



Annual Reception

13 November 2021, Hotel Sky Sandton

Post-event Report

Dated: 15 November 2021

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Kader Asmal Alumni (KAA) network was formed in 2017 to foster linkages and collaborations between the Kader Asmal Fellowship Programme (KAFP) recipients and to provide a platform. As part of Ireland's programme of development cooperation, the KAA directly contributes to the promotion of the KAFP through supporting activities coordinated by the Irish Embassy in promotion of Irish Higher Education institutions (HEIs). KAA use its local knowledge to support its alumni, while also ensuring their work is giving back to Ireland as ambassadors and advisors for current fellows. These are furthered through being resource persons to prospective fellows and the promotion of Ireland and Irish universities through our social media platforms.

The KAA also undertakes to broaden the alumni network through organising events/networking that bring together the wider alumni of the Irish HEIs in South Africa. The Kader Asmal Alumni, in collaboration with the Embassy of Ireland, Pretoria, host an Annual Reception to celebrate fellows returning from Ireland. This marked the second Annual Reception and the first with an in-person format. This report highlights the main outcomes of this event and makes recommendations for future events. The Annual Reception is mainly aimed at welcoming back returning fellows from Ireland as they now officially become part of the alumni community. These returning fellows are the guest of honour at the Annual Reception and will be flown in from around South Africa.

This report contains background information which explains the conception of the Annual Reception and its main objectives. It also summarizes the panel discussions and the next steps that were identified by participants both in-person and online. This report can be used to help plan the next workshops based on the needs of the participants which were identified in this workshop.

We, the Kader Asmal Alumni, would like to express our gratitude to the Embassy of Ireland for partnering with us in hosting the Annual Reception. Further, we would like to express our gratefulness to all the panelists, our stakeholders and participants for their valuable knowledge, time and participation to ensure the success of the Annual Reception.

INTRODUCTION

The Kader Asmal Alumni (KAA) Annual Reception is an inaugural event meant to welcome back alumni who have just returned from Ireland and engage with the existing alumni who are already part of the network. This report summarises the hybrid Annual Reception that took place on 13 November 2021. This report starts with the conception of the Annual Reception and makes recommendations for the successful implementation of future events.

The concept behind the Annual Reception

2021 marked the second Annual Reception event to welcome returning Kader Asmal Fellows into the alumni network. While we are still living in a pandemic, we have collectively progressed to find new ways to interact with each other. On September 30th President of South Africa Cyril Ramaphosa announced further easing of Lockdown restrictions taking the country down to Level 1 which made it possible for us to host our first in-person Annual Reception. There was also an acknowledgment that a lot of our alumni are still based in Ireland so we decided to take a hybrid approach to our Annual Reception.

There was a small delegation of in-person participants combined with members and stakeholders in South Africa and other parts of the world connecting virtually. As in 2020 this was made possible through a partnership and support from the team at the Irish Embassy – who were engaged at the point of the event planning and design and directly assisted the KAA with resources.

Objectives

The annual reception serves to:

- Welcome returning fellows into the alumni community;
- Showcase our alumni network through different panels (listed below) each that will be led by an alumni member;
- Connect our alumni more directly to individuals in our stakeholder networks;
- Provide an opportunity for alumni growth and learning through peer exchange and stakeholder engagement; and
- Provide a space for alumni to connect with one another and foster a feeling of community.

This year the online reception was followed by an in-person networking event with the Gauteng based alumni and returning fellows as the main guests of honour. This networking session was hosted in collaboration with the Irish Embassy in Pretoria at the Hotel Sky in Sandton.

Budget

The table below illustrates what was initially budgeted for the Annual reception. The budget of what was actually spent will be incorporated into Annexure A. (https://www.dropbox.com/s/qdmxx6pjo7ep5r/211115KAA_AR_ConsolidatedInvoices.xlsx?dl=0)

Budget for Kader Asmal Annual Reception				
Item	Unit Cost	Units	Total Cost	Funder
Flights for KAA Exco & Working Group	2800	4	11200	ESP
Transfers & Car Hire	400	10	4000	ESP
Strategic Planning Session (5 Exco, 1 Coordinator, 4 Working Group)	450	10	4500	ESP
Accommodation	1000	6	6000	ESP
Dinner	300	6	1800	ESP
Annual Reception Panelist Payment	1500	4	6000	ESP
Flights for Returning Alumni	2800	2	5600	IE
Annual Reception IT Technician	1500	2	3000	IE
Annual Reception Conferencing (2 hours venue rental + soft drinks - 35 delegates)	545	30	16350	IE
Annual Reception Photographer	1500	5	7500	IE
Data Bundles	150	10	1500	ESP
KAA ESP Contribution			35000	
Irish Embassy Contribution			32450	
Total Event Cost			R 67,450.00	

Programme

14h00 – 14h05	Arrival and Welcome
14h05 – 14h10	IE Opening Remarks
14h10– 14h20	Ambassador Keynote address
14h20 – 14h25	Meeting Overview
Breakaway Sessions	
14h25 – 15h10	Stream 1 and Stream 2
Body Break	
Plenary Sessions	15h10 – 15h15
15h15 – 15h35	Stream 3
15h35 – 16h00	Stream 4
16h00 – 16h10	Group reflection and feedback
16h10 – 16h15	Way Forward and Thank you

Speakers

1. Stream 1: Dr. Gertrude Gwenzi

Dr Gertrude Gwenzi is a Zimbabwean-born social worker and social scientist with research interests in child welfare, alternative care, care leavers and the sociology of family. A former Hong PhD Fellow (2016-2019), a Kader Asmal Fellow (2014/2015), and a former Zimbabwean Presidential Scholarship recipient. Dr Gwenzi holds a PhD in Sociology and Social Policy from Lingnan University (Hong Kong), a First class Masters degree in Social Policy (University College Cork, Ireland) and a Bachelors in Social Work (University of Fort Hare, South Africa). She is currently a Lecturer of Social Work at the University of Zimbabwe and a Research Associate in the Department of Social Work at the University of Johannesburg, South Africa. Dr. Gwenzi is also the Co-Founder of Global South Research and Policy Group (GSRPG), a network that supports postgraduate education. In her role as Higher Education Consultant she

provides scholarship information for doctoral and masters' degrees abroad, postgraduate study tips and mentorship. She runs the postgraduate corner blog on Wordpress and manages the GSRPG social media sites.

2. [Stream 2: Thabo Sibiya](#)

3. [Stream 3: Sinehlanhla Bengu](#)

Sinehlanhla Senzi Bengu is a mover and agent of change. She is a recipient of numerous prestigious scholarships, nationally and globally including the Kader Asmal Fellowship in 2019/2020. She has used her exposure and passion for community work to co-found Kwasuka Sukela Foundation and manage Oakford Blinders Football Club. She holds a Bachelor of Business Science, Honours in Economics and a Masters in Peacebuilding and Development from the University of Limerick; all passed with a first class. She is a researcher, a facilitator and a former teacher. Through her coaching, teaching and mentorship she has changed the lives of Oakford village and the South African community at large. She is breaking cycles of poverty and redefining community service.

4. [Stream 3: Shamiso Chigorimbo](#)

Shamiso holds a Master of Arts (M.A.) focused in International Development from University College Dublin. She hails from a business support, programme coordination, research and procurement profession with 14 years of experience. Her soft skills include being a great team player and time management. She has a nuanced, informed and in-depth knowledge of geopolitics both regionally and more broadly in terms of the Sustainable Development Goals engagement. The vast roles and duties have given her the confidence to bring a fresh and dynamic innovative contribution to chosen organisations. Other positions she has held include an executive assistant, programme officer and procurement officer, all of which developed her time management and operations systems skills. She has experience in project fundraising in Southern Africa and Ireland specifically. She is also a gender and development expert with teaching experience at the University College Dublin, Ireland. Her skills include networking, advocacy, policy review, exco management, analytical skills, Microsoft Word, and field research.

5. [Stream 4: Dr. Mario Gallo](#)

Dr. Maria Gallo is an internationally recognised thought leader in alumni relationships and an award-winning research scholar with over twenty years of experience in higher education, advancement and leadership roles in Ireland and Canada.

Alongside her role as Founder and Principal of KITE, Maria is an adjunct Research Fellow with the Community Knowledge Initiative at the National University of Ireland, Galway (NUI Galway). She was recently appointed as a Visiting Research Fellow at the Centre of Social Innovation at the Trinity Business School, Trinity College Dublin, The University of Dublin. She obtained her doctorate in education from the University of Sheffield and her research on alumni relationships was awarded the HS Warwick Outstanding Research Publication Award from CASE (Council for the Advancement and Support of Education).

6. Stream 4: Justine van Rooyen

Justine van Rooyen graduated from the 2013/2014 MSc in Global Health at Trinity College Dublin with support from an Irish Aid Kader Asmal Fellowship award. Before the fellowship, she was the Media and Publications Officer for the AIDS Foundation South Africa. I especially worked on developing publications – writing and doing interviews with beneficiaries in remote areas to bring the programme alive with their real experiences.

Justine is an experienced researcher with a demonstrated history of working in the non-profit organization management industry. She is skilled in monitoring and evaluation, facilitation, gender mainstreaming, management, report writing, proposal writing, capacity building and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). She is passionate about Gender Equality and Women Empowerment and is currently a gender advisor at the World Food Programme. Justine is also an entrepreneur who runs her own hair salon.

Summary of Panel Discussions

1. Stream 1 :Panel related to pursuing Doctoral Studies: Getting the application right, and tips for staying the course

In this session, Getrude took her personal session and evaluated all the important questions to ask yourself before embarking on doctoral studies. Getrude said she had a growing disaffection with the working environment and a growing passion for research. She had always been told that her approach is too “academic” and not suited for the working world. She then decided to pursue her doctoral studies. Gertrude credits doing her

Masters in Ireland for helping her get into a doctoral programme in Hong Kong. She said they look favourably on students who have studied in Europe at some point in their studies.

Gertrude provided some helpful tips to prospective doctoral studies. She said that prospective students always need to remember their why so they can stay the course even when things get difficult. She advised that prospective students find mentors within their field so their journey is not lonely. Gertrude also highlighted the importance of speaking about your research on as many platforms as possible such as conferences, seminars, submission articles for publication and working with NGOs. Gertrude suggested that prospective doctoral students join writing workshops (in-person or virtual) to help keep them accountable during the writing process.

Gertrude gave some helpful tips about the application process. She reiterated the importance of starting as early as possible. Gertrude spoke about the importance of research and the power of networking during the application process. She highlighted the importance of reaching out to a supervisor early on in the application process who is aligned to your research topic. This is an important make or break in the research process. Gertrude offers assistance to prospective doctoral scholars through her blog called the '[Prograduate Corner](#)'.

2. [Panel related to Doing Business in SA: Tips for running your own consultancy – building your profile to succeed](#)

Supporting smallholder farmers. Where is the business located?

Both in Ireland and SA one has to make the effort. Is there some formal network organised for establishing businesses among SA and Irish citizens?

Hemp is developing as an industry. Can your company play to advance that with eastern cape farmers and Mpumalanga. Sustenance farmers in becoming incorporated...for Hemp as an industry in Ireland? NAMAC trustees and making sure the products reach the international stage...

Your journey in pricing your product the struggle has been in pricing your product and your time. What do you price?

When you started you spoke about farming in the family as entrepreneurship. What other skills and knowledge was something you didn't know was valuable and then become

valuable? To leverage those skills and the aha moment? How do you market yourself and how do you meet the needs of the farmers and do you package the success.

3. Panel related to activism: [Becoming an active citizen and change maker within your community](#)

In this session, the panelist defined 'Active citizenship means people getting involved in their communities and democracy at all levels from local to national and global'. The panelists highlighted how more than ever our survival is dependent on active citizenship and linked this back to the Sustainable Goals. These goals highlight the world's most pressing problems grouped into 17 categories with hopes that they would be achieved by 2030. There is also a global movement towards activism with many organisations being formed to tackle the world's pressing problems such as: the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, UNICEF, United Nations, Equal Education and Activate Change Drivers etc.

The journey of an activist starts with connecting with those who share your mission and purpose. The next step is educating people through information, experience and resources. Activists resist internal and external forces which may derail the kind of change they want to make. They are renewed by new ideas of how they could make a change in the world. The most important thing is that they celebrate both success and failures which provide an opportunity to learn.

Many people do not realise that activism can be a career path. Both panelists have full-time employment while running non-profit organisations in their spare time. They provided some helpful tools on how to register a non-profit and ways of raising money to run the organisation. They also highlighted organisations which provide careers aligned to being a changemaker. This session is particularly aligned with the mission of the Kader Asmal Alumni which is to help alumni give back to their communities like Kader Asmal did. Giving back is a major part of the Kader Asmal Fellowship and the cornerstone of the relationship that Ireland has with South Africa.

4. [Stream 4: Alumni development: Making the most of your networks and setting yourself up for career advancement](#)

Justine started off the session by reflecting on her journey and how she got to where she is today. Justine was one of the first recipients of the Kader Asmal Fellowship in 2013/2014. At the time, Justine worked at the AIDS Foundation which is funded by the Embassy of Ireland. She did a MSC in Global Health at Trinity College. When she returned to South Africa, she realised that she had outgrown her NGO. She leveraged her networks to attain

work at a sister NGO. She interviewed for the UN but got rejected and within a year, the UN called her back about the same position. This time she got her dream job. She works as the Regional Gender Advisor at the UN Food Programme.

Maria started off by commending Justine for being a trailblazer. She also acknowledged that being a changemaker in your career or the work you do requires building strong networks. Building a network is not something you do when you need it but a continuous process that happens all the time. It's not just about who you know but who knows you. People need to think about you when something you are passionate about comes up in a conversation. Part of building a network is not only about what you can take but also about what you can always give back. It is important to reach out to people and spend time learning and exploring. Always ask 2 questions: 1. Who else do you think I should meet? And 2. What can I do for you?

Question: How do we connect with alumni who no longer have an interest after the fellowship? Maria responded that it's not just about playing the game but understanding the game that you are playing. Building a network takes time and it may be a while before that network reaps any dividends for you. The more you build networks the more you become on people's radar who can help you access opportunities. 65%-80% are based on your networks and not job applications. People rely on referrals and people you put down as your reference. It is also important to let people know that they are part of a community as soon as they receive the fellowship. Package it as a transformational experience which can last a lifetime.

There was also a comment in-person about why people struggle to connect to alumni communities. It comes down to the lack of vulnerability. People do not feel seen within the network and therefore cannot share their stories. It's about balancing recognising the achievements of people while also remaining sensitive to those who are not there yet. Create a safe space for people to share their stories and reach out for help when it is needed. Maria acknowledged that alumni spaces are mainly about celebrating the extraordinary and never acknowledging the ordinary. All achievements need to be equally celebrated.

Accomodation

Accommodation was provided for seven delegates who were flown in from different parts of the country. Three of the seven were members of the Kader Asmal executive committee. Two of the seven were panelists for the Annual Reception. There was one member from the working group and one fellow who had just returned from Ireland.

Name	Surname	Check in	check Out	Accommodation
Thabo Derick	Sibiya	11-Nov	14-Nov	3 nights
Thomas Thuso	Mokwa	12-Nov	14-Nov	2 nights
Getrude	Gwenzi	12-Nov	14-Nov	2 nights
Nicole	Watson	12-Nov	14-Nov	2 nights
Mosima	Rasesemola	13-Nov	14-Nov	1 night
Sinenhlanhla	Bengu	13-Nov	14-Nov	1 night
Devina	Harry	13-Nov	14-Nov	1 night

Marketing, media and promotion

There was a lot of effort put into the marketing and promotion of the event. This started with a survey that was sent out on 28 September 2021 which asked alumni what they wanted to see on the day and whether there was a willingness to attend the event. From that survey 38 responses were received from the alumni community out of a total of 90 emails sent out. This was after email and telephonic follow-ups were done with alumni. Once the date of 13 November was decided on, posters were prepared which were shared on social media. A copy of the posters shared on social media is attached in Annexure B. The posters were shared on Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn with the most engagement from Twitter.

Future Recommendations

The following recommendations should be taken into account when planning future Annual Receptions:

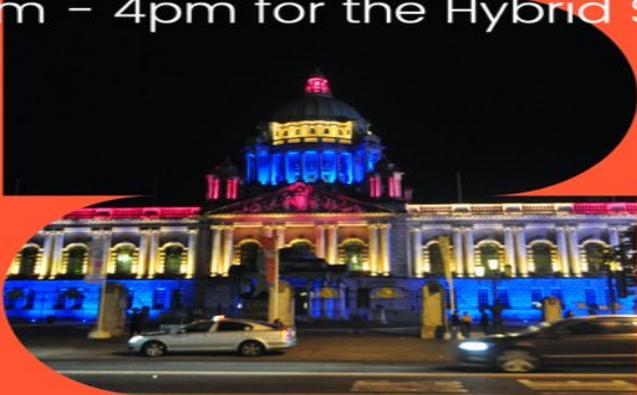
1. Connect with fellows as early as possible while they are still in Ireland;

2. The Kader Asmal Alumni should be part of the send-off events so they can engage fellows as early as possible;
3. Highlight the importance of an alumni community as early as possible in order to build a relationship of trust;
4. Always consider hybrid formats for events to include alumni who choose to remain in Ireland;
5. Do more to help returning fellows transition back into life in South Africa so they are more willing to engage with the alumni community.
6. Assign alumni to fellows to ensure a buddy system where there can be regular check-ins.
7. Kader Asmal Alumni need more branded material to display at events to ensure better brand visibility.
8. Consider more incentive for alumni to attend events such as spot prizes to be won at the Annual Reception.
9. Build a vulnerable space within the network so everyone would like to get involved. Celebrate everyone and not just the extraordinary.

Annexure A: Actual Expenditure

Annexure B: Media and Marketing

Join us on Saturday 13 November
2pm – 4pm for the Hybrid Session



5 DAYS TO GO

OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN, LAUGH AND
CONNECT WITH OTHER ALUMNI

- 4 PANELS LED BY OUR ALUMNI SUPER STARS
- IN-PERSON NETWORKING EVENT FOR JHB
- GUESTS FROM OUR STAKEHOLDER NETWORKS



PANEL 1: LED BY 2015 UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE CORK GRADUATE

GETRUDE GWENZI



PURSUING DOCTORAL STUDIES: GETTING
THE APPLICATION RIGHT, AND TIPS FOR
STAYING THE COURSE

JOIN US ON SATURDAY 13 NOVEMBER : FOR THE KAA ANNUAL
RECEPTION PROGRAMME STARTING AT 2Pm

GETRUDE WILL BE ON AT 14H25 - 15H10

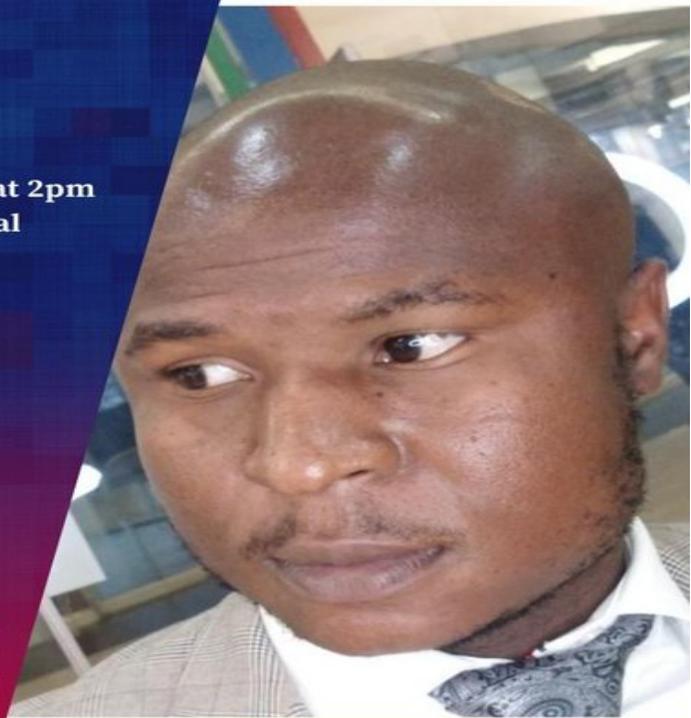


Join us on Saturday 13 November at 2pm
for the Kader Asmal Alumni Annual
Reception.
Programme start at 2pm – 4pm

*Stream 2 Led by 2017 University
College of Dublin Graduate*

Thabo Sibiya

**Doing Business in SA: Tips for
running your own consultancy –
building your profile to succeed**





JOIN US ON SATURDAY 13 NOVEMBER
AT 2PM FOR THE KADER ASMAL
ALUMNI ANNUAL RECEPTION.

PROGRAMME STARTS AT 2PM - 4PM

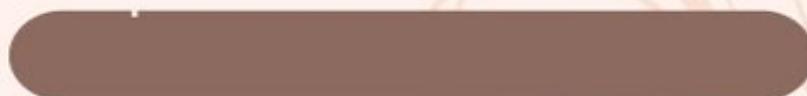


SINENHLANHLA BENGU
University of Limerick graduate
2019/2020 Alumni



SHAMISO CHIGORIMBO
University College Dublin graduate
2013/2014 Alumni

**STREAM 3 ON ACTIVISM: BECOMING AN
ACTIVE CITIZEN AND CHANGE MAKER
WITHIN YOUR COMMUNITY**



Join Justine & Maria in conversation on how to work your networks for career success

Kader Amsal Alumni Annual Reception

Panel 4: Alumni Development: Making the most of your networks & setting yourself up for career advancement



13 NOVEMBER AT 2PM

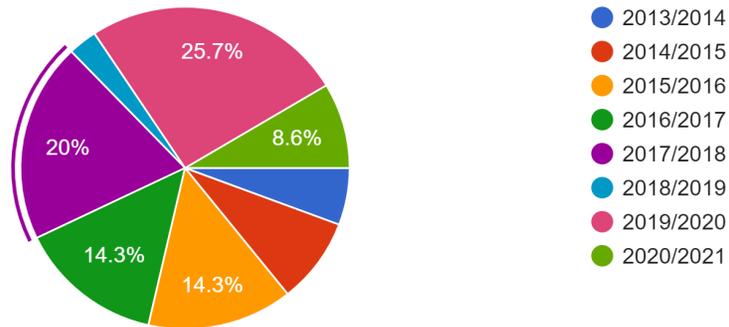


Annexure C: Survey Analysis

There were a total of 95 emails sent out to all alumni requesting them to fill out the survey. There were about seven emails that bounced back and a total of 35 responses were received from alumni.

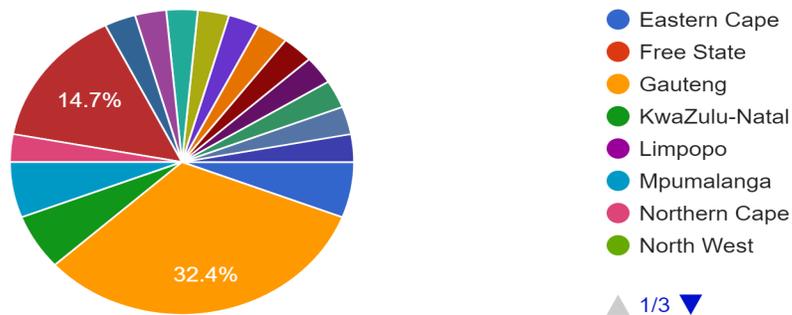
Which years did you complete your KAFP in Ireland:

35 responses



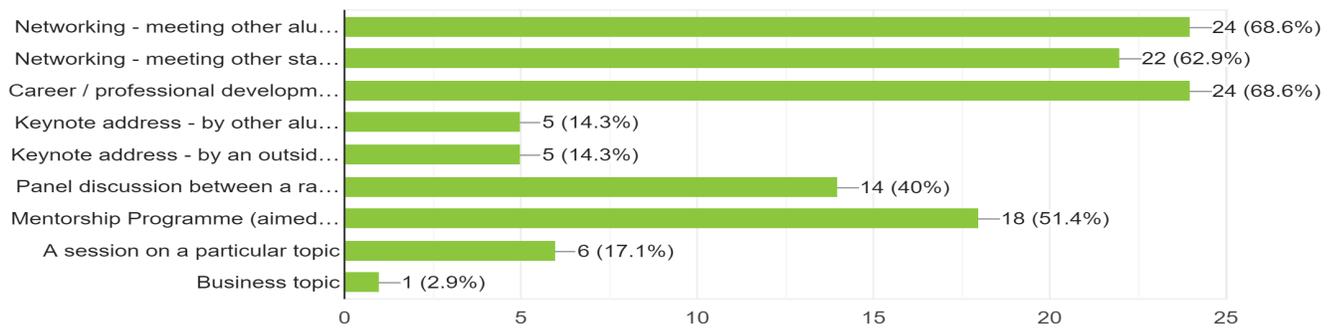
Which province do you reside in or spend most of your time in? (If outside of South Africa, add the name of your City/Town and Country under "Other")

34 responses



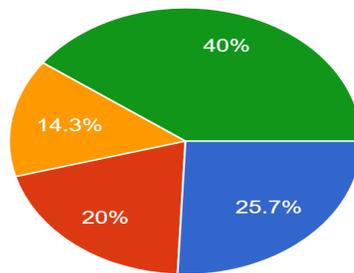
Which sessions would you be most interested in attending at the reception?

35 responses



If you had to choose between the following streams for a panel discussion which would you choose:

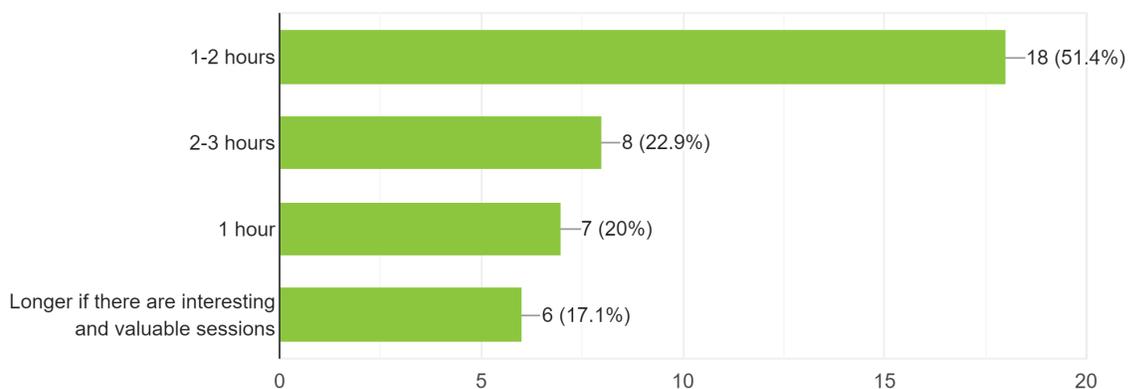
35 responses



- Stream 1 :Panel related to pursuing Doctoral Studies: Key points to consider
- Stream 2: Panel related to starting your own business/organization in SA: Building your profile to succeed
- Stream 3: Panel related to activism: Becoming an active citizen and change maker within your community
- Stream 4: Alumni development: Making the most of your networks and setting...

How many hours would you be willing to attend the reception for?

35 responses



Annexure D: Pictures from the Annual Reception



