

**APEC Forum on Women and Youth  
Empowerment: Enhancing Digital  
Competitiveness and Inclusive Economic  
Growth through Innovative Enterprise  
Education**

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**APEC Human Resources Development Working Group**

**March 2026**



**Asia-Pacific  
Economic Cooperation**





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# **APEC Forum on Women and Youth Empowerment: Enhancing Digital Competitiveness and Inclusive Economic Growth through Innovative Enterprise Education**

**APEC Human Resources Development Working Group**

**March 2026**

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# **INTRODUCTION**

## **1. BACKGROUND**

Chinese Taipei hosted a three-day in-person event “APEC Forum on Women and Youth Empowerment: Enhancing Digital Competitiveness and Inclusive Economic Growth through Innovative Enterprise Education” from 5 to 7 November 2025.

With the primary aim of enhancing regional economic productivity and nurturing the essential talent for regional labor markets, this project focused on implementing methods and practical approaches to train youth's, women's, and individuals with disabilities' vital labor skills, innovative thinking ability, and STEM and digital competency. A three-day event was held to facilitate discussions and disseminate insights on innovative digital and entrepreneurship education, collaborative projects between industry and academia, and programs promoting female empowerment and entrepreneurial capability.

To enhance regional economic productivity and cultivate the talent needed for regional labor markets, this project discussed talent cultivation, innovative digital education, and innovative entrepreneurship policies. It addressed the methods and practical approaches on how to train women and youth in the necessary labor skills and digital knowledge, not only to help them smoothly enter the labor market but also to empower them to become self-sufficient entrepreneurs. This project also integrated contents designed to support individuals with disabilities in pursuing employment and entrepreneurial opportunities.

The aim of this project was to foster the cultivation of youth talent and empower women by developing digital competency and fostering innovative and inclusive entrepreneurial mindset, which will contribute to long-term regional prosperity and inclusivity.

## **2. EXPECTED OUTCOMES**

The project was designed to achieve the following key outcomes:

- 1) Through the post-event survey, participants report increased knowledge, equipping women, young entrepreneurs, and people with disabilities with essential skills including: (1) Market Research and Demand Analysis, (2) Financial Management and Cost Control, (3) Agile Business Model and Minimum Viable Product (MVP), (4) Entrepreneurial Resources and Grant Applications, and (6) Digital Transformation and Automation and, and become better prepared for changing job market, more independent, and successful in their future businesses.
- 2) Through the post-event survey, participants report gained women's insights on how to effectively utilize knowledge and resources to help them attain their entrepreneurial goals.

- 3) Through the post-event survey, participants report enhanced understanding of initiatives for female empowerment, innovative and inclusive strategies for entrepreneurship, and startup education across the region.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **1. RESEARCH METHOD**

The project hosted a physical forum, inviting several speakers to share their experiences and knowledge to the target beneficiaries. After the forum, a post-event survey was conducted to verify the growth of the target beneficiaries and if the participants gain any knowledge from the event. The post-event survey consists of two parts: basic information and event review. There are 15 questions in the event review part, and most of the questions are open-ended ones. With those questions, the PO can verify if the expected outcomes are fulfilled. We will discuss the results in the conclusion part.

### **2. RESEARCH TARGET (BENEFICIARIES)**

The primary beneficiaries of the project were its intended participants, specifically women, youth (aged 18-30), and individuals with disabilities from the APEC region. By circulating invitation via APEC Secretariat to PPWE and the Friends of the Chair on Promoting Disability Policies, FotC in HRDWG, we located the participants who are interested in the topic of this project and send invitations to them. Through the proposed event, which features discussions on innovative ideas, business perspectives, female leadership, and interdisciplinary learning, the primary beneficiaries will gain valuable knowledge and skills necessary for today's and tomorrow's job market.

Secondly beneficiaries were policymakers from women and youth affairs related departments, academic representatives who have been designing and teaching entrepreneurship, and professionals from various sectors who focus on the implementation of women and youth empowerment will benefit from insights on implementing innovative digital education and fostering collaboration between industry and academia. This initiative aimed to bolster the competence and knowledge of women, youth, and individuals with disabilities, empowering them to thrive in the current job market and potentially establish their own businesses that will provide long-term benefits to the regional economy. By sharing best practices and experiences, this project inspires participants to implement similar endeavours in their own respective economies.

# RESULTS

## 1. EVENT SUMMARY

The project's main event was a two-day forum and a one-day field visit took place in November 2025. The forum incorporated projects, resources, policy and information sharing on innovative entrepreneurship education, female empowerment projects, women's participation in STEM.

During the one-day field visit, participants travelled to an entrepreneur hub called Impact Hub Taipei in the morning. In the afternoon, a wrap-up session with breakout sessions to recap key discussions and recommendations from participants took place. A post-event survey was conducted right after the forum to allow maximum receipt of response from participants.

### Day 1 Topics

- Keynote Speech I – Curiosity Is a Growth Strategy: A Playbook for Women and Youth in the AI Generation
- Keynote Speech II – Enhancing Digital Competitiveness and Inclusive Economic Growth through Innovative Education
- Policy sharing – STEM Fields and Women Researcher Cultivation Subsidy Program
- USR Policy Sharing – Building a Mechanism through Cross-Sectoral Collaboration
- Best Practices Sharing - Advancing Regional Growth through Innovative and Inclusive Businesses

### Day 2 Topics

- Panel Discussion – Female Entrepreneurs in the Digital Age – Integrative Training in STEM and Leadership Growth
- Female Entrepreneurship Experiences Sharing
- Regional Best Practices and Policy Sharing (Republic of Korea / New Zealand)
- Workshop: Gender-Inclusive Entrepreneurship and Policy Strategies

### Day 3 Educational Field Visit

- Site Visit to Impact Hub Taipei
- Wrap-up Session & Group Discussion
- Post-Event Survey

## 2. DAY 1 FORUM

### 2.1 Curiosity Is a Growth Strategy: A Playbook for Women and Youth in the AI Generation

The first keynote, “Curiosity Is a Growth Strategy: A Playbook for Women and Youth in the AI Generation,” delivered by Sarah Tong, CEO and Co-founder of Big Bang

Academy, explored how curiosity has become a critical form of growth capital in the age of AI, particularly for Generation Alpha, women, and youth.

The presentation began by highlighting the urgency and opportunity created by the rise of Gen Alpha, the largest and most digitally native generation to date. While children now have unprecedented access to AI tools, the core challenge is not access but agency whether young people will use AI to passively consume or actively create. The deeper risk identified is a growing curiosity gap, which current education systems have failed to address.

Big Bang Academy is presented as a response to this gap: a future-ready STEAM education model that evolves from digital learning to hybrid and AI-supported experiential education. Drawing on five years of experience across three waves (COVID digital expansion, post-COVID offline recalibration, and AI-enabled global learning), the Academy emphasizes that experiential, project-based, and human-centered learning remains essential even in an AI-rich environment.

The core framework was built on three pillars:

- 1) Think Like a Scientist** – learning starts with questions, experimentation, reflection, and portfolios instead of exams.
- 2) Build Like an Engineer** – students prototype, iterate, and solve real-world problems through hands-on creation, including applied AI.
- 3) Speak Like a CEO (Gender Lens)** – integrating communication, pitching, and leadership while addressing systemic gender bias in STEAM through role rotation, content reframing, and visible role models.

A strong gender lens ran throughout the keynote, emphasizing that the issue is not girls' lack of interest in STEM, but retention, environment, and incentive structures. Research from the EU, UK, and APEC was cited to reinforce the need for inclusive, human-centered AI development led by diverse voices.

The keynote concluded with a Curiosity Playbook centered on three actionable principles:

- 1) Projects:** learning through making and solving real problems
- 2) Portfolios:** documenting learning, creativity, and growth
- 3) Protections:** embedding equity and bias checks into education systems

The call-to-action urged policymakers, educators, and founders to redesign learning environments that compound curiosity through inclusion. The overarching message was clear: curiosity is capital, and inclusion is how it grows.

## **2.2 Enhancing Digital Competitiveness and Inclusive Economic Growth through Innovative Education**

The second keynote by Takara Small, a Toronto-based multimedia journalist, national technology columnist for CBC, and founder of VentureKids Canada, examined how digital learning, global collaboration, and trusted information systems are reshaping education in an increasingly connected yet unequal world.

The presentation began by highlighting how digital and in-person learning models are rapidly evolving, driven by learners' expectations for personalized, AI-enabled education that adapts to individual learning styles and pace. As education transcends borders, Takara emphasized that no school, community, or economy operates in isolation, making global collaboration essential rather than optional.

A central theme was the importance of cross-border partnerships, particularly for large and diverse economies such as Canada. These partnerships enabled the sharing of best practices, resources, and innovations, while ensuring that underserved and remote regions benefit from global expertise and technology. Such collaboration also prepared students for participation in an interconnected global economy.

However, the keynote cautioned that connectivity is not guaranteed. Climate-related disruptions, cybersecurity threats, and the high cost of internet access pose growing risks to Wi-Fi-dependent learning systems. To address this, Takara outlined the need for alternative and resilient learning solutions, including offline-capable digital libraries, mesh networks, radio-based education, and pre-loaded devices approaches that reduce dependence on constant connectivity and expensive data plans.

The presentation also explored the rise of STEM and AI EdTech startups, noting both their potential and their challenges. While many startups make bold claims about educational impact, Takara stressed the need for independent validation, measurable outcomes, and evidence-based results. Community-driven reviews, crowdsourced testing, and controlled studies were positioned as critical tools for distinguishing meaningful innovation from unproven promises especially in a market dominated by major technology companies.

A distinctive contribution of the keynote was its focus on journalism as a pillar of trust in education. Journalism's core strength like verification, fact-checking, and accountability were presented as essential counterweights to misinformation in AI-driven learning environments. Partnerships between educators and trusted media organizations can enhance student engagement, credibility, and digital literacy.

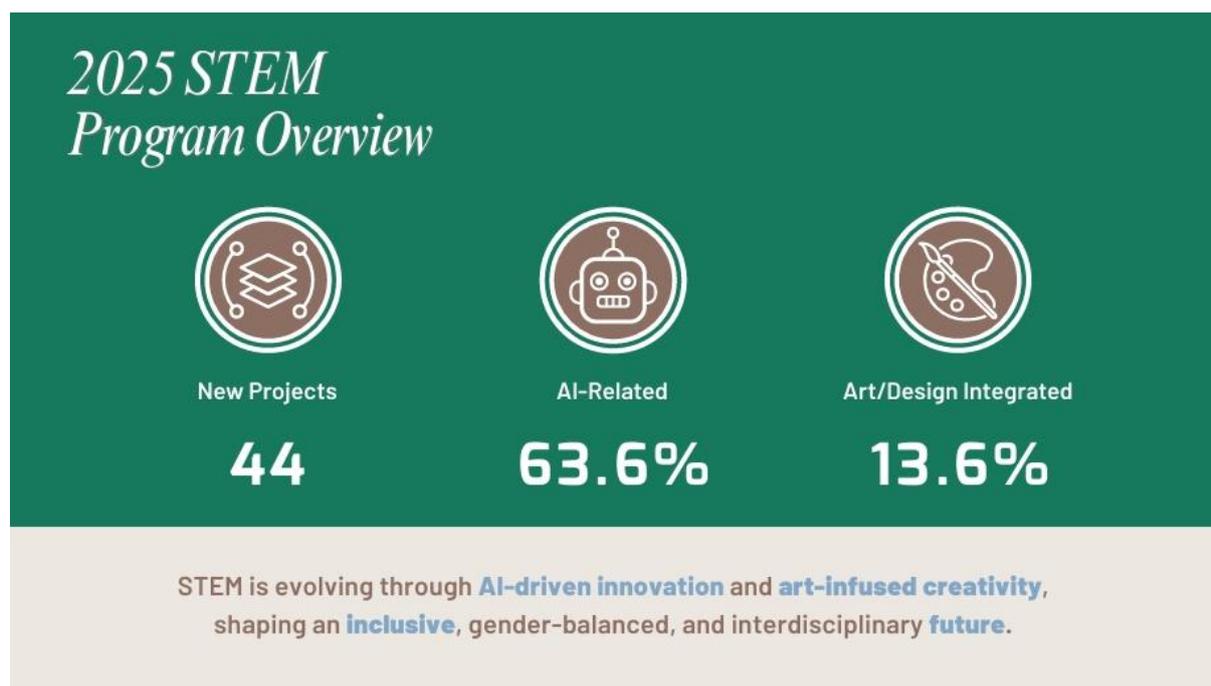
Finally, the keynote underscored the growing importance of privacy and security education. As digital learning platforms collect vast amounts of personal, academic, behavioral, and usage data, students and teachers must be equipped with foundational knowledge of data protection, cybersecurity, and ethical technology use.

Overall, Takara Small’s keynote delivered a clear message: the future of education depends not only on technology, but on collaboration, resilience, trust, and responsible data practices to ensure equitable and sustainable learning opportunities for all.

### 2.3 Policy sharing – STEM Fields and Women Researcher Cultivation Subsidy Program

This presentation by Dr. Hank Huang, Director of the Center of Industry Accelerator and Patent Strategy at National Yang Ming Chiao Tung University (NYCU), introduced Chinese Taipei’s STEM Fields and Women Researcher Cultivation Subsidy Program, a initiative led by the Ministry of Education to advance gender inclusion, interdisciplinary innovation, and academia–industry collaboration in STEM.

Launched in 2021, the program aligns with global developments in AI, ICT, and diversified industrial transformation while addressing gender gaps in STEM education and research. Its mission is to cultivate innovation, empower women and youth, and build a sustainable and inclusive STEM talent ecosystem by connecting academic research capacity with industry needs.



Operating across universities in the economy, the program supports institution-based proposals with structured evaluation and clear performance indicators. A core feature is its women empowerment mechanism, which allocates at least 50% of annual subsidies to female faculty support and STEM career guidance for female students, while tracking women’s participation and research outcomes.

The initiative places strong emphasis on academia–industry collaboration, requiring partnerships with enterprises to co-develop projects, supervise students, and generate

measurable outcomes such as R&D services, technology transfer, and social impact. Outreach to high schools further strengthens the STEM talent pipeline.

To date, the program has engaged over 40 universities, trained thousands of students, and significantly increased female leadership participation in research projects. Through case studies integrating AI, XR, and STEAM approaches, the program demonstrates how gender inclusion, creativity, and advanced technologies together support resilient and globally competitive STEM development.

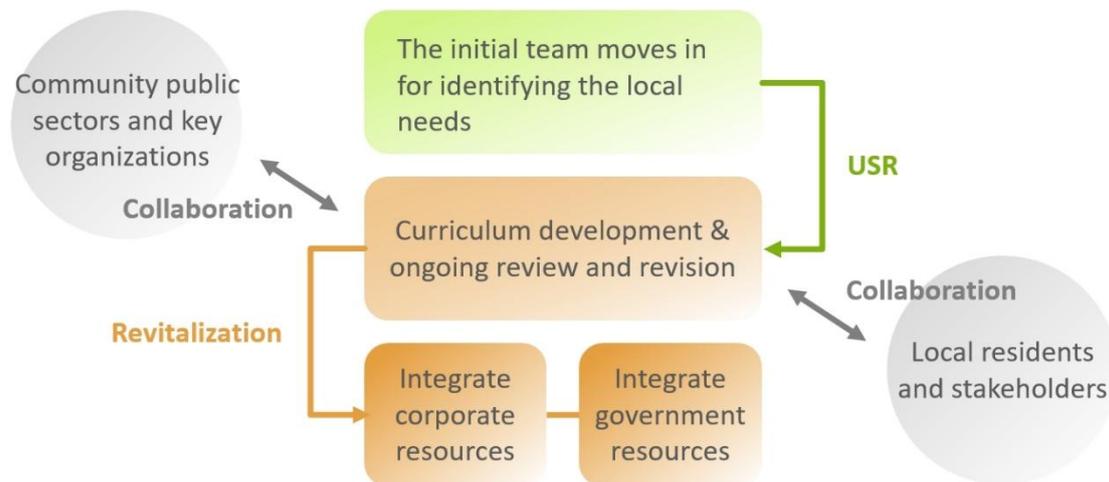
#### **2.4 USR Policy Sharing – Building a Mechanism through Cross-Sectoral Collaboration**

This presentation was made by Dr. Wen-Chun Tsai, Professor, Department of Business Administration, Chung Yuan Christian University. This project examines how University Social Responsibility (USR), integrated with Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) principles, can serve as an effective mechanism for building sustainable capacity in rural communities. Drawing on a long-term case from Zhuolan Township, Miaoli, the initiative demonstrates how higher education institutions can act as catalysts for local revitalization through cross-sector collaboration.

Beginning with community engagement and curriculum-based learning, the project facilitated collaboration among universities, students, local farmers, social enterprises, government agencies, and private-sector partners. Key actions included the establishment of a student-led social enterprise, brand development for local agricultural products, fair pricing mechanisms to secure farmers' income, and the design of community-based cultural and tourism activities. Over time, the initiative expanded from a single community to a township-wide model, integrating external resources from central and local governments as well as socially oriented industries.

The project has generated tangible economic, social, and cultural impacts, including youth empowerment, job creation, preservation of local heritage, and strengthened community resilience. This experience highlights the potential of USR-driven, ESG-aligned approaches to foster inclusive growth, promote sustainable rural development, and provide a scalable reference for capacity-building initiatives across the APEC region.

## KEY REFLECTION



### 2.5 Best Practices Sharing - Advancing Regional Growth through Innovative and Inclusive Businesses

In this session, we invited three qualified speakers to share their best practices for the topic “Advancing Regional Growth through Innovative and Inclusive Businesses.

#### 1) FinTech

The first speaker was Hsin-Cheng Hsiao, the Founder and CEO of Oen Tech. Oen Tech is a leading supporter-relationship SaaS platform helping organizations build stronger digital connections with their members, donors, and fans. Its products, including the tap-to-pay mobile app, integrate payments, membership, ticketing, and AI-driven CRM to support the “support economy. His presentation highlighted the role of innovative and inclusive FinTech businesses in advancing sustainable regional growth across the APEC region, with a particular focus on empowering women, youth, and underserved groups. It underscored that inclusion is not only a social objective, but a strategic driver of economic growth, resilience, and innovation.

Drawing on the experience of Oen Tech, the case illustrated how inclusive business models, diverse talent pipelines, and accessible financial technologies can lower barriers to participation in the digital economy. Key practices included building gender-diverse leadership and engineering teams, designing mobile-first and low-cost financial products, and ensuring strong compliance, security, and trust through collaboration with regulators and financial institutions. The presentation further demonstrated how inclusive FinTech solutions can scale across borders by adapting to local regulatory and cultural contexts while maintaining core principles of accessibility and transparency. The outcomes showed measurable business growth alongside social impact, proving that inclusion-oriented innovation can achieve both commercial viability and public value.

This experience offered practical insights for APEC economies on fostering inclusive policies, strengthening women and youth participation, and leveraging FinTech as a tool for sustainable and inclusive regional growth.



## 2) Consumer Technology

The second speaker was Shefali Anurag, the Co-founder of coto. coto is a pioneering emotional wellness platform transforming how millions access holistic mental health and spiritual guidance. Founded by entertainment and tech veterans Tarun Katial, Aparna Acharekar, Shefali Anurag, and Raj Kamal Singhal, coto has powered over 2.5 million consultation minutes across Canada; India; UAE; UK; and the US since July 2024. Operating 24/7 across 20+ wellness modalities, from therapy and relationship coaching to astrology and energy healing, coto tackles the global loneliness epidemic with culturally sensitive, accessible, and deeply human solutions.

Shefali's presentation explored how empathy-driven innovation and emotional wellness technologies can contribute to inclusive and sustainable growth across the APEC region. It highlighted emotional wellbeing as an emerging frontier of digital innovation, particularly in the post-pandemic context, where mental and emotional health challenges increasingly affect workforce participation, productivity, and social resilience.

Using the case of an emotional wellness platform, the presentation demonstrated how technology can be combined with human-centered design to provide accessible, safe, and inclusive support services. The initiative placed a strong emphasis on women's economic empowerment by creating flexible and dignified employment opportunities for women professionals, supported through targeted training in digital skills, emotional intelligence, and empathy-based service delivery.

# The Next Frontier of Digital Innovation

coto is a **global emotional-wellness platform** that seamlessly provides 24/7 live consultations, combining AI technology with human empathy, creating a safe space for all.

coto = Come Together – because healing begins in community.



The presentation further underscored the role of emotional wellness technologies in bridging cultural perspectives and fostering trust, inclusion, and community engagement across diverse societies. It offered valuable insights for APEC economies on leveraging digital innovation, gender-inclusive employment models, and wellbeing-oriented approaches to support inclusive growth and human-centered economic development.

### 3) 5G mmWave

The last presentation to close the agenda of day 1 was made by Ethan Lin, the Co-founder & SVP of TMY Technology Inc. TMY Technology, Inc. (TMYTEK) is a global leader in mmWave innovation, offering advanced solutions for research, education, and industry applications. Specializing in phased array antenna modules and pioneering mmWave research tools, TMYTEK serves key markets such as 5G/6G, satellite communication, automotive, and defense. By driving breakthroughs in wireless communication and enabling next-generation technologies, TMYTEK empowers its partners to address complex challenges and seize new opportunities. With a commitment to high-quality manufacturing and customer-centric solutions, TMYTEK is shaping the future of connectivity and advancing global competitiveness.

This presentation examined how 5G millimeter-wave (mmWave) innovation can support inclusive regional growth across the APEC region by enabling next-generation digital applications, strengthening connectivity, and fostering cross-sector collaboration. It highlighted the growing demand for high-capacity, low-latency networks driven by emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, extended reality (XR), cloud services, and smart industry applications.

## The Opportunity of the Era

TMYTEK



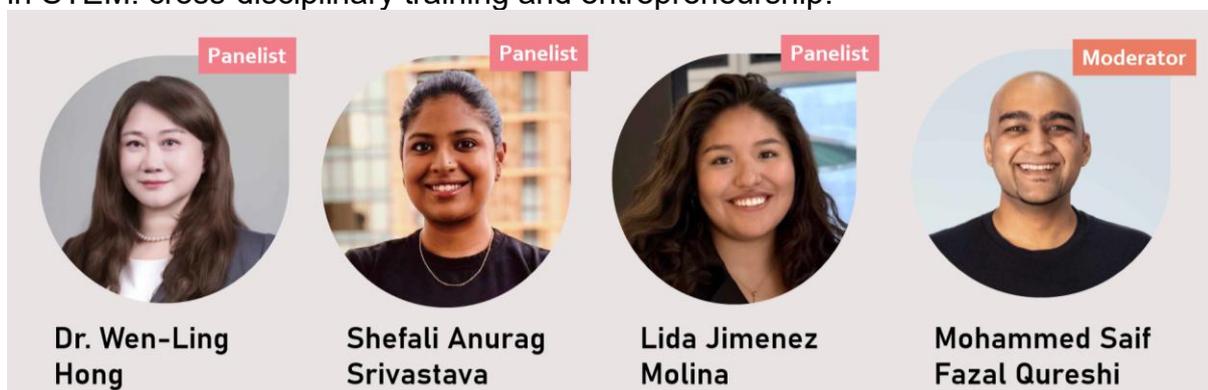
Drawing on the experience of a local based deep-tech startup specializing in 5G mmWave solutions, the presentation illustrated the characteristics and challenges of deep-tech entrepreneurship, including long development cycles, high entry barriers, and the need for sustained investment in research and development. It further demonstrated how advances in mmWave technology and beamforming can address rapidly increasing data traffic and support future-ready digital infrastructure.

The presentation also emphasized the importance of regional collaboration among industry, government, and academia in accelerating innovation, developing talent, and building inclusive digital ecosystems. Through partnerships, training programs, and ecosystem development, the initiative contributed to workforce development and knowledge sharing across APEC economies.

### 3. DAY 2 FORUM

#### 3.1 Panel Discussion – Female Entrepreneurs in the Digital Age – Integrative Training in STEM and Leadership Growth

On the second day of the forum, a panel discussion was arranged to start the day. We invited 4 panelists from different backgrounds to talk about empowering Women in STEM: cross-disciplinary training and entrepreneurship.



The moderator was Mohammed Saif Fazal Qureshi, the Director BD of VEX Robotics.

Panelists include:

1. Dr. Wen-Ling Hong, Associate Professor of Department of Naval Architecture and Ocean Engineering, National Kaohsiung University of Science and Technology
2. Lida Jimenez Molina, Youth & Democracy Coordinator, COPLAN LATAM PERU
3. Shefali Anurag Srivastava, Co-founder, coto

The panel discussion examined how innovation, entrepreneurship education, and cross-sector collaboration can advance inclusive economic growth across the APEC region, with a particular focus on women and youth empowerment. Panelists emphasized that inclusive growth requires not only technological advancement, but also supportive ecosystems that enable diverse talent to participate meaningfully in the digital economy.

Discussions highlighted the importance of entrepreneurship education in equipping women and youth with digital, problem-solving, and leadership skills needed to respond to rapid technological change. Panelists shared experiences from different APEC economies, noting that access to mentorship, networks, and role models plays a critical role in reducing barriers faced by women entrepreneurs and young innovators.

The panel also underscored the value of collaboration among government, industry, academia, and startups to create enabling environments for inclusive innovation. Policy support, flexible regulatory frameworks, and targeted capacity-building initiatives were identified as key enablers for scaling inclusive business models. Overall, the discussion reinforced that empowering women and youth through innovation-driven entrepreneurship is essential for strengthening digital competitiveness and achieving sustainable and inclusive growth across the APEC region.

### **Key Messages & Outcomes**

- Inclusive growth is a strategic priority: Panelists agreed that women and youth participation is essential for long-term economic resilience and digital competitiveness in APEC economies.
- Entrepreneurship education matters: Education systems that integrate innovation, digital skills, and real-world problem-solving help prepare women and youth for future economic opportunities.
- Ecosystems enable success: Access to mentorship, networks, and role models significantly reduces entry barriers for women entrepreneurs and young innovators.
- Cross-sector collaboration is critical: Strong cooperation among government, industry, academia, and startups supports the development and scaling of inclusive business models.
- Policy and regulatory support accelerate impact: Flexible policies, targeted incentives, and capacity-building programs were identified as key tools to foster inclusive innovation across the region.

### **3.2 Female Entrepreneurship Experience Sharing**

In this session, we invited two speakers to share female entrepreneurship experiences.

## **1) Tentenkid**

Tentenkid is an integrated online platform for Chinese learning, focusing on systematic online instruction and immersive cultural experience camps. It offers diverse learning pathways for Chinese learners aged 5-15 worldwide. Through partnerships with university faculty training programs, intelligent teacher-student matching systems, and engaging learning modules, Tentenkid provides high-quality Chinese learning accessible anytime, anywhere.

### **About the speaker**

Grace is the founder and CEO of Tentenkid, a platform that combines online and offline methods for Chinese learning, offering diverse educational experiences for children aged 5-15 worldwide. With 10 years of experience living and teaching in Japan, she is committed to connecting Chinese culture with international resources.

Grace shared how culturally grounded, technology-enabled learning journeys—integrating artificial intelligence, storytelling, and cultural immersion—can effectively engage children and families across borders. By reimagining language education as a holistic system rather than isolated products, the initiative demonstrates how scalable and sustainable models can be built to support diverse learners and educators. The presentation also emphasized empathy, sustainability, and system-building as core principles for long-term impact. Her experience offered practical insights for APEC economies on leveraging education technology, cultural innovation, and women’s leadership to promote inclusive and sustainable development.

## **2) Keedle Education**

Keedle Education offers tailored daily educational solutions for K-12 students. Their AI platform uses norm-referenced assessments to identify children’s unique traits and needs, enabling customized daily learning programs. Keedle Education has also pioneered the integration of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) into our education, achieving 91% positive feedback and significantly enhancing children’s emotional skills and development.

### **About the speaker**

Shin Peng, also known as Teacher Brownie, supports parents and teachers in understanding children’s emotional worlds. A serial entrepreneur with expertise in child development and special education, she aims to guide Asian families toward effective literacy education practices, fostering healthy growth for both adults and children—physically and mentally.

Shin Peng’s presentation focused on the development of data-driven, personalized learning and social-emotional learning (SEL) solutions designed to respond to challenges such as learning difficulties, emotional regulation, parental anxiety, and teacher workload. By integrating assessment tools, expert systems, and technology-enabled platforms, the initiative demonstrated how education innovation can support early intervention, personalized guidance, and measurable learning outcomes.

She further emphasized the importance of key future competencies, including communication, resilience in the face of failure, value creation, and entrepreneurial mindset in preparing children and youth for long-term development. The experience offered insights for APEC economies on leveraging serial entrepreneurship, education technology, and social-emotional learning to strengthen inclusive education systems, empower families, and support sustainable human capital development.

### **3.3 Regional Best Practices Sharing**

In this session, two representatives from APEC economies shared their best practices on the topic of women and youth empowerment.

#### **1) Republic of Korea / Gain Lee**

##### **About the speaker**

Gain Lee is a senior program specialist from the Institute of APEC Collaborative Education. She works closely with policymakers and emerging leaders around the world to drive positive transformation in the education sector. By closely monitoring and analyzing education policy trends, she shares key insights each year at the APEC HRDWG meetings.

In this presentation, Gain introduced the APEC Digital Education Policy Training (ADEPT) program as a regional platform for advancing inclusive growth through digital education policy capacity building. The presentation outlined APEC's overarching vision of connectivity, innovation, and prosperity, and emphasized the role of education policy in enhancing digital competitiveness while promoting equitable access for women, youth, and learners with diverse needs.

She also highlighted how the ADEPT initiative supports member economies in addressing digital transformation in education, with particular attention to inclusive and special education. Through the sharing of regional best practices, policy dialogue, and targeted training programs, the initiative aimed to strengthen institutional capacity, promote inclusive digital pedagogy, and bridge rural–urban and socioeconomic digital divides.

The presentation also showcased participation data demonstrating strong engagement by women across APEC economies, reinforcing the importance of gender-responsive approaches in education policy design and implementation. Her presentation provided practical insights into how coordinated regional action, policy training, and inclusive digital education strategies can contribute to sustainable and inclusive economic growth across the APEC region.

#### **2) New Zealand / Sean Prenter**

##### **About the speaker**

Sean Prenter is the award-winning CE of Access All Areas, which seeks to change the narrative around disabled people in society, with a background in Philosophy, Politics

and Economics MA and personal and professional experience in the disability sector. As founding member and Co president for the National Disabled Students' Association, Sean has presented his research at the Global Disability Summit and Australasian Campuses Towards Sustainability Conference, represented New Zealand as ambassador for Unite2030's New York innovation lab, at the 7th Pacific Regional Conference on Disability and as a Prime Minister's scholar to India.

In this presentation, Sean addressed the critical role of disability inclusion in advancing digitally competitive and inclusive economic growth across the APEC region. Through lived experiences and first-hand narratives, the presentation highlighted the systemic barriers faced by persons with disabilities, including stigma, lack of workplace support, mental health strain, and exclusion from decision-making processes.

Sean emphasized that digital transformation and economic competitiveness cannot be fully realized without intentional inclusion of persons with disabilities. The presentation underscored the importance of creating safe spaces for dialogue, normalizing conversations around disability, and recognizing that accessibility, accommodation, and wellbeing are essential components of sustainable workforce participation.

Sean's presentation offered valuable insights for APEC economies on embedding disability inclusion into digital growth strategies, workplace cultures, and policy frameworks to ensure that no one is left behind in the pursuit of inclusive and resilient economic development.

### **3.4 Workshop: Gender-Inclusive Entrepreneurship and Policy Strategies**

This workshop, facilitated by Maria Cristina L. Ibañez from Miriam College, the Philippines, focused on advancing gender-inclusive entrepreneurship through policy analysis, ecosystem design, and cross-sector collaboration within the APEC region. Through interactive group discussions and case-based learning, participants engaged in two structured sessions.

#### **Presentation**

The first session mapped local challenges affecting women and young entrepreneurs, existing policy responses, and gaps requiring further intervention. The second session applied APEC-relevant case scenarios, covering access to capital, digital inclusion, women in technology, green entrepreneurship, youth innovation hubs, cultural norms, and cross-border collaboration to design inclusive policy and ecosystem solutions tailored to diverse economic contexts.

The workshop emphasized the application of gender-analysis frameworks, alignment with APEC policy priorities, and the importance of coordinated action among government, industry, academia, and civil society. Overall, the workshop provided practical tools and shared insights to support the development of inclusive, human-centered innovation ecosystems, reinforcing women and youth entrepreneurship as key drivers of sustainable and inclusive economic growth across the APEC region.

### **Breakout group discussion**

The breakout group discussions focused on identifying shared challenges and practical solutions related to gender-inclusive and youth-focused entrepreneurship across APEC economies. Participants highlighted common barriers faced by women and young entrepreneurs, including limited access to finance, digital and skills gaps, underrepresentation in innovation ecosystems, cultural and social constraints, and insufficient coordination among policy actors.

Across groups, participants emphasized that existing policies often operate in silos and require stronger alignment across government agencies, education institutions, industry, and financial sectors. Many groups underscored the importance of targeted capacity-building programs, mentorship networks, and inclusive financing mechanisms, such as gender-responsive funding, youth-oriented digital training, and support for rural and underserved communities, to enable sustainable participation in the digital economy.

The discussions also highlighted the need for context-sensitive policy design that respects local cultural norms while promoting women's leadership and youth innovation. Participants identified cross-border collaboration, data-driven policy evaluation, and the sharing of best practices within APEC as key enablers for scaling inclusive entrepreneurship ecosystems. Overall, the breakout sessions reinforced that coordinated, gender-responsive, and youth-inclusive approaches are essential to advancing inclusive and resilient economic growth across the APEC region.

## **4. DAY 3 EDUCATIONAL FIELD VISIT**

### **4.1 Visit to Impact Hub Taipei**

Impact Hub Taipei once served as the residence for teachers and families of Taipei First Girls' High School, nurturing countless students. Thanks to the efforts of the Taipei City Government's (TCG) Social Affairs Bureau, this space has been transformed into the economy's first nonprofit organization cluster. Impact Hub Taipei builds on the successful experience of past space operations and organizational capacity building, uniting diverse social innovation partners to co-create actions with community residents, setting a prime example of public-private partnership (PPP). We provide space for non-profit organizations and social innovation teams, fostering creative energy and value enhancement, catalysing interactions among partners, and giving this building a unique spirit.

The commercial space on the first floor, in collaboration with the Carrefour Foundation, houses the world's first Carrefour Impact Store and the Coffee Museum operated by I-MEI Foods Co., Ltd., drawing community residents together. The building's air conditioning system, implemented through a rental model in partnership with Daikin, is the first in Chinese Taipei to offer air conditioning as a rental service instead of a purchase, embodying the principles of a circular economy.

Today, 50 years later, this building has become a vessel of continuity, carrying forward the legacy of nurturing the community and sustaining Chinese Taipei's influence.

### **4.2 Wrap-up Session & Group Discussion**

The final reflection session invited participants to share key lessons and insights gained over the three-day forum, drawing on diverse professional perspectives. Participants from multiple APEC economies highlighted persistent challenges, including unequal access to education and technology, gaps in early childhood and STEM education, gender inequality, and disparities between public and private sector priorities.

Across discussions, participants emphasized the importance of inclusive and measurable policies that integrate technology, gender equality, and human capital development. Many underscored early childhood education as a foundational investment for long-term development, noting that strengthening learning systems from an early age contributes to sustainable and inclusive economic growth. Cross-economy collaboration, exchange programs, and partnerships among government, industry, and education systems were repeatedly identified as critical enablers. Participants also reflected on the value of cross-cultural exchange in broadening perspectives and fostering mutual understanding. Digital inclusion, particularly for women, youth, and persons with disabilities, was recognized as a key pathway to empowerment and social participation.

## CONCLUSION

The 2025 APEC Forum on Women and Youth Empowerment was a collaborative event bringing together representatives from various APEC economies, including policymakers, entrepreneurs, educators, and students. The forum aimed to facilitate discussions, exchange best practices, and promote initiatives that empower women and youth in entrepreneurship, leadership, and economic development.

### Outcomes

When proposing this project, below were our expected outcomes. We shared our observation under each outcome based on the post-event survey results.

- 1) Through the post-event survey, participants report increased knowledge, equipping women, young entrepreneurs, and people with disabilities with essential skills including: (1) Market Research and Demand Analysis, (2) Financial Management and Cost Control, (3) Agile Business Model and Minimum Viable Product (MVP), (4) Entrepreneurial Resources and Grant Applications, and (6) Digital Transformation and Automation and, and become better prepared for changing job market, more independent, and successful in their future businesses.

The post-event survey results indicated that the forum successfully achieved its objective of enhancing participants' knowledge and practical competencies relevant to entrepreneurship and future employment. Participants across multiple APEC economies reported gaining concrete skills and frameworks related to digital and inclusive entrepreneurship, innovative business models, and adaptive thinking in response to labor market transformation

Participants highlighted improved understanding of how entrepreneurial ecosystems function, including market awareness, resource mobilization, collaboration with policymakers, and the role of social enterprises. Several respondents emphasized that exposure to real-world case studies and ecosystem-based approaches strengthened their preparedness to initiate or refine business ideas and social innovation projects. For example, participants from Chile and Peru noted that learning from other economies' startup hubs and social enterprise models inspired them to adapt similar initiatives in their own local contexts, while respondents from Indonesia and the Philippines stressed that the forum enhanced their readiness to address structural barriers faced by women entrepreneurs, particularly in access to resources and institutional support.

Across economies, participants also reported that the forum strengthened their confidence, independence, and ability to respond to uncertainty, with several indicating that they felt better equipped to pursue entrepreneurial pathways, develop new projects, or integrate inclusive business thinking into their professional work.

- 2) Through the post-event survey, participants report gained women's insights on how to effectively utilize knowledge and resources to help them attain their entrepreneurial goals.

Survey responses demonstrated that the forum significantly deepened participants' insights, particularly women participants, on how to strategically apply knowledge, networks, and institutional resources to advance entrepreneurial goals

Participants from Japan; Malaysia, and the United States emphasized that discussions on inclusive leadership, curiosity-driven learning, and human-centered design helped clarify how women can navigate systemic constraints while leveraging education, technology, and collaboration as enablers. Several respondents noted that hearing women entrepreneurs' personal experiences across different economies made entrepreneurial pathways more tangible and actionable, especially for those at early career stages.

In addition, participants reported gaining a clearer understanding of how to translate ideas into practice—ranging from developing startups and social enterprises to initiating community-based programs and educational activities. Many respondents expressed strong intentions to apply these insights by mentoring youth, supporting female-led initiatives, or integrating entrepreneurial perspectives into education and training programs within their economies.

- 3) Through the post-event survey, participants report enhanced understanding of initiatives for female empowerment, innovative and inclusive strategies for entrepreneurship, and startup education across the region.

The survey results confirmed that the forum effectively strengthened participants' understanding of female empowerment initiatives, inclusive entrepreneurship strategies, and startup education models across the APEC region.

Participants from the Republic of Korea; Peru; the Philippines; and Viet Nam highlighted that comparative sharing among economies enabled them to better contextualize their own policy and ecosystem challenges. Many respondents noted that learning how different economies address gender gaps in STEM, digital inclusion, and entrepreneurship broadened their regional perspective and reinforced the importance of cross-economy collaboration.

Several participants also stressed that the forum clarified the interconnectedness between gender equality, innovation, and long-term economic growth. Exposure to diverse policy approaches and grassroots practices helped participants identify adaptable elements that could inform future programs, research, and institutional strategies in their own economies.

### **Reflection Session's outcome**

Beyond individual takeaways, the reflection session revealed several cross-cutting themes that deepen the forum's overall impact. First, participants recognized that gender equality and youth empowerment are not standalone objectives, but intersect with broader social, educational, technological, and economic challenges. Addressing these issues required integrated approaches that move beyond isolated programs toward systemic change.

Second, the discussions highlighted the growing role of technology as both an enabler and a responsibility. While digital tools can expand access, improve capacity, and support inclusion, participants stressed that technology must be paired with empathy, ethical considerations, and context-sensitive policy design to avoid reinforcing existing inequalities.

Third, the session reinforced the importance of sustained collaboration across APEC economies. Exposure to diverse experiences—from developing and advanced economies alike—helped participants identify transferable practices, inspire new partnerships, and strengthen a shared sense of regional purpose. Lifelong learning, social networks, and peer-to-peer exchange were seen as essential mechanisms for maintaining momentum beyond the forum.

Collectively, these reflections underscored that inclusive growth depends not only on innovation and policy reform, but also on shared values, mutual learning, and long-term commitment. The final session therefore served as both a synthesis of learning and a call to action, encouraging participants to translate insights into concrete initiatives that advance inclusive, resilient, and people-centered growth across the APEC region.

### **Policy-Oriented Insights and Economy-Specific References**

Importantly, the post-event survey reveals strong policy relevance and concrete policy-oriented reflections among participants.

Respondents from Chile; Malaysia; the Philippines, Viet Nam explicitly stated their intention to incorporate insights from the forum into policy discussions, reports, or program design within government bodies, ministries of education, and women-focused institutions.

For example, a participant from the Philippines indicated that lessons from the forum would directly inform policy briefs and consultations related to gender-inclusive digital transformation and entrepreneurship. Participants from Chile and Malaysia highlighted plans to integrate forum insights into education curricula, exchange programs, and discussions on inclusive innovation. These responses demonstrated that the forum not only enhanced individual capacity but also generated policy-relevant knowledge that can contribute to evidence-based policymaking and inclusive development across APEC economies.

## Event Evaluation

### 1) Participants' Key Objectives and Goals

Based on the post-event survey, participants reported that their primary objectives for attending the forum were largely achieved. Across economies, participants joined the forum with goals that included gaining new knowledge on women and youth empowerment, learning about best practices from other APEC economies, expanding professional networks, and identifying practical approaches that could be adapted within their own economic and policy contexts.

Survey responses indicated that participants valued the opportunity to engage with diverse stakeholders, ranging from policymakers and academics to entrepreneurs and youth representatives, which enabled them to better understand regional challenges related to gender equality, digital inclusion, and entrepreneurship. Many participants emphasized that the forum broadened their global and regional perspectives, allowing them to situate their own economy's challenges within a wider Asia-Pacific context. Overall, participants expressed strong satisfaction that the forum met their learning, networking, and knowledge-exchange objectives, with several noting that they intended to transfer these insights back to their economies through education, policy dialogue, research, or entrepreneurial initiatives.

### 2) Event Structure and Content

Participants provided highly positive feedback on the overall structure and content of the forum, noting that the agenda was well organized, coherent, and easy to follow. Survey respondents consistently highlighted the clarity of thematic design across sessions, the logical flow of presentations, and the balance between keynote speeches, panel discussions, field visits, and networking opportunities.

The majority of participants agreed that speakers were well prepared and knowledgeable, and that the time allocated for presentations and discussions was generally appropriate. Many respondents appreciated the inclusion of real-world case studies, ecosystem visits, and practitioner perspectives, which helped translate abstract concepts such as inclusive innovation and digital transformation into tangible examples. While a small number of participants suggested allowing more time for interactive discussion or Q&A, these comments were framed as opportunities for further enhancement rather than fundamental shortcomings.

### 3) Gender Impact & Inclusive Participation

The survey findings showed that participants perceived the forum as having a strong and positive gender impact, while also advancing broader principles of inclusivity across age, sector, and ability.

Participants frequently highlighted the value of discussions that addressed women's empowerment in entrepreneurship, STEM, education, and digital transformation, as well as the explicit inclusion of youth and persons with disabilities in these conversations.

Many respondents noted that hearing diverse voices from different economies and social contexts deepened their understanding of gender-related challenges and reinforced the importance of intersectional and inclusive approaches. Participants emphasized that the forum successfully created a safe and supportive environment for sharing experiences, fostering empathy, and challenging traditional assumptions about gender roles in innovation and economic participation. At the same time, several participants suggested that future forums could further strengthen inclusivity by encouraging even broader participation across genders and backgrounds, underscoring their recognition of empowerment as a shared, collective responsibility.

## **Overall Conclusion**

The 2025 APEC Forum on Women and Youth Empowerment successfully achieved its objectives by strengthening capacity building, regional exchange, and policy-relevant dialogue on inclusive entrepreneurship, education, and innovation across the Asia-Pacific region. Evidence from the post-event survey demonstrated that the forum effectively responded to participants' expectations while generating meaningful and actionable outcomes.

Participants across economies reported increased knowledge, enhanced skills, and improved confidence in navigating entrepreneurship, digital transformation, and inclusive economic participation. The forum's emphasis on practical case sharing, ecosystem engagement, and cross-sector dialogue enabled participants to translate abstract concepts such as gender equality, inclusive innovation, and youth empowerment into concrete ideas applicable within their own economic and institutional contexts. Many participants expressed strong intentions to apply the knowledge gained through policy formulation, curriculum development, research initiatives, community programs, and entrepreneurial activities, demonstrating the forum's lasting impact beyond the event itself.

In addition, the forum fostered deeper regional understanding of gender-responsive and inclusive approaches to entrepreneurship and startup education. By bringing together representatives from diverse economies, sectors, and social backgrounds, the event strengthened mutual learning and highlighted both shared challenges and differentiated policy needs across the region. Participants consistently recognized the value of cross-economy collaboration in addressing structural barriers faced by women, youth, and persons with disabilities, reinforcing the importance of collective and coordinated efforts within the APEC framework.

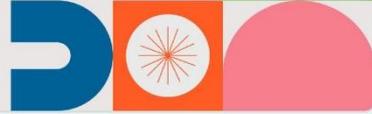
Importantly, the post-event survey indicates that the forum generated strong policy relevance. Participants from several economies explicitly referenced plans to integrate forum insights into policy discussions, institutional strategies, and program design, particularly in the areas of education reform, digital inclusion, and support for women-led entrepreneurship. These responses underscore the forum's contribution to evidence-based policymaking and inclusive growth, aligning closely with APEC's priorities on human capital development, innovation, and social inclusion.

Overall, the forum served not only as a platform for knowledge exchange and networking, but also as a catalyst for sustained action at both the individual and policy levels. The outcomes reflected in the post-event survey confirm that the project has laid a solid foundation for future cooperation, capacity building, and inclusive economic development across APEC economies.

# APPENDIX – POST-EVENT SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

APEC Forum on Women and Youth Empowerment:  
Enhancing Digital Competitiveness and Inclusive Economic Growth  
through Innovative Enterprise Education

November 05-07 ——— 2025



## 2025 APEC Forum on Women and Youth Empowerment: Post-Event Survey

Thank you all for joining the forum!

We greatly value your comments regarding our forum.  
Please help us improve our future events by completing this survey.

\* Indicates required question

### Basic Information

Full Name \*

Your answer

Email Address \*

Your answer

Please let us know your gender. \*

- Male
- Female
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

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Please let us know your age. \*

- 18-30 years old
- Over 30 years old
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Which economy are you representing? \*

Choose 

Would you like to receive the presentation slides of the speakers in the forum? \*

We will consult all the speakers for their permission before we send the slides to our participants.

- Yes
- No

### Event Review

1. Please rate how you feel about this event. \*

Please rate us from 1 to 5.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not satisfied	<input type="radio"/>	Very satisfied				

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2. How did you know about this event? \*

- APEC's nomination
- TECO's nomination
- Email
- Poster
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

3. What was your primary goal in attending this forum? \*

Your answer \_\_\_\_\_

4. Which session(s) is/are the most inspiring session(s) in your opinion? \*

- Keynote Speech I by Sarah Tong
- Keynote Speech II by Takara Small
- Policies Sharing – STEM Fields and Women Researcher Cultivation Subsidy Program
- Policy Sharing – University Social Responsibility (USR) Program
- Best Practices Sharing I – FinTech / Hsin-Cheng Hsiao
- Best Practices Sharing II – AI Wellness / Shefali Anurag
- Best Practices Sharing III – 5G mmWave / Ethan Lin
- Panel Discussion – Female Entrepreneurs in the Digital Age: Integrative Training in STEM and Leadership Growth
- Female Entrepreneurship Experiences Sharing by Grace Chiang and Brownie Peng
- Regional Best Practices and Policy Sharing by Gain / Zahyra / Sean
- Workshop: Gender-Inclusive Entrepreneurship and Policy Strategies
- Site Visit to Impact Hub Taipei

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5. Was the content well organized and easy to follow? \*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Disagree	<input type="radio"/>	Agree				

Comments to the above question. \*

Your answer

---

6. Were the speakers well prepared and knowledgeable about the topic(s)? \*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Disagree	<input type="radio"/>	Agree				

Comments to the above question. \*

Your answer

---

7. Was the time allotted for the speeches appropriate? \*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Disagree	<input type="radio"/>	Agree				

Comments to the above question. \*

Your answer

---

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8. Did the event structure give you ample time to interact with other attendees? \*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Disagree	<input type="radio"/>	Agree				

Comments to the above question. \*

Your answer

---

9. How relevant was this project to you and your economy? \*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Disagree	<input type="radio"/>	Agree				

Comments to the above question. \*

Your answer

---

10. What new skills or knowledge did you gain from this event? \*

Your answer

---

11. How will you utilize the skills and knowledge gained from this event after you return to your home economy? Please provide examples (e.g. develop new business ideas, develop new policy initiatives, organize training, develop work plans/strategies, draft regulations, develop new procedures/tools etc.). Please Explain: \*

Your answer

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12. What did you like or dislike about the event? Why? \*

Your answer

13. How can this event be improved? \*

Your answer

14. Please indicate your overall satisfaction with the following aspects of the event. \*

	Very Dissatisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Neutral	Somewhat Satisfied	Very Satisfied
Forum content / subjects	<input type="radio"/>				
Speakers	<input type="radio"/>				
Time allocated for each speech	<input type="radio"/>				
Staff	<input type="radio"/>				
Overall event experience	<input type="radio"/>				

15. Is there anything else you would like to share with us about this event? \*

Your answer

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