AFRICAN WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP COOPERATIVE

Annual Program Report
Year 2: 2019-2020



AWEC

"AWEC helped me grow as an entrepreneur. I took a step back after every monthly session and saw how I could apply all that I just learned to my business."

Maina S., Senegal
Human Resources & Employment Services



Table of Contents

About AWEC 4
Message from the Managing Director 7
Message from the Board Chairs 8
Core Program 11
Leadership Summit 18
General Assembly 20
Impact 22
AWEC Alumnae Network 24
AWEC Business Academy 26
Staff 29
AWEC in the News 30
Financials 31
Donors & Supporters 32

Vision

Build the capacity of 5,000 women entrepreneurs by 2030

Mission

Empower African women entrepreneurs with the knowledge and network needed to build resilient and scalable businesses

Values

Resilience, passion, collaboration, and teamwork



Origin

The Center for Global Enterprise (CGE) was founded in 2012 by Samuel J. Palmisano, former CEO and Chairman of IBM, to enable underserved communities around the world to gain more equal access to contemporary business and management learning opportunities.

Qualitative and quantitative feedback from past programs supported by the Rockefeller Foundation and Goldman Sachs Foundation revealed a gap in entrepreneurial training, particularly among African women. These women wanted:

- More equal access to long-term business management learning
- Practical lessons that could be applied to their businesses immediately
- A strong network of their peers
- Business mentorship from senior professionals

The African Women Entrepreneurship Cooperative (AWEC), a CGE program, was created to fill this gap.

AWEC's innovative blended learning model broke the mold of typical management and entrepreneurial training programs. This intentionally inclusive program invites high-potential female entrepreneurs from across Africa and its diaspora to join annual cohorts of 200 trail blazers, regardless of geographic location, sector, or business size.

Supported by multi-year funding from Bloomberg Philanthropies, AWEC launched its first cohort in April 2018 after evaluating more than 2,000 applications. Within three application cycles, AWEC has admitted women entrepreneurs from all 54 African countries.

Three Pillars

Core Program

Innovative 12-month leadership and business management capacity building program that empowers 200 women entrepreneurs annually

Alumnae Network

Growing community of impassioned female leaders from across Africa, ready to grow their businesses and empower others

Business Academy

Four-week, fee-based online courses taught in the same engaging, dynamic, collaborative, and applied learning style that has become AWEC's trademark

Photo courtesy of Jenny Rasija, Cohort 2



Message from the Managing Director

The second year of AWEC has proven to be no less exciting and groundbreaking than the first.

We expanded our AWEC community by another 200 trailblazing women entrepreneurs from 38 countries and delivered twelve months of collaborative and applied management learning experiences. We launched the AWEC Alumnae Network to live up to our commitment to a lifelong learning journey with our entrepreneurs. And we piloted the AWEC Business Academy, a four-week, online-only subscription program that will be the launchpad for us to begin meeting the overwhelming demand for our innovative learning model.

Together, we learned, grew, and deepened our resiliency in ways that we could never have imagined. With the COVID-19 pandemic looming, we transformed our end-of-year celebration in Lagos, Nigeria into a virtual event that ultimately engaged 30% more participants than originally planned. The joyful celebration that took place via Zoom reaffirmed our conviction that remote and cross-cultural learning is the future of empowering women across Africa. Together, they will advance their knowledge and change their lives and countries.

As I write this message, small businesses across Africa are shuttered and have an uncertain future. Now more than ever, it is critical to use technology to connect our entrepreneurs, support each other, and create innovative solutions to ensure that businesses not only survive this pandemic, but thrive.

With the support of our donors, advisors, and network of friends, we look forward to a long future of empowering thousands of women entrepreneurs across Africa.

Let's go father together (but also, for now, six feet apart).

Karen Sippel
Co-Founder and Managing Director

Message from the Board Co-Chairs

Imagine this idea: “Let’s build from scratch a rigorous, high touch, continent-wide program that will enable 600 African women business owners and entrepreneurs from all 54 countries to gain management knowledge, support each other, and grow their businesses; and let’s do it in 30 months.” Most people would dismiss it as unachievable, ripe for failure, or just downright crazy. Well, not so.

As Co-Chairs of the AWEC Board of Stewards, we are happy to say, with the help of our colleagues, participants, mentors, instructors, and donors: “We have done it! Now let’s go beyond and empower many more African women to learn, grow, and contribute to their communities and the world.”

This is where we stand today after completing Year 2 of AWEC and just beginning Year 3:

- 400 AWEC alumnae
- 200 new fellows
- Accepted participants from every country in Africa

In this report you will find the details of this remarkable initiative and we appreciate the commitment of The Center for Global Enterprise for making it happen. If you feel these results are worth continuing, we encourage you to learn more about AWEC’s impact and join us in continuing to improve the lives of women across Africa and the world.

With gratitude,

Christopher Caine
President
The Center for Global Enterprise

Sherif Kamel
Dean, School of Business
American University in Cairo





AWEC Board of Stewards

The AWEC Board of Stewards contributes their time and expertise to the cooperative. We thank them for their continued support during the 2019-2020 program year.



Christopher Caine
The Center for Global Enterprise



Sherif Kamel
American University in Cairo



Jennifer Brant
Innovation Insights



Dr. Olayinka David-West
Lagos Business School



Hashem El Dandarawy
Team 4 Security



Rebecca Enonchong
AppsTech



Tara Fela-Durotoye
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Natalino Mwenda
Rasello



Guy Pfeffermann
Global Business School Network



Heba Ramzy
Avanade



Karen Sippel
AWEC



Pule Taukobong
CRE Venture Capital



Hesham Wahby
Innoventures



"Every month, the exercises were rare opportunities to build my business up from the ground and create a solid foundation with which to move forward."

Daphne K., Malawi/UK
Fashion & Apparel

Cohort Profile

To grow their businesses. To experience a blended-learning program. To build a pan-African network of peers. These are just some of the goals set by the members of AWEC Cohort 2 when they enrolled in AWEC's 12-month program. Over the course of the next twelve months, they built an entrepreneurial community, developed their business skills, and exhibited incredible amounts of passion and resilience.



200

ENTREPRENEURS



1,210

EMPLOYEES



$6.02M

REVENUE

Participant Perspectives

"The best part of AWEC is not just the knowledge, but the network of people you have access to, and the ability to tap into that network is amazing."
- Blessing A., Nigeria

"Connecting with fellow business owners in my country help[s] me navigate challenges better. Through the community I can ask for help anytime."
- Stella N., Kenya

"Thank you for introducing me to a community of women who have become more than sisters but also a great resource for information and motivation. This is invaluable."
- Sibongile M., Malawi

Cohort Reach

The diversity of skills, interests, and experiences in the cooperative reflect the diversity of women-led entrepreneurship across the continent. Representing 38 African countries and 40 industries, members of Cohort 2 have leveraged their collective knowledge and experience to provide one another with business advice and insights, management tips and tricks, and moments of support and encouragement.

38

COUNTRIES



Most Represented: Nigeria, Kenya, Ghana, Malawi, Zimbabwe

40

INDUSTRIES



Most Represented: Education, Agriculture, Fashion & Apparel, Food Products, Beauty & Cosmetics

"From the feedback from peers and the coaching of my mentor, I have been able to start new services to create new sources of revenue." ***- Jocelyne T., Cameroon***

Participant Spotlight: Cheswa Vwalika

Zambia, Healthcare

Dr. Cheswa Vwalika founded **Mobile Medical Services** in 2018 to redefine traditional healthcare in Zambia. Her clinic offers affordable home-based care solutions which include specialized nursing services, ante and postnatal care, physiotherapy, and health screenings. Dr. Cheswa's home-based approach to patient recovery is innovative and unique in Zambia and allows her team to build relationships with their patients - all of which lead to better outcomes.

The COVID-19 pandemic, which struck Africa toward the end of her AWEC year, created both challenges and opportunities for Dr. Cheswa, who relayed, “We initially lost contracts with big clients and for a few weeks had no idea how we were going to survive.”

But a turning point came when national hospitals needed to re-strategize care for patients who were not fully recovered, but needed to be discharged in order to protect them from contracting the virus. They contacted Dr. Cheswa, who ultimately experienced such strong demand that she hired more staff. As she describes it, "We didn’t plan for this but what I learnt at AWEC gave me the courage to face what was coming.”

Dr. Cheswa characterizes her time at AWEC as “awakening and empowering” and credits lessons learned about market segmentation, creating new revenue streams, and the art of pitching, as the most eye-opening parts of the program.

She looks forward to continuing to be an active member of her AWEC “sisterhood.” She says, **“With the network that we have, I can call my fellow sisters in Uganda, Malawi or even Nigeria if I need information about healthcare training or equipment that is available in those countries. Where else would I get that? AWEC made me come alive. It has taught me to be bold and fearless and I’m no longer afraid to ask.”**

Program Elements

AWEC uses applied and collaborative learning experiences to create immediate business impact and cultivate a pan-African cooperative of entrepreneurs, experts, and allies. The program's blended-learning model - in which most activities take place digitally - releases AWEC from the traditional confines of in-person training programs and enables us to impact entrepreneurs across the continent and diaspora.

Our unique blended learning model delivers impact through:



Online and in-person learning opportunities led by business experts and academics



Individual applied learning assignments and collaborative team projects



One-on-one mentoring from senior business professionals



Online and offline peer networking and feedback

"AWEC has equipped me with the skills and tools I require to competitively position my business for growth and market expansion, especially accessing funding.." - ***Tolulope A., Nigeria***

Curriculum



Participant Perspectives

"AWEC has increased my business acumen. I came in with very little business knowledge. The monthly topics, assignments, etc. have sharpened my thinking tremendously."
- Kimani W., Kenya

"I have gained better clarity of every component of my business and I am now knowledgeable in practical steps to take to grow and improve each of these areas. This has resulted in an increase in revenue and overall confidence I have in the future of my business."
- Adelaide A., Ghana



Participant Spotlight: Yemi Adenuga

Nigeria/Ireland, NGO

Yemi founded SHEROES GLOBAL in 2012 with a vision to empower women and youth to become positive-impact change agents in their communities. Nearly 50,000 people have been impacted across six countries through personal development programs that focus on mental wellness, self esteem, career guidance, and poverty alleviation.

Yemi focused her AWEC experience on advancing the organization's Boys To Men Project, which is designed to teach young boys to become strong, responsible men.

Yemi had a transformational experience after a thought-provoking conversation with Bill Ozturk, an AWEC Mentor, at the program's Leadership Summit in Tanzania. His feedback inspired her to go back to the drawing board: “**We have delivered several programs successfully over the years but about 6 months into my AWEC journey, peer feedback opened my eyes to things I hadn't thought about before and gave me clarity on some areas where I felt stuck. Then I met Bill and he asked if I had documented my processes for each one of our projects. That hit me like a bolt! I left the Summit eager to implement all I had learnt.**”

Today, the Boys to Men Project is SHEROES GLOBAL's flagship project. With a new curriculum, a clear process, and an intensive 6-month training program for prospective mentors, the team is set to launch Boys to Men Clubs in local communities.

"I'm exposed to a wide range of content that triggers amazing ideas I can emulate in my company. The wealth of experience shared is totally phenomenal."

Amma F., Ghana
Agriculture

2019 Leadership Summit

Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

The AWEC Leadership Summits are integrated elements of the core program that transform virtual connections into face-to-face friendships. Executed over two fast-paced days, they serve as powerful catalysts to network, share best practices and new ideas, cultivate existing relationships, and fuel the collaboration that already exists within AWEC's ecosystem.

The Year 2 Leadership Summit held in September 2019 in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania was no exception. Celebrating the mid-point of the AWEC program, the Summit gathered more than 150 high-achieving female entrepreneurs from all across Africa who earned an invitation to the event through consistent and active engagement in the AWEC curriculum. The Summit program balanced expert-led keynotes and insights with interactive workshops, team building challenges, industry networking sessions, and opportunities to gain one-on-one feedback on business problems.

Through it all, it was the people who mattered. AWEC Fellows connected face-to-face with their Mentors, expanded their peer network, formed new friendships, and made plans for the future.

Summit Highlights



184 participants in attendance



30+ African countries represented



14 learning labs, workshops, keynotes, and panel discussions



500+ connections and conversations



Mentor Spotlight: Kudzayi Nheweyembwa

Kudzayi Nheweyembwa is the General Manager of the Hilton Garden Inn in Lusaka, Zambia and a Year 2 AWEC Mentor. A native Zimbabwean, he was selected for the prestigious Hilton Elevator Program, which provides on-the-job training that equipped him to open the first Hilton hotel in Zambia in 2017. He grew up around entrepreneurial women and fondly reflects on his grandmother who ran the family farm well into her 80s.

Kudzayi describes his approach to mentoring as “Consultative. **It is important to act as an advisor and consultant that allows the mentee to get the best out of themselves.”**

His expertise in finance, operational efficiency, and setting long term goals has benefited his mentees and their businesses greatly. One participant credited his mentorship as a factor in attracting new customers, saying, “I’ve focused more on listening to what feedback I was getting from the market to get closer to my product-market fit.”

Kudzayi embraces the opportunity to challenge mentees to take their businesses to the next level and continue to grow personally and professionally.

“One of the most rewarding things about being a mentor is giving an entrepreneur a different perspective about the challenge they have been having. This was especially evident when mentoring entrepreneurs who run businesses that are very different to the one I am in. In the end, ***I found myself learning from them even more than they learnt from me****.”*

2020 General Assembly

Virtual Event

In March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic upended plans to convene more than 150 entrepreneurs from both cohorts in Lagos, Nigeria for the first-ever General Assembly. It was intended to be both an end-of-year celebration for Cohort 2 and an opportunity to network with AWEC alumnae.

AWEC, on the forefront of organisations and companies that cancelled in-person events, transformed our closing event into a Virtual General Assembly hosted on Zoom, which we already used daily in our programming. The switch to a virtual event yielded 30% more participants than originally planned and earned rave reviews in post-event surveys. Event highlights included insightful panel discussions with business leaders and investors, pitch workshops that provided the opportunity to practice pitches and receive immediate feedback, and peer-taught Masterclasses.

The virtual graduation celebrated the 162 members of Cohort 2 who earned their Certificate of Completion. Months before universities around the world began planning for virtual graduation, our event was both an experiment in remote collaboration and an emotional celebration of an outstanding group of women leaders. Featuring an address by Rebecca Enonchong, Cameroonian founder and CEO of Appstech and champion of women's empowerment, the closing session acknowledged individual and team achievements, and centered the focus on our Fellows.

Assembly Highlights



5-day virtual event



190 Fellows in attendance; 30% more than in-person expected attendance



8 masterclasses, workshops and panel discussions



50,000 collective hours invested in AWEC Fellows' experience



81% earned Certificate of Completion





Masterclass Spotlight: Atinuke Babatunde & Rehema Bashir

Peer-taught Masterclasses – interactive and practical workshops designed and facilitated by members of Cohorts 1 and 2 – were among the highest attended components of the virtual General Assembly.

Collaborating for the first time were Atinuke Babatunde, a Cohort 1 Fellow from Nigeria, and Rehema Bashir, a Cohort 2 Fellow from Tanzania. Their combined experience as a branding expert and a retailer who taught herself online strategies, created powerful first-person lessons on how SMEs can harness digital marketing.

Before her time with AWEC, Rehema had never led a face-to-face presentation, let alone an online one. On the experience of reshaping their presentation, Rehema had this to say: **"AWEC's belief that we had the ability to deliver this workshop meant there was no backing out. We knew we had to adapt and so we did."**

Atinuke shared her sentiments: **"When they moved the event online, my first instinct was to decline but all my fears disappeared after our first call with the AWEC team in preparation for the Virtual General Assembly. They gave us as much clarity and confidence as we needed."**

In the strong AWEC tradition of collaboration and rising to new challenges, Atinuke and Rehema delivered a knowledgeable, relatable, and actionable Masterclass after which 85% of survey respondents reported knowledge growth and 74% said they planned to apply immediately what they had learned.

Impact

AWEC was created to meet a need expressed by entrepreneurs in Africa for more equal access to high-quality business and management learning, longer engagement, access to business mentorship, and a strong peer network. Our impact data demonstrates that we have been successful in meeting these objectives.

We monitor participant engagement on a monthly basis and measure key indicators for success, including assignment submissions and participation in live learning opportunities and peer discussions. AWEC Teaching Assistants directly facilitate program participation and community-building, ensuring high levels of participant engagement. We also administer pre-, mid-, and post-program surveys to measure the success of specific program components and the impact of AWEC on business and personal growth.

Over the course of 12 months:



79% increased the quality of their network



76% experienced higher quality mentoring



76% strengthened their business strategy



72% increased their annual revenue



63% attracted new customers/clients



43% hired new employees



"I have more than doubled my revenue, attributed to increased product lines, business planning and increased partnerships."

Brenda K., Uganda/Rwanda
Education

AWEC Alumnae Network

Entrepreneurship is a lonely path. The AWEC Alumnae Network (AAN) ensures that our entrepreneurs don't walk that path alone. After completing their program year, AWEC Fellows are immediately invited to join the private online community created exclusively for them.

The AAN is a community of nearly 200 women entrepreneurs from 39 countries. In the past year, AWEC alumnae have remained connected through a variety of projects largely initiated by the alumnae themselves, including:

- Alumnae-led Masterclasses on practical topics
- Mentor-taught Live Sessions designed to uplevel their businesses
- Alumnae-driven events, including a series of skills and personal development workshops in Lagos, Nigeria
- Community-building activities like the AWEC Sister Circle Kenya, which initiated supportive site visits and donations to alumnae businesses
- Pay-it-forward activities, such as informational sessions leading up to the annual AWEC application cycle



Alumna Spotlight: Phirdy Motala

South Africa, Agriculture

In 2006, Phirdy Motala installed six hives on her family's sprawling 140 acre fruit farm in the foothills of the Winterhoek Mountains, located in the Western Cape of South Africa. That hobby became The **Farmyard Honey Factory**, a growing business with a team that now manages nearly 300 hives.

Like many small business owners, surpassing the ten year mark did not mean that Phirdy had unlocked all the secrets to building an efficient and strategic enterprise. She joined the first AWEC cohort to improve her business savvy and leadership skills, and as an alumna, she continues to rely on AWEC to deepen her knowledge.

Since becoming an alumna, Phirdy and her team "have been systematically going through [AWEC's] whole curriculum and have identified areas in my business that need attention."

Drawing on past AWEC assignments, Phirdy relayed: **"I have refined my business plan, vision, mission statement, social mission, and core values. At present, I am busy compiling a new business strategy and I'm trying to apply the lessons we learned on establishing a brand identity and building a digital strategy."**

Phirdy also draws on the AWEC Alumnae Network to stay connected with female business owners across Africa. When asked what she values most from the alumnae community, she says, "Our WhatsApp groups are very active. I'm crazy about the Masterclasses and try not to miss any."

After completing her AWEC year in 2019, Phirdy has increased her monthly revenue, expanded her production facility, moved her retail store into a newly renovated building that was funded by shop sales, and launched an eatery, which she credits her AWEC experience as going "a long way to making it a reality."

If you find yourself in the Boland region of South Africa, visit Phirdy's Farmyard Honey Factory for a dose of inspiration and local honey.

AWEC Business Academy

To meet the growing demand for entrepreneurship training geared towards women and Africans, we launched the AWEC Business Academy in November 2019. This innovative paid online learning experience is designed for women entrepreneurs seeking to develop specific business management skills in just one month. While AWEC Business Academy courses are delivered digitally, they are not typical online courses. They are practical, interactive, applied, and collaborative.

Our pilot course, *Creating an Entrepreneurial Culture*, was led by American University in Cairo Professor, and AWEC Board of Stewards Co-Chair, Dr. Sherif Kamel. At the conclusion of the four week course:



91% of Learners earned a Certificate of Completion



78% of Learners reported an increase in the quality of their network



87% of Learners reported an increase in their comfort with digital collaboration



100% of Learners would enroll in a future course





Learner Spotlight: Lestina Nhlema

Agriculture, Malawi

In addition to being the CEO of Northern Honey Processors, her honey processing business, Lestina is a community leader and industry expert in the field of apiculture. Although an accomplished entrepreneur in her own right, she sought out the opportunity to expand her network of fellow African women business owners after another Learner encouraged her to register for the AWEC Business Academy.

Over the course of four weeks, Lestina reassessed business processes, identified ways to better reach her customers, and sought out new mentors. The practical and applied nature of the assignments and the feedback from her peers encouraged her to consider new innovations she could incorporate into her business. As she said, **“The course made me think outside the box. I am going to be a different entrepreneur, more focused and willing to learn from others.”**

Shortly after completing her Business Academy course, Lestina applied for the AWEC Core Program and joined as a member of Cohort 3 in April 2020. She explained the impact, saying, **"AWEC has changed the way I do business. Every day I think of how best can I improve with the knowledge gained."**

"When I applied for the program, I had less than 5 staff, and one shop. Today, we have 18 full time staff and branches in Lagos and Port Harcourt that have well equipped factories with staff accommodation."

Chioma E., Nigeria
Food Products

AWEC Staff

Our team is passionate, supportive and committed to contributing to the learning and growth of the AWEC community.



Didi Agbahor
Program Manager



Ifeanyi Ajaebili
Teaching Assistant



Kola Akintola
Teaching Assistant



Francine Beleyi
Associate Director



Chris Caine
Executive Sponsor



Monica Consiglio
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Flora Gabtony
Teaching Assistant



Sugathri Kolluru
Program Advisor



Meredith Krieg
Program Manager



Dawn Leaness
Program Director



Akinola Odunlade
Teaching Assistant



Karen Sippel
Managing Director



Magdalene Uzoechi
Teaching Assistant

AWEC In the News

June 2019

AWEC Cohort 1 Member, Anike Lawal, is featured in a *BBC* article on lowering maternal mortality rates in Nigeria.

Read more about Anike



February 2020

AWEC Cohort 2 Member, Colette Ndi, and Live Session Leader, Shelly Lazarus, discuss female entrepreneurship in Africa during an interview on *Bloomberg Markets*.

Watch the interview

February 2020

AWEC Cohort 1 Member, Emilia Eyo Okon, explains how she juggles entrepreneurship, advocacy, and motherhood in her profile by *The Guardian Nigeria*.

Learn more about Emilia



March 2020

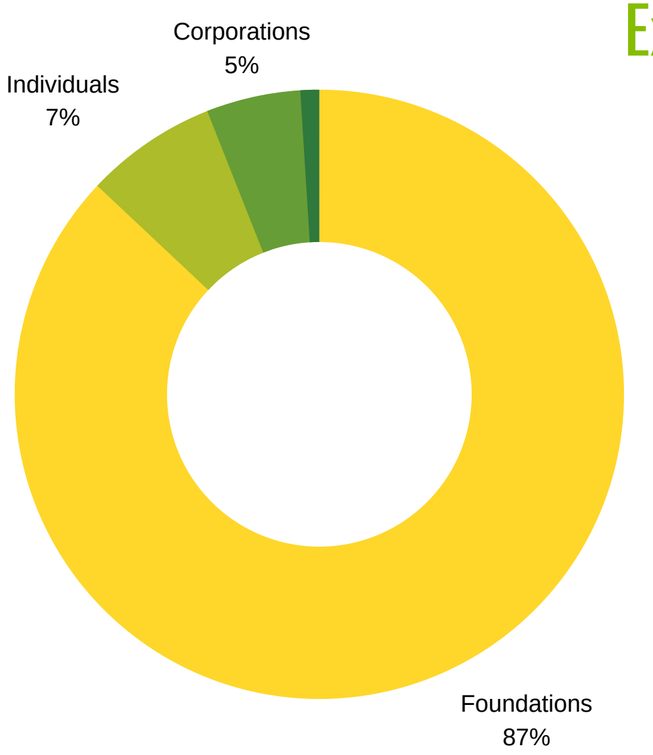
AWEC Board of Stewards members, Rebecca Enonchong and Tara Fela-Durotoye, are among *Forbes Africa*'s 50 Most Powerful Women

Check out the full list

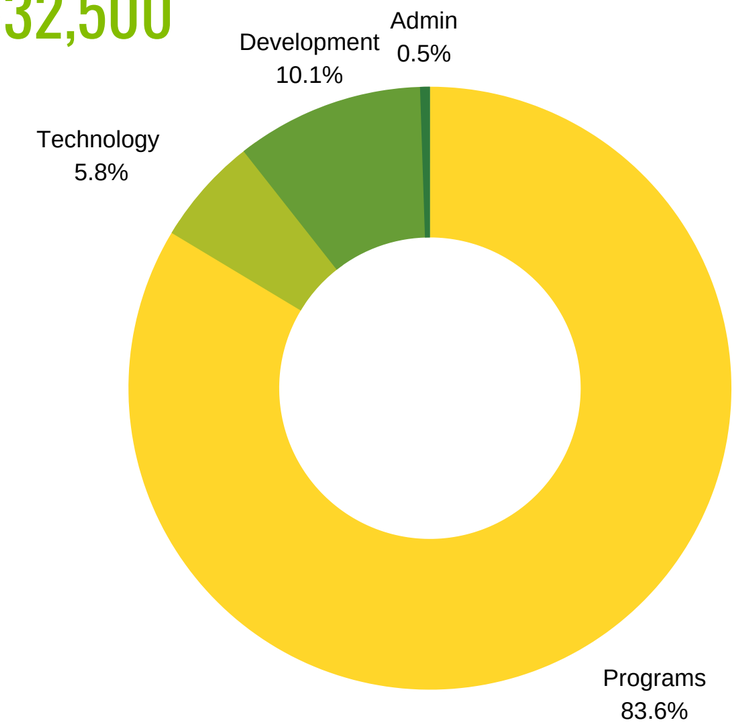
Financials

Throughout the 2019-2020 program year, we diversified our donor community, deepened individual giving commitments, and increased overall giving by 26%. We are also grateful for the in-kind support of fourteen international business experts who teach monthly webinars to our Fellows and 40 mentors from around the world who freely share their experience and knowledge with their AWEC mentees. We value these combined in-kind gifts at more than $300,000.

Revenue: $871,500



Expenses: $832,500



Donors and Supporters

$100,000+

Bloomberg Philanthropies
Inglesea Charitable Trust

$10,000-$99,999

Economic Club of Washington, DC
Mercator XXI
Silicon Valley Community Foundation

$1,000-$9,999

Todd Helfrich & Monica Consiglio
Samford Global Strategies
Karen Sippel
Story Partners
Toyota North America
John Williams

$500-$999

Henry Doong
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Rebecca Enonchong
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Amy Millette
Angela Wasunna
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$100-$499

Ifeanyi Ajaebili
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Emily Anthony
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$1-$99

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Kumbutso Takomana Black
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Pule Taukobong, CRE Venture Capital
Hesham Wahby, Innoventures


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