



**FUTURE FIRST GLOBAL
IS NOW INHIVE.**

**THIS RESOURCE WAS PRODUCED PRIOR
TO THE ORGANISATION'S REBRAND.**





Networking for Social Change:

A Global Alumni Network



Acknowledgements

This report has been produced by Future First Global in collaboration with the Mastercard Foundation. Future First Global would like to thank Ashley Collier and Nura Yunus for their enthusiastic help and support, which made this research possible. We would also like to thank the Mastercard Foundation and its partners who gave their time to contribute thoughts and ideas. Finally, and most importantly, we would like to thank the hundreds of inspiring young people who were kind enough to share their experiences and insight: without you, this research would not have been possible.

About the Mastercard Foundation

The Mastercard Foundation seeks a world where everyone has the opportunity to learn and prosper. The Foundation's work is guided by its mission to advance learning and promote financial inclusion for people living in poverty. One of the largest foundations in the world, it works almost exclusively in Africa. It was created in 2006 by Mastercard International and operates independently under the governance of its own Board of Directors. The Foundation is based in Toronto, Canada. For more information and to sign up for the Foundation's newsletter, please visit mastercardfdn.org.

About Future First Global

Future First Global believes that every young person deserves the same chance in life. It supports organizations and schools to build strong youth networks and alumni communities so that young people can access relatable role models and get the support they need from people like them. Its support includes feasibility studies, research, program and resource design, ongoing advice, and impact evaluation services. For more information, please visit futurefirstglobal.org

About This Project

Future First Global, in partnership with the Mastercard Foundation, has conducted research into the feasibility of a Global Alumni Network, which would bring people together from across the Mastercard Foundation portfolio in Africa.

In order to ensure that youth voice is placed at the centre of the project, program participant and alumni inputs were critical in the design process. Over six months, Future First Global ran focus groups, interviews, and surveys with over 300 current and former program participants as well as partner institution staff from 19 countries and 23 partner programs. This established young people's perceptions of a global network, how they would benefit, and how it could be put into practice.

While this report is written with Mastercard Foundation's portfolio in mind, it is also informed by Future First Global's broader experience and expertise in this area. As a result of this insight, many of the findings will be transferable to those looking to create a similar network.



4 Young Leaders Speak

5 Executive Summary

6 What is a Global Alumni Network?

7 Why a Global Alumni Network?

8 The Value of a Global Alumni Network

10 Building a Global Alumni Network

12 Vision and Purpose

12 Structure and Leadership

13 Engagement and Activities

13 Impact and Evaluation

14 Conclusion

Young Leaders Speak

In 2016, I took part in the eighth cohort of the Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI), a leadership program made possible in part by the generous support of the Mastercard Foundation. Since then, I have committed my time to promoting tech in rural schools and working so that no child is left behind when it comes to technology and education.

When I was accepted into the YALI program, I knew I really wanted to use that platform to network with like-minded individuals who would later become partners in my social change journey and who could support me to give back to and support my community. This is exactly what I did. To date, I have worked with brilliant minds from YALI who have selflessly given of their time and resources to transform the communities I serve.

Knowing how important this support has been for me makes me so excited when I think about the Mastercard Foundation Global Alumni Network and the huge opportunity it presents.

The Mastercard Foundation Global Alumni Network can help change the African continent: if one individual can have a large impact, then think how much more can be achieved by the entire Mastercard Foundation network when it comes together. That's why I'm so excited about the Global Alumni Network: it gives us an opportunity to have a voice, connect, collaborate, drive change, and increase our impact.

The Mastercard Foundation has seen the need for African challenges to be addressed by young people from Africa. I believe this is very important. It's wonderful to see the Mastercard Foundation supporting this, and I'm thrilled to be a part of this transformation.

Joshua Eyaru
YALI Alumnus
Uganda

I am a Mastercard Foundation alumna and a recent Mastercard Foundation Scholar at Ashesi. I currently work with the Transitions Working Group (TWG), a team made up of program managers, alumni, and various Mastercard Foundation stakeholders.

When my Mastercard Foundation program ended, I was so grateful for the great opportunity I had been given. I felt the importance of helping my community in the best possible way, using all the support, education, training, exposure, and networks I had benefitted from through the scholarship. I felt empowered and suddenly ready.

I strongly believe that an alumni network would give us the opportunity to collaborate, share ideas, and solve problems as a collective, using all of our combined knowledge. I believe that just as African heads of state come together to connect, share, and develop unity, the Mastercard Foundation alumni could foster a similar relationship.

We are the upcoming leaders, so what better than to be in a network with like-minded individuals who all share the values of the Foundation and want to work toward a better future for the African continent? I am particularly excited about this because I know I have a network of transformative young African leaders who I can relate to.

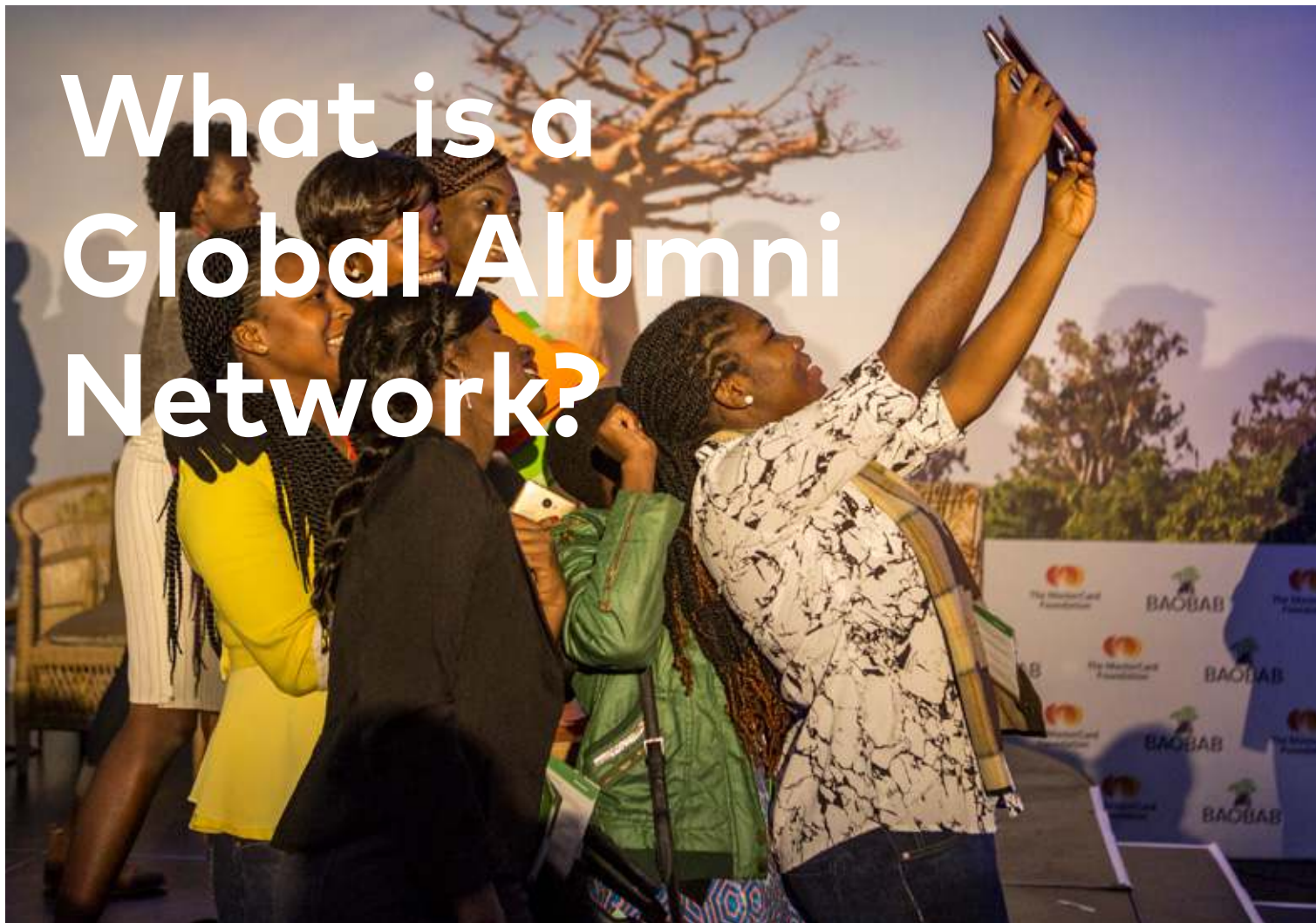
I believe this is an exciting opportunity for us to achieve sustainability and to ensure that in addition to the impact we have felt for ourselves, we are also able to have a transformative impact on Africa.

Nadia Amasa
Mastercard Foundation Scholar at
Ashesi University College
Ghana

Executive Summary

- There is a feeling in the Mastercard Foundation Community that building a global “network of networks” would provide significant added value to young people and other stakeholders.
- Participants need clarity on the network’s purpose: it needs to be broad enough to appeal to those who have had a wide range of experiences, but still have a focus on transformative leadership and service to local communities.
- Young people want the network to function both on the global and local levels, and for the network to be peer-led with fully accountable leadership.
- Young people are primarily interested in transition support, including access to employment and development opportunities, and support with community give-back projects.
- The alumni community can support the acquisition of learnings to better support young people in their transition into dignified and fulfilling employment.
- Further areas of research include the role and commitment of program partners, the interaction between existing networks and an overarching global network, and the role of the Global Alumni Network and the private sector.

What is a Global Alumni Network?



The proposed Mastercard Foundation Global Alumni Network aims to create a network and movement of leaders for change in Africa, connecting young people who are committed to transformative leadership and social change.

This is a network to push forward the idea of transformative, powerful, and ethical leadership, community service, and real change-making on the continent. It will create a "network of networks," bringing together for the first time people from across the Mastercard Foundation portfolio to connect and support one another to drive this change.

Why a Global Alumni Network?

Key to this research was first understanding whether more impact could be achieved by

- 1) Strengthening individual networks (of individual programs funded by the Mastercard Foundation) or
- 2) Bringing these networks together into a global one.

The research demonstrated a feeling in the Mastercard Foundation Community that building a global "network of networks" would provide significant added value, supporting young people committed to improving their communities and the development of transformative leadership that can bring change to the African continent.



Scale

"Critical mass is so important — an alumni coalition can be the change we want to make in Africa."

Alumnus from the Young African Leaders Initiative, Ghana

- Participants felt a global community has wider potential for leverage and impact than a single program's alumni network.
- It was felt that the network would provide a new opportunity for a collective voice to engage with stakeholders such as government, the media, funders, and major employers on key issues.
- Young people were excited to learn from and connect to others with a broad range of experiences and felt like this was key to building impact and enhancing their leadership skills.

Shared Values

"A common interest bridges the lack of personal connections I have with people."

Student at Ashesi University, Ghana

- Shared values and vision were felt to be stronger than shared experience. This meant that young people were enthusiastic about a network that is inclusive of different experiences.
- A strong shared value of "give-back" was often suggested as a common purpose of the Global Alumni Network. Mastercard Foundation programs actively encourage participants to think about how they can use their experience to contribute positively and give back to their community following their program.

The Value of a Global Alumni Network

There was huge enthusiasm for a Global Alumni Network and a universal recognition of its potential value:



Every young person we spoke to recognized the power of collaboration and wanted to see a Global Alumni Network developed.



There was a clear sense that this network could add value to the networks that young people were already part of.



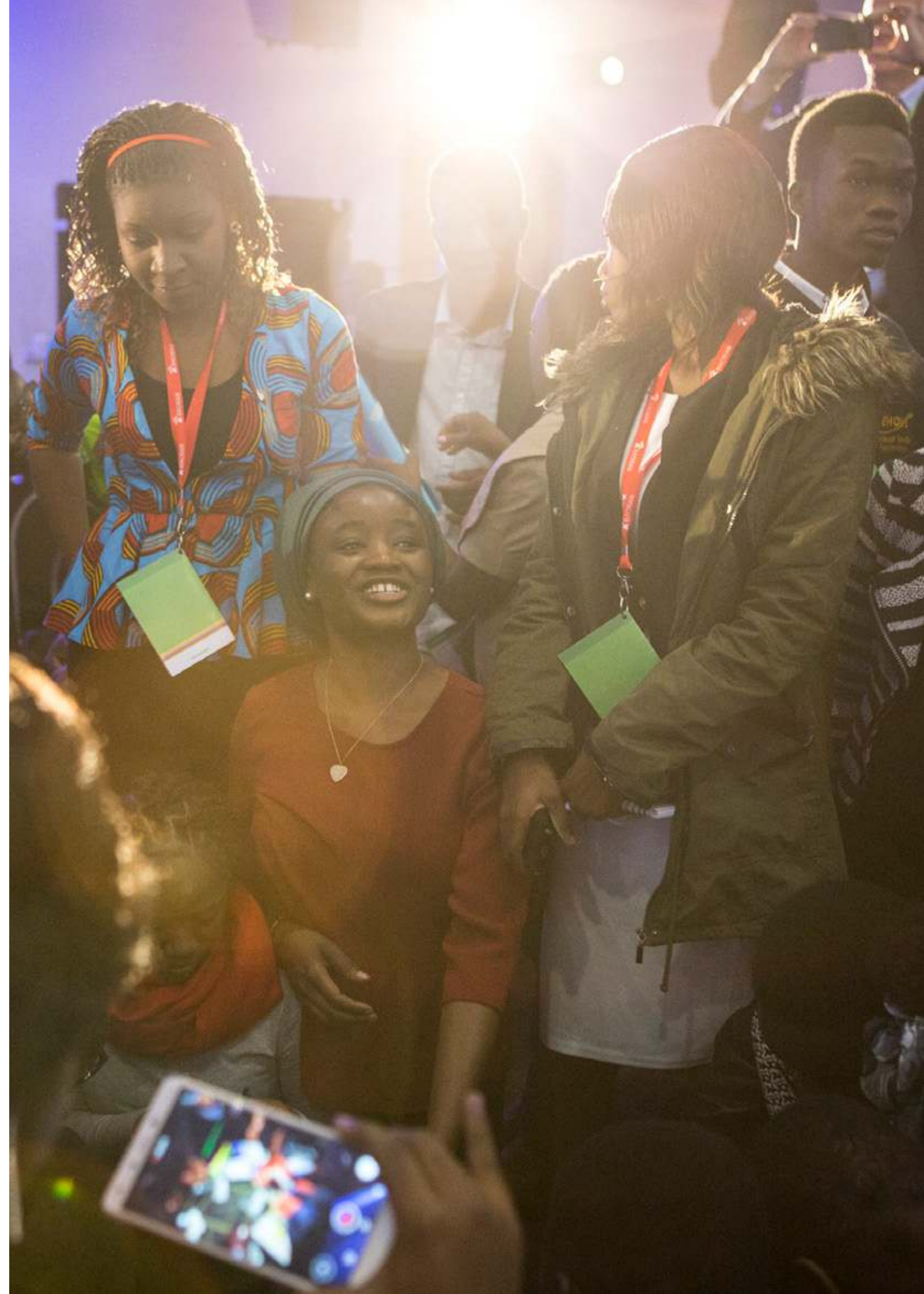
Current program participants can benefit from being connecting them to relatable role models and through providing sustainable post-program support.



Program providers can benefit from the creation of a clearer feedback loop to improve program offerings.



Society can benefit from more engaged and better-connected young people who are supported to make a difference in their communities.

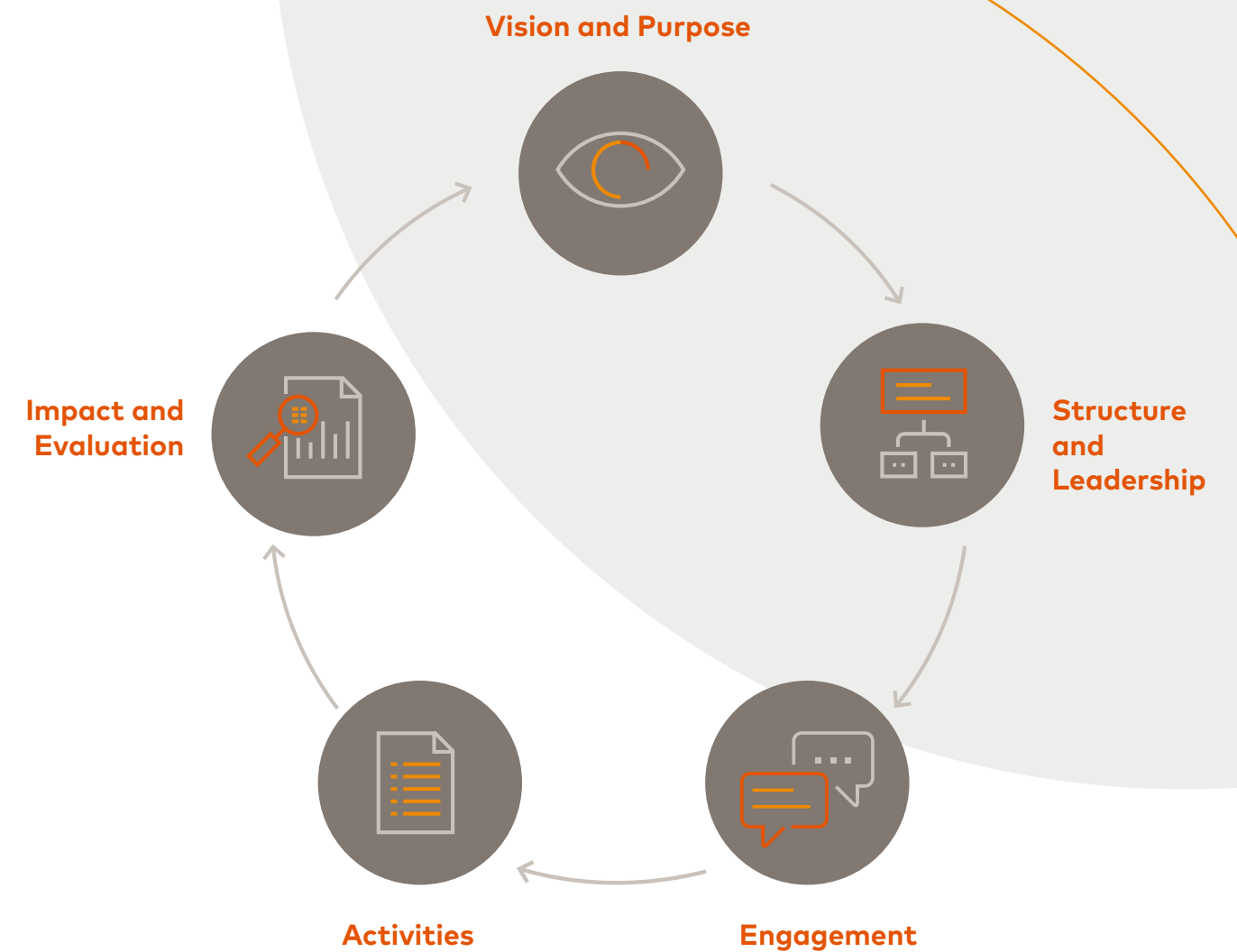


Building a Global Alumni Network



Based on more than five years' worth of work and research across multiple countries, Future First Global has identified five elements that are key to a successful alumni community.

In this section, we outline the view of young people involved in Mastercard Foundation programs in relation to these elements.



Vision and Purpose

A successful alumni community must be bound together by a shared purpose, driven by the community itself and not dictated to from above.

Participants need clarity on the network's purpose

- The network's purpose needs to be broad enough to appeal to those who have had a wide range of experiences, but it still requires a focus
- The purpose should focus on transformative leadership and service to local communities. This was the unifying common vision: young people wanted to be supported to make a difference.

Having a common vision is more important than having a common experience

- Connections to specific programs in which young people had taken part were found to be less important than the values and vision that program participants had in common.
- The commitment young people feel about their responsibility to be a force for social good, to give back to their communities, country, and continent, was the primary area all participants were felt to share.

Young people feel that brand credibility is important

- A prestigious brand was felt to add credibility. People were very keen for the Mastercard Foundation brand to be attached to the community.

Structure and Leadership

Over-centralized structures can be stifling and transactional. Decentralized structures are preferred but can vary greatly in practice. Finding the right degree of decentralization is key.

Both local and global are important

- Many alumni placed high value on accessing a diverse range of experiences through a global network, as well as seeing an opportunity for enriched collaboration.
- Local networks were also felt to offer significant value, given the desire to have a network they could tap into face-to-face. Key reasons for this were:
 - Connecting to others who understand the local context
 - Support to engage with more local stakeholders
 - Strong national pride and desire to change their country
 - The practical elements of local or national networks being more immediately implementable and more cost-effective

"Many alumni placed high value on accessing a diverse range of experience through a global network, as well as seeing an opportunity for enriched collaboration"

Young people want to own the network

- Young people overwhelmingly want the network to be peer-led and to have a local leadership that is fully accountable to members.
- Young people strongly felt the need for a transparent and fair process for appointing and monitoring local leadership and that these positions should be voluntary and not paid.

Membership in multiple and intersecting networks is not a challenge

- Many young people are already part of their program's or institution's alumni network but did not see an additional global network conflicting with this.
- A Global Alumni Network would need to offer something that these individual alumni networks do not.

Engagement and Activities

A deliberate strategy is needed to maintain engagement from the moment somebody joins the community. Uptake and support of activities will determine how alumni collectively contribute to the community's mission. A mix of in-person and digital activities is required to maximize impact according to the resources available.

People want to be connected based on topic and interest area

- Key topics in which people were interested were transition support (including access to employment and development opportunities) and support for community give-back projects.
- Alumni also expressed a strong desire to be connected through areas of common interest. These included entrepreneurship, youth employability and unemployment, youth empowerment, agribusiness, opportunities in rural areas, female empowerment, and leadership.

A blend of face-to-face and online interaction is vital for engagement

- A mix of face-to-face and online engagement and activities is important to develop a balance of breadth and depth of relationships.
- The preferred online method of communication was WhatsApp, which was favoured by all groups and seen as a cheap, easy, sustainable, and internationally recognized method of communication. The second-choice communication platform was Facebook. It was felt that using an existing platform was preferable to introducing a new one.

Alumni engagement needs to be built into programs from the beginning

- Program staff of individual programs need to be involved to ensure participants are aware, onboarded to the alumni community, and well supported.

Key connectors within the alumni community are important

- Early adopters and ambassadors among young people have the ability to raise the profile of the network and involve a greater number of young people.

"Young people expressed a strong desire to know that those in the network were contributing to it and having an impact."

Impact and Evaluation

Measurement and evaluation of alumni engagement and impact is complex and often overlooked. It is important to track impact at an individual and community-wide level. Impact and evaluation is an area we touched on more lightly with the young people themselves.

Network members are keen to track the impact of the network and their peers

- Young people expressed a strong desire to know that those in the network were contributing to it and having an impact.
- It is important for communities to gather data so they can develop and evolve in response to it.

Supporting the impact of young people

- An alumni community can contribute to a feedback loop for programs and to further centralize the youth voice.
- Alumni form a key part of the Mastercard Foundation's Young Africa Works strategy to get 30 million young people in dignified and fulfilling employment by 2030. The alumni network will support the acquisition of learnings to move toward that aim.

Conclusion

Summary

In summary, there is little doubt following this research that the opportunity to develop a Global Alumni Network holds significant value for all stakeholders concerned:

- For the alumni themselves, in reaching their full potential and supporting others to do the same
- For the program partners, in helping to shape and support those leaders
- For the Mastercard Foundation, in creating a new generation of transformative leaders

Recommendations

We recommend that the Mastercard Foundation consider how a Global Alumni Network aligns with its long-term strategy before undertaking detailed and collaborative program design and implementation. Areas for further investigation include:

- The role and commitment required of program partners
- A deeper understanding of the interaction between existing networks and an overarching global network
- The role of the Global Alumni Network in relation to the private sector and employers

Building this network presents a unique possibility to not only incubate a movement of transformative leaders and support the longer-term strategy of the Mastercard Foundation, but also to support leadership, employability, and change for the African continent as a whole.



