

Annual Report

2018-2019



From the Executive Director

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Since early 2020, we have witnessed the world change dramatically and learned new terms such as social distancing and flattening the curve. Prior to COVID-19, there was a time when we could gather in mass and interact more directly with each other. I would like to walk you through such a time from our recent 2018-2019 annual report where you will see many examples of how VIA provided life-changing experiences.



In addition to the amazing work that our Global Community Fellows (featured on p.5 of this report) have engaged in with our partner institutions in Asia, I would also like to highlight the evolution of our Exploring Social Innovation (ESI) program (documented on p.3) which celebrates its 10th anniversary. While this program is short in its duration, the impact it has on participants goes well beyond the program affecting their career and life choices as Zhiye (Tea) Zhou shares on p. 4.

While these people-to-people experiences that we have cherished and enjoyed are threatened now because of circumstances out of our control, there is no change to our commitment to serving people and communities by listening to their voices and constantly innovating our programs to meet their needs. Our resilience is to draw on technology, entrepreneurial forces, and available resources to strengthen our global community. This will allow our participants to have greater access to leadership, networking, mentorship, and professional development opportunities across the U.S. and Asia.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my deep gratitude to all our donors, funders, alumni, and friends who support VIA and enable us to continue our work. Your generosity ensures that VIA is viable for another generation after COVID-19 and that we can continue our work to support, connect, and inspire emerging leaders to take action in their communities and build a better world together.



Kazutoh Ishida, PhD
Executive Director

Celebrating 10 Years of Exploring Social Innovation



The Exploring Social Innovation (ESI) program, currently held twice a year in Silicon Valley and once a year in China, offers young changemakers from across Asia an opportunity to learn innovative ways to make the world a better place by engaging in hands-on experiences as well as visiting and engaging with successful social innovators in the San Francisco area.



ESI History

The ESI program, launched in 2010, was inspired by a desire to dive deeper into social issues that other VIA programs introduced. The American Service Learning (ASL) summer program, later renamed Asia US Service Learning program (AUSL), was launched in 2005. Two years later, the spring Serving American Community (SAC) program was developed with a focus on poverty issues in the Bay Area. In 2010, due to the popularity of innovation and design-thinking and input from alumni, VIA decided to shift SAC to a program designed around social innovation, giving birth to the current Exploring Social Innovation program. Initially offered at Stanford as a 3-week program, VIA decided to redesign ESI as a 2-week program held in San Francisco in 2014. Being in the city meant having access to more diverse organizations and perspectives. It also created more opportunities for hands-on experience with innovation tools like design-thinking and applying skills learned in workshops directly in San Francisco through projects and volunteer activities. Building on the success of ESI's model, VIA converted its 3-week summer Exchange for Social Entrepreneurs and Leaders (XSEL) program into two ESI sessions in 2015, bringing the annual number of sessions to three, held in February, July, and August. In 2018, VIA consolidated the two summer

programs into one August session and piloted ESI in China in 2019.

In the past decade, over 350 participants representing 18 nationalities (primarily China, Japan, Thailand, and Myanmar) have joined the ESI program. Through organization visits, experiential workshops with mentors, peer reflections, and community building, participants had the opportunity to see innovation in action, discover new perspectives and explore new insights on ways to connect their own desire for contributing to their communities with the possibility of becoming a social innovator.

Sharing their favorite ESI memories, alumni highlight visiting social enterprises, storytelling activities, design-thinking, V-talks, social issues simulation workshops, and interviewing the homeless community in San Francisco as their most rewarding experiences.

ESI 10 Year Anniversary Survey Highlights

In March 2020, VIA sent out a survey to all ESI alumni to collect reflections and updates from the community. Although still collecting responses at the time of print, highlights from initial responses include:

85% shared that ESI helped strengthen their creative problem-solving skills as professionals

80% indicated their ESI experience helped shape their personal values

80% indicated the program made them more aware of diversity

74% shared that they use design-thinking in their own life

Of the 30 respondents who completed the survey so far, 28% work in education, 11% in communications, 11% in social services, and 11% in business administration. Many alumni credit ESI as a stepping stone for their future career goals, opening their minds to possibilities, and feeling prepared to create positive change by applying the tools ESI has taught them.

(continued on the next page)



Beyond Exchange: Supporting a Lifetime of Impact for 21st Century Leaders in the VIA Community

VIA's alumni community, which spans 56 years of experiences, many nationalities, and several continents, presents both an incredible opportunity and a challenge. In order to better understand how we can create and support sustainable, meaningful connections and engagement across this diverse network, we initiated an in-depth needfinding project in 2018.

As part of this foundational year in our alumni community and ecosystem development initiative, we tested specific aspects of community-building. Working with several highly active alumni members, we organized four community summits in Asia over the course of one year. During the summits, we shared our vision of VIA's ecosystem, with the intent to build investment among the attendees in actively participating and co-creating the community with us. Each summit iterated on the last, so we rapidly improved the collaborative planning and implementation process with alumni coordinators.

Summit Quick Facts

- Locations: Chiang Mai (June 2018), Tokyo (September 2018), Yangon (March 2019), Taipei (June 2019)
- Total attendance: 80
- Programs represented: 7
Participation years: 2011-2019
- Attendees from the USA, Mainland China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, Laos, Macau, Myanmar, the Philippines, Taiwan, Tajikistan, Timor Leste, Zambia

Highlights

- Chiang Mai Summit attendees visited a social enterprise supporting environmental sustainability, youth education, and job skills training for migrants in Chiang Mai.
- The Tokyo Summit included a professional panel discussion with VIA alumni and education-focused social entrepreneurs.
- Yangon Summit attendees visited several education-related social enterprises, including an independent textbook book publisher and VIA's Global Community Fellowship partner, KoeKoe Tech, which creates apps to make health and legal information more accessible.
- The Taipei Summit is the first summit open to alumni "and friends", so several attendees are local guests who are new to the VIA community and interested in learning more about VIA's work.
- At the Taipei Summit, we welcomed two attendees from Timor Leste and Laos who are alumni of the Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative (YSEALI) Media Literacy workshop that VIA facilitated in Yangon in March 2019.



Photo Credit: Fitri Mulyaningsih

Key takeaways from alumni summits:

Intentional convening is critical for community members to connect, share ideas, and forge collaboration across backgrounds and cultures.

Most attendees were surprised when they started to see the full scope of the VIA community. Many were unaware of the range of programs, themes, locations, and nationalities represented in our activities. Despite the wide variety of VIA experiences represented by attendees, there is a strong sense of shared identity and community. Alumni are enthusiastic and motivated to connect with each other and collaborate. While some have unique community-based projects they would like to pursue, many are interested in recreating their VIA experience in their home country - to share the lessons they learned, build community, and support fellow emerging leaders.

Looking ahead, we plan to build on lessons learned from the summits and develop activities and resources to support, connect, and inspire those in the VIA community pursuing a lifetime of meaningful impact as leaders and changemakers.

(cont) ESI 10th Anniversary

Alumni Spotlight



Zhiye (Tea) Zhou, ESI February 2014 alumna from China, shared her initial interest in ESI, as well as her growth and her journey since the program in a recent interview.

Zhiye was very much interested in volunteering, philanthropy and public good issues, so when she discovered the program, she immediately thought it would be a good opportunity to expand her traditional thinking of "doing good" and knowledge about "social innovation" approaches and practices. The on-site visits to many social innovation organizations were the most rewarding aspect of the program, enabling her "to vividly see the stories behind their work, their missions, passions, and also challenges", inspiring her and giving her the courage to delve deeper into the field.

Zhiye specifically mentioned her visit to Kiva, an online microfinance social enterprise, as her favorite memory: "It was my first time to realize that philanthropy, business and technology could work together for greater good, and create a more enabling environment for vulnerable people to build up their own wellness. It was very inspiring for me."

Zhiye shared that the most precious gift that ESI gave her is the ongoing passion to be a real participant in the social sector in which she works. Zhiye is currently a program manager at the Narada Foundation, a grant-making foundation in China that supports NGOs to enhance their organizations and work.

Yi Zhang, VIA's Social Innovation Programs Director, discussed the patterns she noticed in the recruitment process, and the passion and desire ESI participants have to meet like-minded people: "the participants care about social issues in their local and global communities and want to do something about them, and not only during university but throughout their life." She stressed VIA's interests in always finding the right people, guiding them through the steps to find meaning, be inspired, and take skills and knowledge back home and create change.

Looking Forward

Stemming from a 2017 collaboration with XinHe Foundation, the idea to launch the ESI program in China came about as a way to bring social innovation mindsets and tools back to NGO leaders' work on rural and early childhood education. Thanks to XinHe and Enlight Foundation's full financial support, the ESI China program was launched in April 2019 in Chengdu. ESI China was the first move to extend VIA's mission and work from being primarily oriented towards college students and experiential exchange to professionals who brought a higher level of training and experience but also sought new ways of thinking and support through a community.

ESI China's success and the continuous interest and support from alumni will be taking ESI to the Inner Mongolian grasslands in 2020. In the next decade, VIA hopes to keep expanding beyond cultural exchange and, through experiential program design, continue to train leaders who are driving change and working towards creating meaningful social impact with their communities.

Global Community Fellowship Program

Alta Alonzi

BEAM
(Bridging Educational Access to
Migrants)
– Chiang Mai, Thailand



Inaam Avant

Universitas Gadjah Mada (UGM)
– Yogyakarta, Indonesia

Tamara Biddle

Jember University
–Jember, Indonesia



Chennal Breen

Universitas Gadjah Mada (UGM)
– Yogyakarta, Indonesia

“There are few spaces in the world in which you can be so deeply and richly immersed in a kind of learning that forever impacts you as a person and how you interact with others. That is the kind of experience the GCF program gave to me.”

Lua Xuan Doan

Pacific Links Foundation
–Vietnam



Eleanor Jones

Jember University
– Jember, Indonesia

Erik Hammarlund

Sanata Dharma University
– Yogyakarta, Indonesia

“Thanks to the fellowship’s intimate size, its thorough orientation, and its frequent check-ins, I felt like my fellowship in Indonesia was well-supplemented by a support group across Southeast Asia.”



Angeline Lee

360ed
–Yangon, Myanmar

Emily Stephenson

Connect
– Yangon, Myanmar

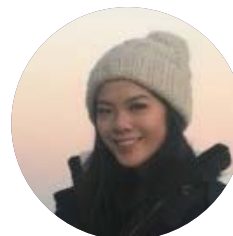


Tanmai Vemulapalli

Pre-Collegiate Program (PCP)
–Yangon, Myanmar

Anvy Tran

Pacific Links Foundation
–Vietnam



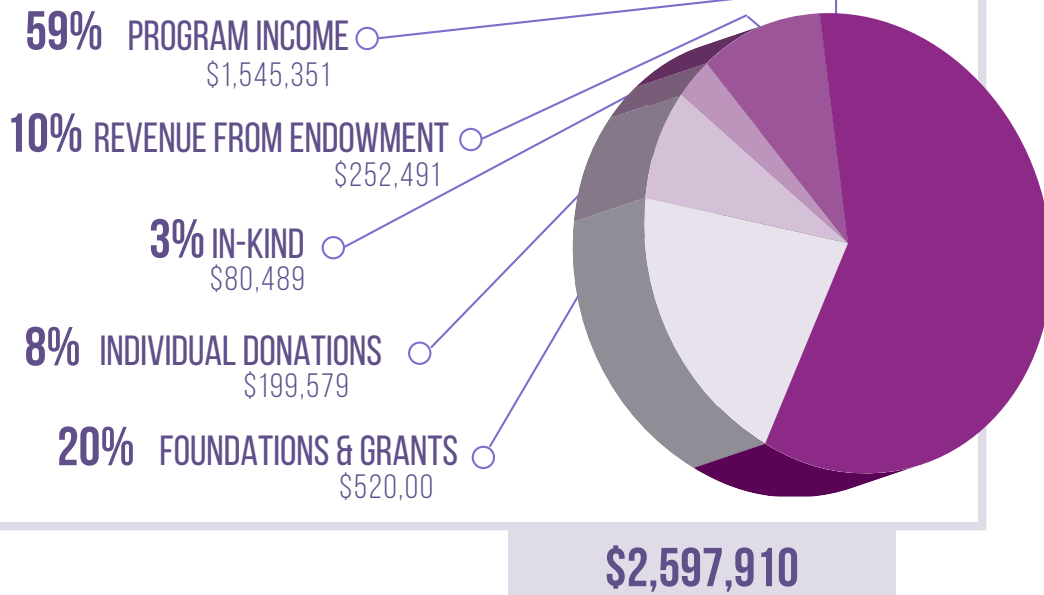
Carissa Yen

Alma Ata University
–Yogyakarta, Indonesia

2018–2019 By The Numbers

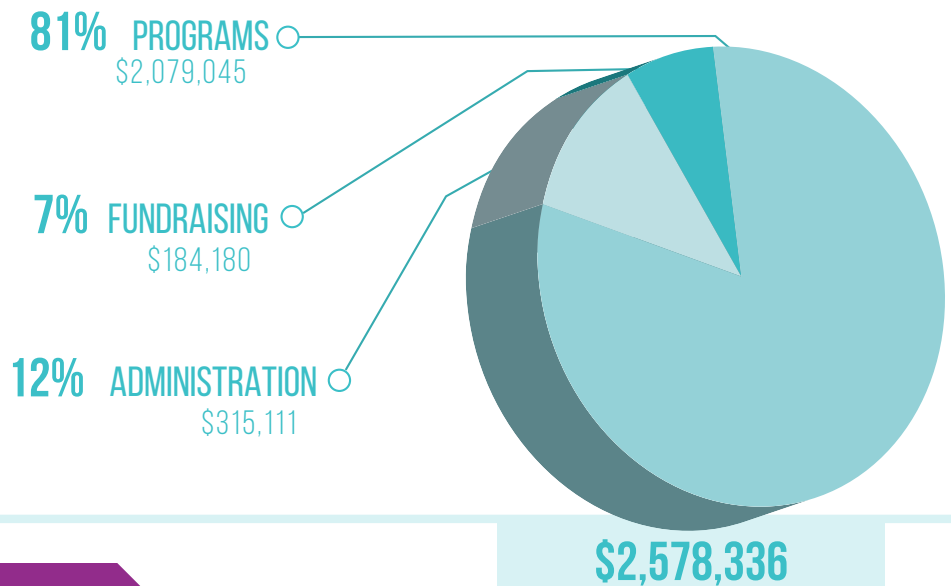
FY 2019

FUNDING SOURCES



FY 2019

EXPENSES



Leaving a Legacy for VIA

We would like to thank and honor all of those who have made a legacy gift promise to VIA. Their commitment will ensure the continuation of rich, immersive cross-cultural learning experiences that transform lives and strengthen our global community.

John Affeldt & Karen Hoy

Jeanne Blamey & Robert Fram

Dwight Clark

Tim & Mia Clark

Joan Karlin & Paul Resnick

Michael Moradzadeh

Corbin Smith

Joel Stratte-McClure

Robert Textor

If you have included VIA in your will or trust, please inform us so that we can thank you for your special commitment. For additional information about our planned giving program, please contact Brian Byrdsong at: brian@viaprograms.org or (415) 904-8033.

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July 1, 2018 - June 30, 2019

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