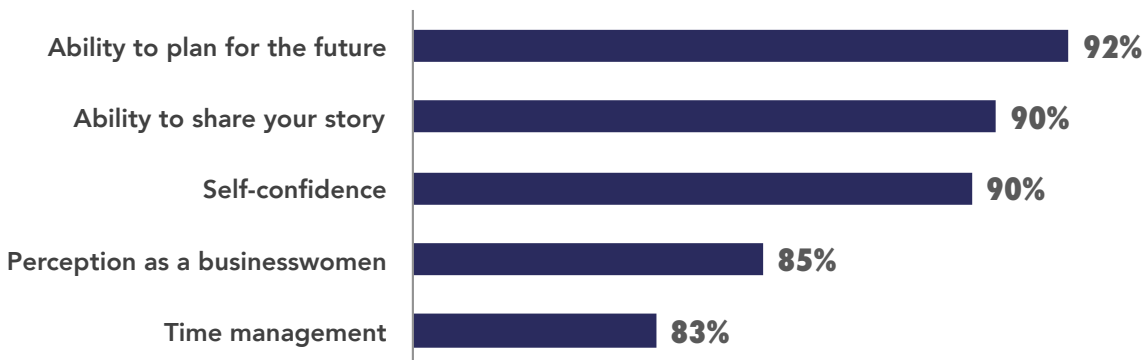
"AWE academy grew my business because I had the idea, but did not know how to run a business."

- Western Hemisphere, alumna

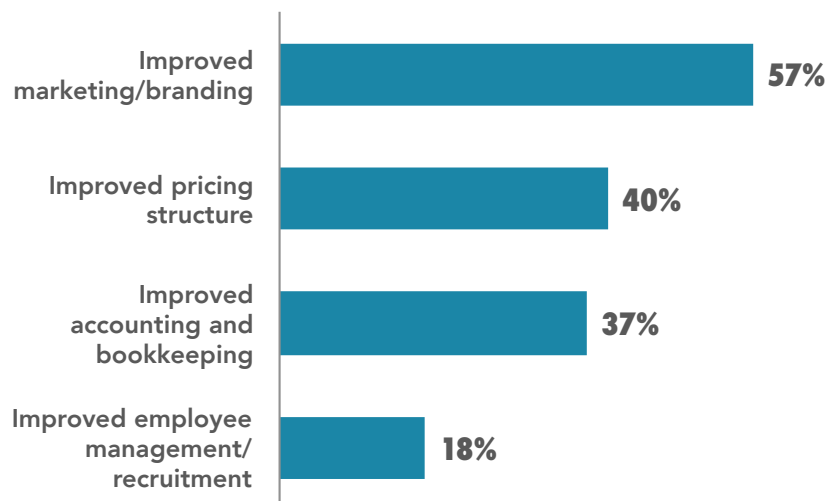
AWE IMPROVED ALUMNAE KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDES, AND PRACTICES

AWE provided a foundation upon which alumnae could effectively build their business. Alumnae reported substantially increased skills, capabilities, and self-confidence due to AWE.

TOP 5 SKILLS REPORTED AS IMPROVED



CHANGES IN PRACTICES ALUMNAE ATTRIBUTED TO AWE



90% OF ALUMNAE REPORTED IMPROVED SELF-CONFIDENCE AS A RESULT OF AWE

CHANGES IN ALUMNAE'S KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDES, AND PRACTICES

KNOWLEDGE

- Finance
 - Bookkeeping
 - Paying oneself
 - Separating business and family finances
- Marketing
 - Identifying clients/markets
 - Digital advertising
- Business strategy and plan development
- Learning from self and others

ATTITUDES

- Increased self-confidence
 - Realizing they are not alone
- Increased drive/ambition
- Changes in family attitudes and support

PRACTICES

- Financial management
- Public speaking
- Improved marketing/branding
- Meeting deadlines
- Ability to delegate tasks
- Teaching others about entrepreneurship
- Searching for funding

"[my] confidence has tripled."

- Africa, alumna

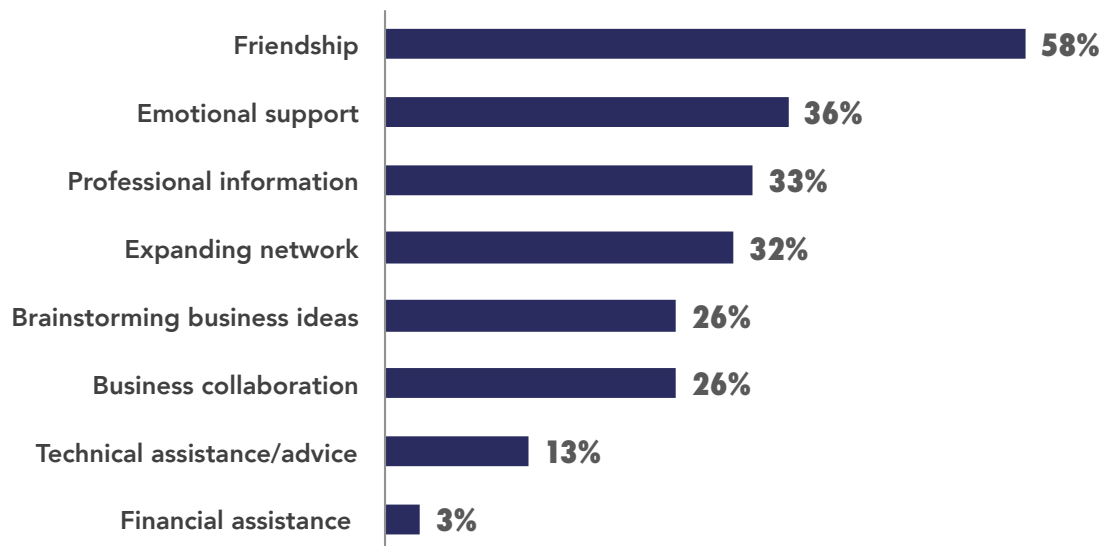
*"I think the program helped her to
understand her inner underlying potential."*

*-Africa, mentor
(speaking about mentee)*

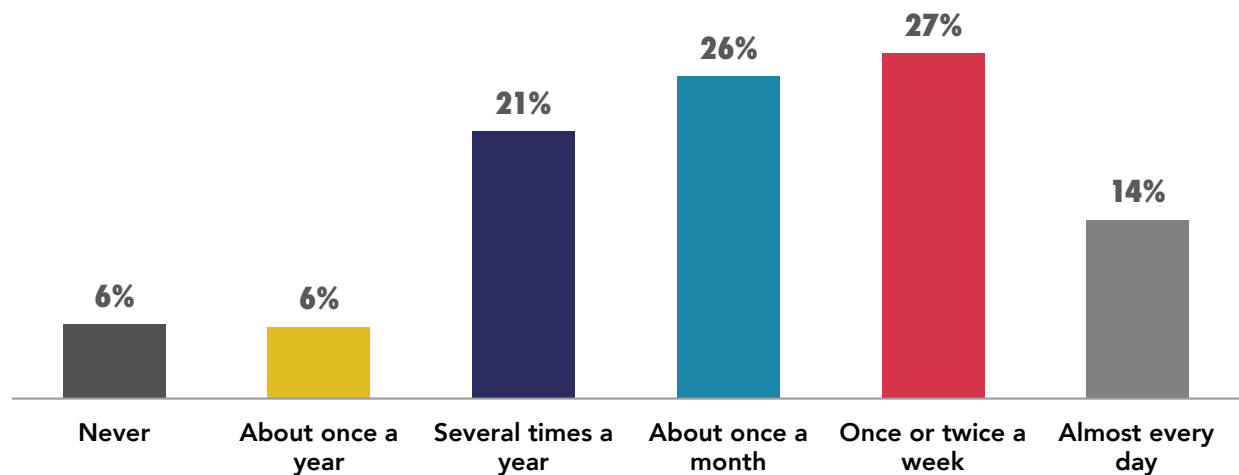
AWE CREATED STRONG ALUMNAE NETWORKS AND MENTOR RELATIONSHIPS

Alumnae reported **strong peer networks**, utilizing these networks for friendship, emotional support, and business opportunities. Alumnae also utilized mentors acquired through the AWE program.

MOST COMMON TYPES OF SUPPORT RECEIVED FROM PEERS



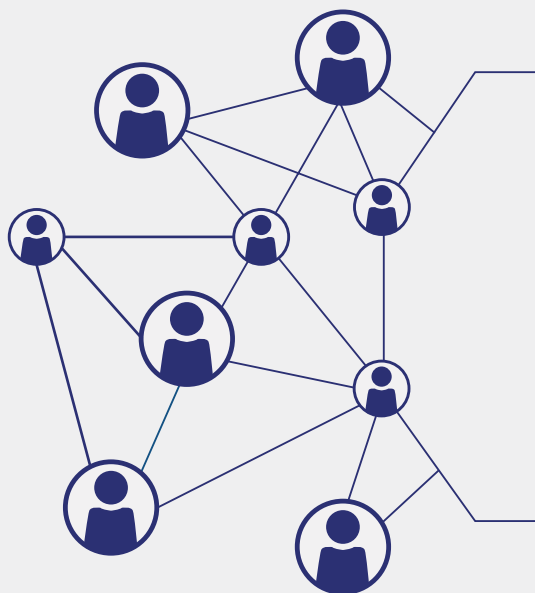
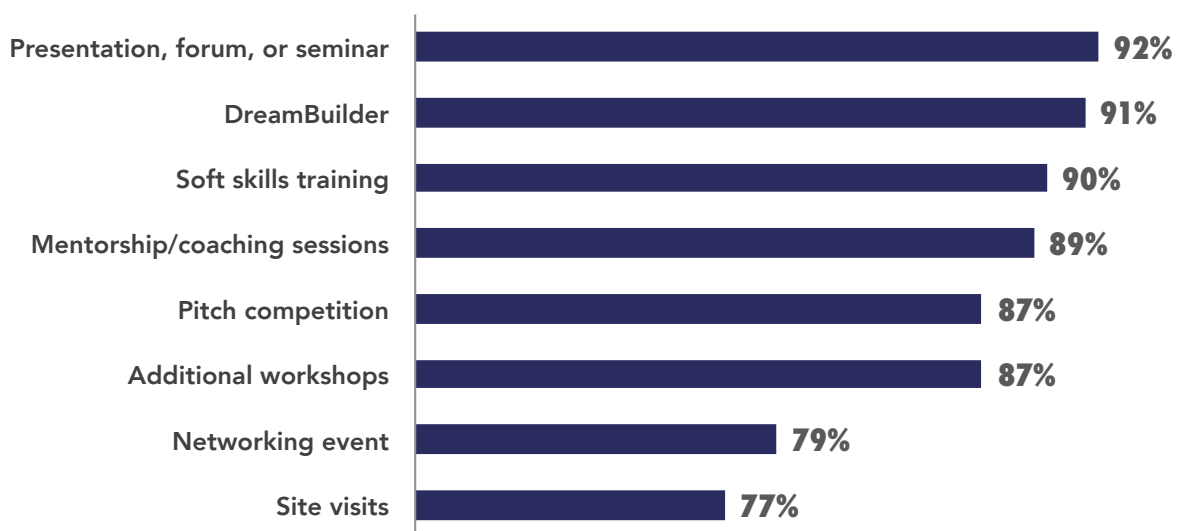
REPORTED FREQUENCY OF CONTACT WITH COHORT PEERS



AWE BEST PRACTICES

AWE was most successful when implementing partners tailored programs to the specific country context through facilitated sessions and external presenters. Alumnae also appreciated continued engagement post-program from facilitators and mentors.

PROGRAM COMPONENTS RATED VERY OR EXTREMELY HELPFUL



"Interacting with the mentors really helped because these are people who have gone through a lot. Hearing their journey really helped a lot and also getting to interact with some of the women who were selected for the program also helped since they had run businesses."

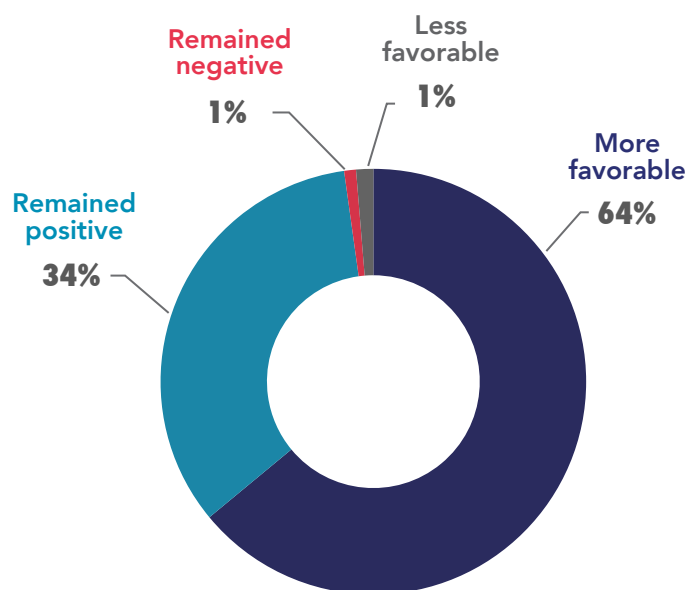
-Africa, alumna

AWE'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO INCREASED GLOBAL PEACE, STABILITY, AND ECONOMIC PROSPERITY

AWE is meeting its economic prosperity goal, according to Embassy and Implementing Partner staff interviewed. The most important local and country-level benefits are increased employment and economic development opportunities.

"These women definitely gained skills they wouldn't have otherwise gotten from other sources...When you're empowering them and building their entrepreneurial capabilities then you're building the democracy and stabilizing within the country."

-Embassy, respondent



"[AWE] gives tools and opportunities for women with small businesses to create jobs."

-Western Hemisphere, alumna

CONCLUSION

The AWE program successfully empowered women entrepreneurs, improving their skills and supporting them in expanding their businesses and increasing their sales. From increased self-confidence to strong alumnae networks and mentor relationships to strengthened community engagement, alumnae experienced a wide range of benefits from their participation in AWE.

The evaluation found that AWE provided a comprehensive foundation upon which alumnae could effectively build their businesses, with participants reporting improved key business skills, such as self-confidence, time management, and financial management. Some women reported that AWE gave them skills that translated into increased sales, improved product offerings, and expanded marketing techniques. The evaluation uncovered that alumnae developed deep and meaningful alumnae peer networks, crucial for both building personal confidence and business connections. The evaluation discovered that implementing partners who contextualized AWE program content—allowing for more culturally and circumstantially relevant course material through external speakers, one-on-one mentorship, and supplemental training sessions—resulted in better equipped graduates. AWE also improved many participants' views of the U.S. Government.

