Panamanian *Protagonistas*:

An Evaluation of IRI's Ideathon Project in Panama

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Executive Summary

Summary of Project Background and Evaluation Purpose
Despite impressive progress and economic growth since its transition to democracy in 1989, Panamá faces challenges in consolidating its new democracy, strengthening institutions at all levels of government, combating corruption and improving citizen security in the midst of an active drug corridor in the Americas. An analysis undertaken by the International Republican Institute (IRI) revealed that Panamanians were not involved in local governance processes, that local governments lacked the ability to strategically plan for citizen security interventions at the local level and that CSOs lacked the capacity to assist in bridging the gap between citizens and local governments. Additionally, youth reported feeling as though their government did not listen to them and government officials admitted they were not familiar with the problems citizens faced on a daily basis. These overlapping challenges resulted in a disconnect and distrust between citizens, especially youth, and local governments.

To address these challenges, IRI's project was based on the following theory of change: If citizens have the opportunity and capacity to design and implement citizen security projects and if local government officials are engaged in community dialogue and initiatives related to citizen security and have improved capacity to plan for citizen security intiatives, then citizens and local governments will work together to complete projects to make Panamá a safer place to live and work and to help restore citizen trust and engagement in the governance process more broadly. With funding from the National Endowment for Democracy, IRI launched its program in 2015 in Panamá to help realize this theory of change, specifically targeting at-risk, low income youth in Panamá City and San Miguelito. The Ideathon, hosted by the International Republican Institute in March 2016, was the centerpiece of IRI's approach.

The Ideathon was an opportunity for youth to learn how to be more active in addressing citizen security, to provide an opportunity for them to share their ideas and provide the local governments an avenue to hear from youth in a constructive way. Additionally, the Ideathon produced concepts for tangible projects that the governments could support, helping them show their commitment to citizen security and engaging youth in the process. IRI collaborated with several stakeholders to plan, conduct and publicize the Ideathon, including the *Universidad Católica Santa María La Antigua* (USMA), United Way Panamá/*Centros de Alcance*, the municipalities of San Miguelito and Panamá City and MEDCOM (the largest media conglomerate in Panamá). During the Ideathon, 99 youth representing six different neighborhoods divided into teams to develop projects to address some of the following issues: unsafe public spaces, drug and alcohol abuse and inter-family violence. Youth were coached through the process of developing a project proposal around their topic, and each team presented their idea to a panel of judges from their municipality. The winning project team from each municipality was rewarded with the opportunity to implement their project with IRI's support.

Throughout program implementation, IRI saw signs that the effects of the Ideathon likely went beyond the youth-developed and youth-implemented citizen security projects. The primary purpose of this evaluation was to more deeply understand program results, especially the unexpected results, of the Ideathon. Secondarily, IRI wanted to thoroughly examine the process undertaken to conceive and launch the event to inform future project design. More specifically, IRI studied factors that contributed to the event's widespread media attention and multi-stakeholder involvement. Thus, IRI designed and implemented a learning-oriented internal evaluation to help IRI, the funder (National Endowment for Democracy) and future implementers, including local CSOs and mayors' offices, more thoroughly understand the cumulative results of the activities and interventions related to the Ideathon and identify ways to replicate, improve and expand the Ideathon model.

Overview of Methodology
Evaluation questions were crafted to provide a framework for the research effort. Key evaluation questions are listed below. Please see appendix A for a detailed description of the methodology utilized for this evaluation effort.

- Evaluation Question 1: How did the Ideathon change the perceptions of, and expectations for, the role of youth in local communities?
- Evaluation Question 2: Have interactions between Panamanian youth and community stakeholders changed since the Ideathon?
- Evaluation Questions 3: What contributed to the success of the Ideathon from a project design and implementation perspective?

Between August 10 and 17, 2016, IRI traveled to Panamá to collect qualitative data from project beneficiaries, partners, staff and other identified stakeholders (see appendix C for a copy of all the data collection tools used). Eighteen one-on-one and five group interviews with a total 40 individuals (22 women; 18 men) were conducted in Spanish and subsequently translated to English by a professional translator (see appendix D for a complete list of the individuals interviewed as part of this evaluation effort). Following data collection, IRI analyzed the data and shared draft findings and recommendations with the program team during a participatory session to validate their relevance.

Summary of Findings
Contextual Findings
- Finding 0.1: At-risk youth in Panamá are perceived as having fewer opportunities and fewer tangible skills/abilities than other Panamanian youth.
- Finding 0.2: At-risk Panamanian youth believe they are viewed as unmotivated and untalented—they want to change that stereotype.
- Finding 0.3: There is widespread desire to expand the Ideathon to involve more Panamanian youth.

Evaluation Question 1: How did the Ideathon change the perceptions of and expectations for the role of youth in local communities?
- Finding 1.1: The Ideathon changed individual perceptions of at-risk Panamanian youth. Non-governmental actors realized that at-risk youth have the desire and capacity to change their communities.

Supporting Question 1a: Did youth beneficiaries' perceptions of themselves change?
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Evaluation Question 3: What contributed to the success of the Ideathon from a project design and implementation perspective?
- Finding 3.1: Providing at-risk youth the opportunity to develop their own solutions to the challenges they identified was key to the Ideathon's success.
- Finding 3.2: Partners believe that the combination of diverse actors with complementary skills and resources was critical to the Ideathon's success.

- Finding 3.3: Partners viewed the Ideathon as a fresh and unique idea, generating interest and enthusiasm.
- Finding 3.4: IRI's decision to leverage the *Centros de Alcance* and their related stakeholders contributed to the success of the Ideathon.

Supporting question 3a: What lessons can be learned to further improve design and implementation of similar projects in the future?
- Finding 3a.1: A longer planning and implementation timeline may have resulted in higher quality project ideas and in a less tiring day for the participants.
- Finding 3a.2: Additional training for youth participants prior to the Ideathon and additional guidance for the university mentors may have helped some teams and volunteers be more prepared for the day of the Ideathon.

Summary of Recommendations
For Program Implementers:
1. The opportunity to win funds to realize their projects should be prioritized in Ideathon design, as it was a key source of motivation to participate in the Ideathon.
   a. Recognizing that funding for carrying out projects is a challenge in Panamá, implementers should identify/facilitate opportunities for funding for the projects that don't win, including from municipalities and other stakeholders.
2. Fostering a network of Ideathon alumni would reinforce peer-to-peer learning and interaction.
   a. Alumni could play an important role of future iterations of the Ideathon.
   b. Implementers should consider having one (or periodic) Ideathon alumni event(s) to continue to foster not just the relationships built, but also the goodwill among youth from different *Centros* and positivity among this demographic.
3. Develop a digital platform to continue to engage youth on these issues even after the Ideathon. If this platform is utilized, consider channeling that to the broader public, especially the municipal government.
4. University mentors should be given specific guidance and written reference materials prior to the Ideathon.
   a. Preparation sessions for university mentors should continue. These sessions should provide detailed direction for the kind of support expected from mentors on the day of the Ideathon.
   b. Consider having pre-Ideathon consultations for the university mentors and the youth, not just for the youth, university professors and trainers.
   c. Consider facilitating post-Ideathon interactions between university students and youth in order to continue building relationships and encourage continued mentorship.
5. Participating youth should be given training and time prior to the Ideathon.

a. A standardized training structure across all *Centros* could make for a more balanced and efficient competition.
b. Training for the participants should include a session on public speaking.
c. Implementers must ensure they do not influence youth with project ideas before the Ideathon, but rather focus on providing them the structure and the tools to design a project.

6. Continue to involve a diverse array of partners in the Ideathon, from conception to implementation, in order to generate cross-sectoral interest and attention.
    a. This approach also helps with cost share and may contribute to the sustainability of the project.
    b. Ensure that communications and outreach plans are extremely detailed, include specific individuals or organizations to target and through which media format/platform to reach them.
    c. Find partners that will benefit from partnership to encourage their participation.

7. Begin planning and finding partners earlier in the design process. The partner identification process should likely begin a minimum of six months prior to the anticipated date of the Ideathon.
    a. Take into account the length of time needed to get all stakeholders on board as well as the timing of the activity.
    b. Timeline should be determined by how much pre-training will be given (see recommendations 4 and 5 above).

8. Provide additional breaks throughout the day or reduce the length of the Ideathon day to maintain interest and attention spans.

Working With Panamanian Youth Beyond the Ideathon
1. IRI and other implementers should look for opportunities to increase the number and quality of positive interactions between municipal authorities, the private sector, university youth, or other community stakeholders and youth in Panamá.
    a. Participant training should be a formal process, involving some type of selection criteria that will determine the youth's commitment to the program, amount of time they have to dedicate to the program, and their skills and abilities.
    b. Since these projects can be mutually beneficial, especially if the participating youth are assisting with a specific task that needs to be completed, they could be well-received initiatives by mayors and municipal authorities.

2. Activities where youth are "in the driver's seat" should be prioritized and expanded.
    a. Based on feedback from youth, making beneficiaries the protagonists encouraged participation and commitment to the program.

     b. Involving Ideathon alumni in future activities allows them to constructively apply their experience and benefit others, making them not only beneficiaries but also mentors.

3. Panamanian youth often have a strong desire to help their communities and especially each other; as such, tap into this internal motivation whenever possible when conducting youth focused programs.

4. Whenever possible, continue using existing networks/structures of the targeted demographic, in this case youth.

Evaluation Report

Project Background

Despite impressive progress and economic growth since its transition to democracy in 1989, Panamá faces challenges in consolidating its new democracy, strengthening institutions at all levels of government, combating corruption and improving citizen security in the midst of the most active drug corridor in the Americas. *Panamá City*'s metropolitan area, including the *San Miguelito* municipality, registered a 53.1 per 100,000-person homicide rate in 2012, making it one of the 10 deadliest cities in the world. Panamá City and San Miguelito account for 75 percent of the country's homicides. This lack of citizen security has led to distrust in government's provision of services, including security services, as well as citizen apathy for involvement in community affairs. With funding from the National Endowment for Democracy, IRI launched its program in 2015 in Panamá. Specifically targeting at-risk, low income youth in *Panamá City* and *San Miguelito* municipalities, IRI's work empowers youth citizens to engage with local government officials and develop solutions to community challenges, especially those related to citizen security. The Ideathon, hosted by the International Republican Institute in March 2016, was the centerpiece of IRI's approach in this project. The Ideathon allowed the at-risk youth to create innovative citizen security projects to help confront issues directly affecting their communities. IRI collaborated with several stakeholders to plan, conduct and publicize the Ideathon, including the *Universidad Católica Santa María La Antigua* (USMA), United Way Panamá/*Centros de Alcance*, the municipalities of *San Miguelito* and *Panamá City*, and MEDCOM (the largest media conglomerate in Panamá). During the Ideathon, 99 youth representing six different neighborhoods divided into teams to develop projects to address some of the following issues: unsafe public spaces, drug and alcohol abuse and inter-family violence. Youth were coached through the process of developing a project proposal around their topic and each team presented their idea to a panel of judges from their municipality. The winning project team from each municipality was rewarded with the opportunity to implement their project with IRI's support.

Evaluation Purpose

Through conversations with beneficiaries and stakeholders afterward, IRI learned that the impact of the Ideathon likely went beyond the youth-developed and youth-implemented citizen security projects. The primary purpose of this evaluation was to more deeply understand the results, especially the unexpected results, of the Ideathon.

Secondarily, IRI wanted to thoroughly examine the process undertaken to conceive and launch the event to inform future project design. More specifically, IRI wanted to examine the factors that contributed to the event's widespread media attention and multi-stakeholder involvement. Thus, we conducted this learning-oriented internal evaluation to help IRI, its funder (National Endowment for Democracy) and future implementers (including local CSOs and mayors' offices) more thoroughly understand the cumulative results of the activities and interventions related to the Ideathon and identify ways to replicate and scale the Ideathon model.

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Between August 10-17, 2016, IRI staff traveled to Panamá to collect qualitative data from project beneficiaries, partners, staff and other identified stakeholders (please see appendix C for a copy of all the data collection tools used). Eighteen one-on-one and five group interviews, with a total 40 individuals (22 women; 18 men), were conducted in Spanish with an audio recording (please see appendix D for a complete list of the individuals interviewed as part of this evaluation effort). English transcriptions of each interview were produced by a professional translator. Immediately following data collection, the evaluation team began analyzing the translated data and developed draft findings and recommendations, which were validated by the program team during a participatory session to validate their relevance.

Findings
Contextual Findings
These findings emerged organically and almost unanimously from interviewees. Because of interviewees' widespread agreement on these issues, they are included to provide background information that frame the report's remaining findings.

Finding 0.1: At-risk youth in Panamá are perceived as having fewer opportunities and fewer tangible skills/abilities than other Panamanian youth.

During interviews with at-risk youth and their mentors, the idea that at-risk youth do not have equal access to opportunities as middle and high-income youth clearly

The evaluation team discuss with youth from the Santa Ana Centro de Alcance.

emerged. Ivan, a youth mentor working in the low-income Santa Ana neighborhood explained, "Here in Panamá, we are still separated by social status. There are those who have more opportunities and there are those who, unfortunately, do not have the same opportunities. I refer to neighborhoods like ours…They have not had many opportunities." Malka, a young woman from the low-income neighborhood of Victoriano Lorenzo echoed this sentiment saying, "We know that we are in a community that I have heard comments about…youth are worthless and they cannot do anything…Others see the bad part, the downside of the youth." Further contributing to this point of view, Maryann, who previously worked in the office of the Mayor of San Miguelito, shared, "[In] the poor areas, you can see a lot of kids with a lot of time, but they don't have anything to do."

Suggesting that they do not often have opportunities to participate in such events, at-risk youth repeatedly expressed their appreciation for the Ideathon—a new and challenging opportunity that was directly applicable to their daily lives. Many commented that the opportunity to help other youth in their community, to provide their opinions on issues in their community and to affect positive change were major motivations for participation in the Ideathon. The quotes below are representative of the sentiments of the majority of youth interviewed:

- "What motivated me [to participate] in the contest was being able to help and support other young people; [in a place] where I would have a pleasant experience and they would get a better understanding." – Jossi, *Victoriano Lorenzo*
- "One of the great motives that pushed me to continue in the competition was that I was going to able to present, along with other team members, the initiative against the domestic violence which is a problem in our community." – Robinson, *San Pancracio*

Finding 0.2: At-risk Panamanian youth believe they are viewed as unmotivated and untalented. They want to change that stereotype.

During program implementation, at-risk youth told IRI they feel they are perceived as "unmotivated" and "untalented" by other Panamanians. Youth reflected that they felt as if they were treated like criminals or potential criminals by adults; and, in some cases, by those who claim they are trying to help. During evaluation interviews, participants repeatedly confirmed this, as Malka from Victoriano Lorenzo mentioned, "… [there] are many talented young people…many youth that paint, dance but others do not see that...But they do not see the good things that are inside them." Similarly, youth are bored of programs—such as sports leagues and workshops—that treat them as *delinquents or problems* rather than *problem-solvers or resources* for brainstorming solutions to community challenges.

During interviews, youth mentioned they want to participate in constructive activities and share their skills and aspirations with the community more broadly. This contributed to their motivations to participate in the Ideathon, as Nayarith from *Brooklincito* expressed, "If I want things to be different for all of our sakes, my own, my sister's, cousins' and the rest of society; I obviously have to convey those ideas for them to come to life. To make things different and listen to others who want to say what they think. If I can put it into practice, great."

Finding 0.3: There is widespread desire to expand the Ideathon to involve more Panamanian youth.

The desire to expand the Ideathon was widespread, though individuals interviewed had different ideas on how to do it. Some young people, like Gabriel from the Victoriano Lorenzo *Centro*, suggested holding Ideathons in other municipalities. He said, "If it is to be done again, let us [do it] not just in San Miguelito or in Panamá. I say, it would be best if it is done in all the other provinces of the country and have all the young people participating and getting involved. That is what I really want." Malka agreed that expanding the Ideathon to other provinces would be a good idea. She explained,

"…to have this [the Ideathon] done not only in Panamá but in other provinces as well." Others, like Ivan, the *Centro* coordinator from Santa Ana, suggested holding the Ideathon annually or "institutionalizing" the Ideathon. Karla Campos, of the San Miguelito Mayor's office suggested providing financial support to more than just two projects, perhaps four or five projects. Regardless of the way interviewees wanted to see the Ideathon grow, they shared the same sentiment to expand the project.

Evaluation Question 1: How did the Ideathon change the perceptions of and expectations for youth's role in local communities?

Finding 1.1: The Ideathon changed individual perceptions of at-risk Panamanian youth; Non-governmental actors realized that at-risk youth have the desire and capacity to change their communities

IRI staff members with the Centro *coordinator and youth at the Victoriano Lorenzo Centro de Alcance.*

This finding is related only to perceptions of non-government actors. Data related to the perception changes of municipal government stakeholders is included in finding 2.1. Non-government stakeholders who participated in the Ideathon reported a change in their perceptions of youth as a result of their experience. They were pleasantly surprised with the at-risk Panamanian youth's creativity and dedication. Rina Rodríguez, the coordinator of *Centro de Alcance* engagement from United Way, remarked, "The people who were there were so shocked because there is a perception in Panamá about the youth from [low-income] neighborhoods; that they are thieves, violent people, you could say they are labeled...but for a stigmatized young person to develop a project of this nature is shocking…it surprises even more if it is a *good* project." Marco, one of the university student mentors, said his opinion of these youth "really changed...but let's say that I kind of lost hope in young people, but that day they really showed me that people want to make changes." Professor Sam Vásquez from USMA echoed Marco's comments, stating the Ideathon "changed [his university

students'] opinions about that kind of people. They usually do not relate or interact with kids of different income. It was an opportunity to see that lower income people are not bad people."

Evaluation Question 1a: Did youth beneficiaries' perceptions of themselves change?

Finding 1a.1: After the Ideathon, youth gained new skills and felt empowered to actively participate in their community alongside their peers.

Numerous youth participants reported acquiring new—or rediscovering existing—skills as a result of the Ideathon. Two youth from *Brooklincito* said their public speaking skills increased and they can now address others confidently. For example, Carlos remarked, "I feel I can express myself better now. I can speak in public now. Before, I could not do that. That was something impossible for me." Gabriel, a youth from *Victoriano Lorenzo*, said he learned about responsibility and commitment, comments that were also reflected by his peers.

The team from El Chorillo working on their project during the Ideathon.

Other Ideathon stakeholders—such as the United Way and *Centro del Alcance* coordinators—reported youth improving their project design and implementation skills. Cecilia Rojas, the *Victoriano Lorenzo* coordinator, said, "They never had to make decisions before. I mean, they did not make a decision about what project would be done or what to do."

Youth reported that participating in the Ideathon increased their self-confidence, especially to set and achieve goals. Aleyka from *Santa Ana, Panamá City* recalled, "Suddenly, I felt I could do it and I felt totally proud of myself for being able to fulfill the project. I mean, I was the one who thought up how to solve the situation." Another young woman, Malka from *Victoriano Lorenzo* told the evaluation team after the Ideathon she felt that "…one can accomplish anything you set your mind to in life…I have changed a lot." Many of her peers from other *Centros* and municipalities offered similar comments. Take Carlos from *Brooklincito* for example, who said, "I understood I had qualities that I did not even know I had…that I did not know I could give speeches and confidence…that I could train other youth."

Some of the *Centro* coordinators also noted changes in the youths' self-perceptions, further validating the participants' own observations. Eduardo, a *Centro* coordinator in the *24 de Diciembre* neighborhood explained that participating in the Ideathon changed some of the youth, claiming, "I feel that this was something that has helped them with their self-esteem; something that needed to be worked on." Daysi, a *Centro* coordinator in *Brooklincito* noticed changes in the youth that participated in the Ideathon. About one young man she said, "Now he feels so confident that he says, 'I can work by myself with a group of young people.' That allowed some of them…to develop that self-assurance…for them to believe they can do something without having fear. They now have confidence."

In a few cases, stakeholders believed this empowerment directly led to major changes in some of the youths' lives. The evaluation team heard an example from Pastor Eusebio, from *Centro del Alcance, San Pancracio*, who recounted a story: "One that participated before the competition had dropped [out of] school and after the competition he got back into school. And then he did not only go back to school but also started to work. That made him realize that he was able to achieve other goals. He had left school due to his personal-family situation, but after Tengo Una Idea [the Ideathon] he really reintegrated to a module school and also is reintegrated to work….it was this competition that made him establish clear goals and concrete steps." Additional supporting evidence for Finding 1a.1 is in appendix B.

Finding 1a.2: Participants learned the value of peer-to-peer interaction, which further motivated them to work together.

The majority of youth reflected that working as a team fostered hard work and respect and served as a source of support and learning. This support came from their own teammates, peers from their own *Centro del Alcance* and from other *Centros* and contributed to an overall positive experience. Robinson from *San Pancracio* remarked, "Having participated in this competition, it gave me a different mindset. We shared times with persons from different neighborhoods and different realities and this really made me see that we, as youth and working from here, can change our society little by little as we are the future and the present of this big society." Malka from *Victoriano*

Lorenzo shared, "And, knowledge does not strictly come from adults; you can learn anything from any person, regardless of their age or social status."

Other participants remarked they were inspired-by and supportive-of their peers as a result of the friendships they developed, even if they did not personally win. "I think I have changed, for I now know more people and people who are truly interested in helping others," said Nayarith from Brooklincito. Anthony from *San Pancracio* offered similar thoughts, "It motivated us to always give each other support in the church and continue forward knowing we could either win or lose."

A team presents their project during the Ideathon.

Centro del Alcance coordinators observed a similar atmosphere of engagement, as remarked by Daysi Gomez, the coordinator for *Brooklincito*, "I saw a union, a team effort, fellowship and they had an objective that allowed them, as youngsters, to participate; that even allowed their relations to improve because they even became friends with young people from other *Centros*." Cecilia, a coordinator for *Centro de Alcance, Victoriano Lorenzo*, noted, "In an environment full ... of enthusiasm and seeing all of this euphoria you could say, that also helped the youth...for them to feel more encouraged." The mayor of San Miguelito offered his insights on the matter, saying, "...If they [at-risk youth] are not offered opportunities, they will suppress and stay sitting without being active. And, we are losing potential leaders that can help other kids with problems to move forward. I think that if we empower more kids, they can help others to make the right decisions. It is a matter of youth. Youth attracts youth."

Evaluation Question 1b: Did youth beneficiaries' expectations for their future role in the community change?

Finding 1b.1: Following the Ideathon, the expectations of the Youth changed—they felt they had a role to play in improving their community.

Panamanian youth, especially at-risk youth, are not frequently asked for their ideas or opinions. Many told the evaluation team that they always had ideas, but felt no one cared or wanted to listen, and they were thankful for the platform to express themselves and they felt important and appreciated. Nayarith, a young woman from the *Brooklincito Centro* explained to the evaluation team that when she arrived at the Ideathon "it was incredible. I felt good because I felt we had the correct attention and had the opportunity. At the moment, I thought—now, is our turn. Usually when people talk about today's youth it is not done with the best words nor in the best way. I realized it was our time to show others that we are worth a lot more than they think."

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"I realized it was our time to show others that we are worth a lot more than they think."

-Nayarith Cruz
Young Woman from Brooklincito

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Other youth interviewed said:

- "I also felt really excited, like my peer said, we were appreciated as young people." – Emmanuel, *Victoriano Lorenzo*

- "I have always had a few ideas to share but I guess I did not dare to do anything since I thought there were some people that were not interested or that were not going to pay any mind to those sorts of ideas." – Nayarith, *Brooklincito*

- "We felt really valued and heard. Really happy and the best part is that it was done as young people." – Jossi, *Victoriano Lorenzo*

- "At that moment, I was thrilled when people interviewed us…"- Malka, *Victoriano Lorenzo*

Centro del Alcance coordinators had similar observations as the youth. Cecilia Rojas, coordinator for *Centro del Alcance* in *Victoriano Lorenzo* explained, "They felt they did something different, something important and that they were being taken into consideration for a thing…like this and that their opinion was the one that mattered." Her comments reflected the majority of coordinators interviewed.

Finding 1b.2: Especially for youth on the winning teams, the Ideathon experience caused participants to be more interested in community problems and in solving those problems.

As noted above, the Ideathon exposed the participating youth to new activities and, in many cases, led the youth to develop new friendships. Many reported staying in contact with peers from neighboring municipalities as well as their university mentor. Implementing their projects provided the youth a specific, constructive way to spend their free time and an opportunity to further engage with each other.

"We used to spend time texting, wasting time, etc. Now, instead of that, we meet up two or three times a week and spend time with friends. We also speak about the project," said Jossi from *Victoriano Lorenzo*. Gabriel, also from *Victoriano Lorenzo*, commented about the project's implementation, "This is a great opportunity we have and it is productive. Besides texting and doing nothing, truthfully, it is a great opportunity for us youth because this way we learn more things…"

Further, the opportunity to continue to help others and solve community challenges led some to change their behavior. Robinson from *San Pancracio* decided to continue attending his *Centro* on a regular basis, stating, "I had made plans to stop collaborating here [at the *Centro*]…But after the competition, I saw the reality that if I left while seeing how other youth need help, how would I then criticize them if I was not part of helping them get out of the place they were in and become better people?"

At least two other young people interviewed credited their participation in the Ideathon with opening the door for them to enter the *De Joven A Joven* program, a program run by the City Hall of *Panamá City*. Yemmy explains, "Thanks to the contest, I was able to enter the *De Joven a Joven* program with City Hall. Before I did not pay much mind to certain matters. Now, with the contest and all of this, I have been more interested in other problems."

One of the most notable behavior and perception changes in youth was observed in Raul, a young man who was part of the *Santa Ana* team in the Ideathon. Ivan Richards, the coordinator at the *Santa Ana Centro del Alcance,* described Raul's general attitude and disposition prior to the Ideathon event. He explained that Raul had decided to drop out of school, feeling that his efforts and work were not being recognized at school and there was no reason to continue attending school. His self-esteem was also suffering. However, according to Richards, "After the contest [Ideathon] something very particular happened in Raul: he found his identity…he had been struggling for a while with that…Even though he had achieved goals, he said his goals had not been recognized. He is the model; one of the cases where you see a true change. He is now empowered." Raul reflected on his experience participating in the Ideathon telling the evaluation team, "I think my life has changed a lot because great doors have opened for us, great opportunities have been offered to us…not because we were the winning team but for the skills seen in the *Tengo Una Idea* contest [the Ideathon]."

Evaluation Question 1c: Did the municipal authorities' expectations for youth's role in the community change?

Finding 1c.1: The interactions between youth and community leaders during the Ideathon resulted in increased positive perceptions of at-risk youth in Panamá and led to new expectations for their involvement in community affairs.

Both of the mayors' offices interviewed reported positive changes in their perceptions of at-risk youth. The mayor of *San Miguelito*, Gerald Cumberbatch, said, "And we have discovered that youth are more capable than what we think to formulate ideas and offer possible solutions to problems, so of course, we think that the program and the activity are very appropriate to stimulate those things… to our surprise the kids in *San Miguelito* showed a lot of capacity to work in these scenarios." Further reflecting on Mayor Cumberbatch's changed perceptions, one of his staff offered, "I think that he [the mayor] didn't realize the potential that we have in our youth. And, he could see that in the Ideathon." Discussion with the mayor and his staff revealed that they now expected the youth to become more involved in community affairs. One of his staff members, Karla Campos, noted that she was exploring ideas for at-risk youth to be involved in community art projects that promoted positive messages. Additional evidence of this is found in finding 2.1, which describes the mayor's office's new initiative to integrate at-risk youth into the conversations and work of the local government. The *San Miguelito* mayor's office realized the potential of at-risk youth and are taking steps to tap into that potential

"…to our surprise the kids in San Miguelito showed a lot of capacity to work in these scenarios."

-Mayor Gerald Cumberbatch
San Miguelito

Lorena Gomez from the *Panamá City* mayor's office said she felt the perception of Panamanian youth as "lost" had received too much attention in Panamá. She noted that often people feel that youth only commit criminal acts. Lorena clarified, "…that is part of what is going on in our society, but it is not the greater trend." After working with the youth she told the evaluation team, "I trust young people. There are so many young

people with great talent. They have demonstrated it in every aspect… we must know how to guide them." Based on this conversation, it was clear to IRI that Lorena realized the contributions that at-risk youth can make to their own neighborhoods as well as the broader community. Lorena made clear that she would no longer be surprised when at-risk youth demonstrated their desire to address the challenges their neighborhoods face.

Evaluation Question 2: Have interactions between Panamanian youth and community stakeholders changed after participation in the Ideathon?

Finding 2.1: The Ideathon fostered new interactions between youth participants and other actors, including with the mayor's office and other organizations.

A team displays their social media post related to the Ideathon that received 100,000 impressions.

During interviews, community stakeholders repeatedly revealed that their engagement with at-risk youth during the Ideathon led to additional interactions or engagements with them after the Ideathon. For example, Karla Campos, the Director of Cooperation at the *San Miguelito* mayor's office noted, "We are helping them with our contacts with other institutions…its different when it's the [youth] trying to get a meeting than when it's a mayor's office trying to a get a meeting; so, I think it's good that the municipality has this partnership with the kids and the *Centros del Alcance*…" She explained how she and her colleagues at the mayor's office facilitated several meetings for the winning

team to present their project to Panamá's Secretary of Education, Secretary of Health, representatives from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Office of the First Lady of Panamá—opportunities they likely would not have had without the support of the mayor's office. The mayor's office also offered the use of their space for youth to give their presentations in a place with amenities—including a projector, internet and air conditioning. As Karla noted, "We open our doors, our house so they can do the meetings here because I know they don't have a place to do it…"

As a direct result of participation in the Ideathon, the *San Miguelito* mayor's office is establishing a youth office in order to provide continuity to this and similar projects. Karla Campos explained, "We are trying to do one here—a youth office here that can help these kind of kids and projects to be continued, not only one time during the year but to be something that the group of youth can come to this office and present project and we analyze, it's like the Ideathon, what is good and what is not and help them to make it real." This project was in the startup phase when the evaluation team visited Panamá. Karla shared, "…we are having working tables with our own people so that we can include all of the departments in the municipality, so we have a group for youth, a group for environment, a group for trash [removal]…. They are… doing the meetings and doing the plan and strategies." IRI notes that these intentions and the concrete steps taken to realize the idea suggest future, additional interactions between the mayor's office and the youth. Notably, the actions of the mayor's office demonstrate significant buy-in to the idea of supporting at-risk youth beyond the life of this project. The potential for sustainable engagement between the local government and at-risk youth is one of the most significant outcomes of this project.

After the Ideathon, the *Brooklincito* coordinator had a discussion with the *Panamá City* mayor about one participant named Lester—full of potential and desire for new opportunities. After that discussion, the mayor offered Lester a short-term internship in his office. Several times a week, Lester worked with the mayor's staff on special projects and, along the way, offered his thoughts and insights to the mayoral team[1]. Beyond Lester's experience, various departments within the *Panamá City* municipality held a meeting to determine mechanisms to help fund youth-led projects in the future. Though, nothing concrete had been established as of IRI's interview in August 2016; that said, the meeting itself suggests the support and buy-in municipal officials are willing to provide the youth.

Evaluation Question 2a: Have interactions between Panamanian youth and USMA changed after the Ideathon?

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[1] Lester was ill during the time of interviews being conducted and unable to contribute to this evaluation.

Finding 2a.1: The university mentors were an important source of motivation and guidance for the youth during the Ideathon. Some university mentors indicated a desire to continue to support the youth after the Ideathon.

The youth participants and the *Centro* coordinators reported that on the day of the Ideathon university mentors were a valuable source of guidance and advice to the youth participants. Raul, a youth participant from the Santa Ana *Centro* said, "The attention we had [from] the [university] students from beginning to end was great…. The university students' welcoming was very good. I mean, their help was excellent. There were moments where one felt discouraged and they came to say, 'Come on, keep going. Don't give up.' They gave us…not ideas but they helped us get out of that shutting-in moment, where one does not know what to do or what to write." Eduardo, the 24 de Diciembre *Centro* coordinator, explained, "The volunteers from USMA worked very well with the youth…I saw that they rotated a lot. They had a lot of energy…they had a great energy and they motived the youth." Marco, a university mentor explained that one group demonstrated their appreciation for his assistance at the conclusion of the Ideathon. He shared, "…so, when they won third place, they were like thank you, you really helped us to do this. It was pretty memorable for them."[2]

Beyond serving as a critical resource on the day of the Ideathon, some of the *Centro* coordinators and one university mentor himself reported that they remained engaged with the youth participants after the Ideathon. For example, Itzel, a staff member at USMA who assists with coordinating the students' volunteerism, shared her impressions that the mentors wanted to do more to help the youth after the Ideathon. She shared, "In this meeting that I had, the closing one, they [the mentors] were left with this restlessness; that we have to give the youth more support." Some mentors did in fact provide additional support to the youth at the *Centros* after the Ideathon. Itzel continued saying that even though the mentors only needed 20 hours of volunteer service, some of the mentors continued helping the winning team implement their project. Cecilia, a *Centro* coordinator corroborated this noting, "From the USMA we have received support from their volunteers. In fact, some of them helped the youth in making their projects [after the Ideathon]." Marco, a university mentor told the evaluation team that he occasionally visits the Victoriano Lorenzo *Centro* on Saturdays for activities related to a separate project. Some of the youth participants, like Myrna from San Pancracio *Centro* de Alcance, also reported being in contact with some of the university mentors via social media.

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[2] Please see Appendix B for additional supporting evidence for this finding.

Evaluation Question 3: What contributed to the success of the Ideathon from a project design and implementation perspective?

Finding 3.1: Providing at-risk youth the opportunity to develop their own solutions to the challenges they identified was key to the Ideathon's success.

A team working on their social media posts during the Ideathon.

In almost every interview with youth and *Centro* coordinators, respondents praised the Ideathon for making the youth the "*protagonistas*" or "main characters" in the project. Gabriel from Victoriano Lorenzo explained, "Different [in] this project was that we young people were the main characters here…In other activities and projects, the ones participating were adults and elder people." Daysi, a *Centro* coordinator in Brooklincito, further elaborated on this point, "It is different because we usually have to bring things already set up…One provides them with workshops, courses and speeches. But to tell them, 'Okay, tell me what your idea is and let us see how we can achieve it,' that is different, particularly for us. Rina of United Way and Cecelia the *Centro* coordinator in Victoriano Lorenzo also used the term "protagonistas" when explaining how the Ideathon put youth in the driver's seat of the projects. Rina continued that, "They [the attendees] are not only seeing youth as a beneficiary but as a main character for their environment's transformation, the creating of opportunities …" Nayarith, a young woman from Brooklincito told the evaluation team, "The difference between the Ideathon program and the *Centro* is that you…you feel more important. You feel you can make a big difference, do something different and real, and that it will be taken into consideration. It will not just stay there among the youth…"

The Mayor of San Miguelito with members of the winning team.

Finding 3.2: Partners believe that the combination of diverse actors with complementary skills and resources was critical to the Ideathon's success.

Respondents frequently cited the diverse range of partners as a leading factor contributing to the Ideathon's success. Noting the array of skills, resources and networks that were available to the entire implementing team as a result of the diverse partnership, interviewees repeatedly praised the collaborative efforts. Rina from United Way shared, "We were pretty well represented because the community was there, the government, private sector, the civil movement, private sector businesses like MEDCOM, civil society organizations, like ourselves. The participation was well-balanced. I think that there was a lot of representation."

When asked what advice he would give to others planning to conduct an Ideathon, an IRI program staff member recommended finding good, diverse partners. He explained, "I think that making this not the project of IRI but as a teamwork within [among] the organization…because each organization really took their time and really their energies to make them work. This was not just IRI…I mean everyone was so engaged into the project and making all the people part of it…I think that was the crucial part that made this so successful. Because IRI by ourselves wouldn't have the resources to make all this happen." Other IRI staff members agreed that partnerships were key to a well-rounded,

well-publicized event. One remarked said, "Because it just wouldn't have happened without the right partners. We could have had all the great ideas in the world, but it would have been a much poorer event if we didn't have the partners that we did…"

Finding 3.3: Partners viewed the Ideathon as a fresh and unique idea, generating interest and enthusiasm.

The evaluation team consistently heard from interviewees that the Ideathon was "different" or "unique" compared to other projects or programs in which they had participated. Respondents noted that other youth oriented projects they participated in were more focused on training or teaching kids, "talking at them" and giving them information. The mayor of San Miguelito, Gerald Cumberbatch explained, "It's not very common, scenarios where the kids interact and create ideas. Unfortunately, I have to say this but it's the truth. Not even in the schools [do] they stimulate those things."

A young woman poses for the social media campaign related to the Ideathon.

The youth participants agreed:

- Gabriel, Victoriano Lorenzo: "I mean, I had never been part of an event like this, where many young people share their ideas."
- Raul, Santa Ana: "…this is a new experience we have…but I think Tengo Una Idea [the Ideathon] was far greater than all the contests I have partaken in before. It was really something spectacular…"
- Malka, Victoriano Lorenzo: "That [the Ideathon] was something so unique and incomparable…"
- Lilineś Urriola, MEDCOM representative: "I mean…we have a lot of programs but this was, like I said, it was innovative…"

Marco, the university mentor noted that he had be a part of projects like this in school, but he'd never seen at-risk youth participating in this kind of project. He found that to be a particularly important and impressive aspect of the Ideathon. He said, " [The Ideathon partners] went to places where there's youth that may be at social risk, that's what's different. Because, before I've done it at school with classmates…but here what is different and good is that you got close to these areas at social risk to see ideas they have to improve their situation in the community."

Finding 3.4: IRI's decision to leverage the Centros de Alcance and their related stakeholders contributed to the success of the Ideathon.

IRI staff repeatedly noted that partnering with the *Centros de Alcance* proved to be a wise decision. The *Centros* were well-established in the low income neighborhoods and were staffed with individuals that already had personal relationships, and often the respect of at-risk youth. By partnering with the *Centros,* IRI was able to gain credibility and buy-in to the event faster than it would have alone. Additionally, IRI's reach was likely greater since invitations to participate in the event were coming from already known and respected individuals. Finally, the *Centros* already had regular programs and activities for the youth, and featured a physical location for them to gather in their neighborhood—something IRI could not provide. This made it easier for youth to participate in pre-Ideathon activities and brainstorming and likely helped foster excitement about the Ideathon day.

Evaluation Question 3a: What lessons can be learned to further improve design and implementation of similar projects in the future?

Finding 3a.1: A longer planning and implementation timeline may have resulted in higher quality project ideas and in a less tiring day for the participants.

Nearly all interviewees requested "more time" for the Ideathon

Other partners also voiced their opinions that more time for the students to plan and design their projects may have been beneficial. Iván, a *Centro* coordinator from Santa Ana said, "Well I think it should be done, announced with a little bit more time. If there was a bit more time, we could have prepared the youth a lot better in choosing topics... announced maybe in three months in advance to train and prepare [them]." Sam Vásquez, a professor from USMA that provided academic instruction to the youth on problem identification and project design, agreed, but wanted more time for teaching the youth. He told the evaluation team he wanted to, "have more time to teach more things to the youth, so they can do better stuff, not only eight hours, maybe 20 or 40 hours. They could do much more with the projects…"

A number of individuals also remarked that the Ideathon was a very long and tiring day. While this was nearly always mentioned as a side note and it did not appear to inhibit overall enthusiasm for the Ideathon, it merits noting in this report. Two IRI staff members commented that the day was probably too long to hold the attention of nearly 100 young students. Iván, the Santa Ana *Centro* coordinator also felt the day was a bit long. When asked what he would change or do differently, he answered, "the contest's length, I would say the length…I mean it was really full, the schedule, program."

Finding 3a.2: Additional training for youth participants prior to the Ideathon and additional guidance for the university mentors may have helped some teams and volunteers be more prepared for the day of the Ideathon.

When asked about what improvements could have been made to the Ideathon, many respondents replied that additional training for volunteers and youth participants might be useful. Regarding the preparation for day-of volunteers, IRI's DC-based program officer noted, "We didn't really have much preparation for them. We had one prep session a couple of days before the event. But that could be something to keep in mind for the future, to have a more formalized process for volunteers to really maximize them…We maybe could have maximized the help we got if we had given them more direction before the morning of or the day before." Marco, a peer mentor from USMA reiterated this point saying, "…maybe the preparation for us who were working along with the teachers and all that can be done better so we can be better aligned with the project….so we have a clearer idea of what to tell them and that'd be consistent from each student to student."

Several interviewees also told the evaluation team that additional training for the youth participants may have been beneficial. Specifically, a number of interviewees suggested that some public speaking training would have better prepared the youth to present their projects in the afternoon. Cecelia, a *Centro* coordinator in Victoriano Lorenzo saied, "I think that they would need a bit more training so they can be better

prepared and have the opportunity to present better elaboration of the project." Some of the IRI staff were even anxious about their presentations, with one in-country staff member saying, "At one point I was a little bit nervous for the kids. Because we could feel and we knew that most of them didn't have a chance before or have the opportunity to be a part of something like this, like a competition and presenting their project at the front. And some of the kids, some of the groups were really nervous…they have never had this chance to be in front of the room." IRI's resident program director agreed, observing that some of the kids had "stage fright" and that it would have been better to "give them a little bit of training on how to speak…"

Recommendations:

For Program Implementers:

1. **The opportunity for participants to win funds to realize their projects was a key source of motivation to participate in the Ideathon, and thus should be prioritized in Ideathon design.**
   a. Recognizing that funding is a challenge in Panamá, implementers facilitate potential funding or dissemination opportunities for projects that don't win. Implementers should explore ways to provide non-winning projects with sponsorship or support to implement these ideas through other avenues. Such avenues could be inviting more private sector stakeholders to the event, or facilitating direct interactions between youth and the donor community to promote opportunities for future collaboration. This community could include the Panamanian diaspora, family foundations, United States and Canadian Embassies, private sector companies with a commitment to corporate social responsibility, the European Union, and the World Bank.

2. **Fostering a network of Ideathon alumni would reinforce peer-to-peer learning and interaction.**
   a. Alumni could play an important role of future iterations of the Ideathon. Alumni should be selected through a thoughtful and targeted process on a case-by-case basis, identifying specific components of the Ideathon where their skills would be most useful. For example, alumni could be considered "consultants" on event logistics in order to understand the view of the protagonists/beneficiaries. They may also serve as peer or "alumni" mentors for participants designing projects. At least one young person interviewed indicated interest in serving as an alumni mentor if the Ideathon were to be held again.
   b. Implementers should consider having one (or periodic) Ideathon alumni event(s) to foster relationships and goodwill among youth from different

Centros and positivity within this demographic. Events could include a volunteerism fair or similar event, perhaps in partnership with the mayor's office or in partnership with other international/local civil society organizations.

3. **Develop a digital platform to engage youth on community issues following the Ideathon. If the platform is utilized, consider channeling it to the broader public, especially the municipal government.**
   a. Account for the level of connectivity to the internet, as well as existing mechanisms for youth to interact, e.g. Facebook or WhatsApp. Ensure that efforts are aligned with existing channels of communication and engagement among the target demographic.

4. **University mentors should be given specific guidance and written reference materials prior to the Ideathon.**
   a. Preparation sessions for university mentors should continue to provide detailed direction for the kind of support they should provide on the day of the Ideathon. Additional preparation sessions should be held and written guidance, in the form of a packet, should be given to the mentors, especially if mentors cannot attend the in-person training(s). Guidance should include how to help the beneficiaries clearly define problems, develop ideas, speak effectively, and design projects.
   b. Consider having pre-consultations before the Ideathon between the university mentors and youth. Mentors could apply what they learned on project design and public speaking in a practical context while also building the youths' ability. Further, these sessions could develop a rapport between youth and mentors — hopefully contributing to improved project design and logistics on the day of the Ideathon.
   c. Consider facilitating post-Ideathon interactions between university students and youth in order to continue building relationships and encourage continued mentorship.

5. **Participating youth should be given training, time and resources prior to the Ideathon.**
   a. A standardized training structure across all *Centros* could make for a more balanced and efficient competition. For example, all participating youth could receive project design training or resources two to three weeks before the actual competition. This support could include in- person training sessions and physical or online resources, such as exercises, case studies, or videos.
   b. Preparation training should also include a session on public speaking. Many of the youth admitted they were nervous speaking in front of a group on

the day of the Ideathon, so preparing them ahead of time might contribute to calmer participants and more effective presentations.

    c. Do not provide youth with project ideas - focus on providing them with the structure and the tools to design their own project. Keeping participants on track, balancing preparation, and making the actual day of the event exciting and meaningful are all critical components.

6. **Continue to involve a diverse array of partners in the Ideathon, from conception to implementation; this diversity generates cross-sectoral interest and attention.**

    a. This approach, while more time-consuming and logistically labor intensive, clearly added to the quality and reach of the event. Similar approaches should be replicated in other contexts as appropriate and feasible.

    b. This approach also helps with cost share. For example, without the university space, there would have been costs associated with venue rental.

    c. Ensure that communications and outreach plans are extremely detailed and include the specific individuals or organizations who will be targeted through which media format/platform. Plans should also clarify who is responsible for conducting outreach.

    d. Offer potential partners an area of mutual benefit to encourage participation. For example, when possible, tap into media outlets' existing corporate social responsibility structures as incentive to participate.

7. **Begin planning for and identifying partners earlier in the design process. The partner identification process should likely begin a minimum of six months prior to the anticipated date of the Ideathon.**

    e. Take into account the length of time it will need to get all stakeholders on board as well as the timing of the activity. IRI staff members noted the significant time required to foster buy-in during the project's kick-off, especially because this was IRI's largest project in Panamá to date. Additionally, holidays are a difficult period to get in touch with contacts in Latin America. When working with school-aged youth, consider school calendars.

    f. The timeline should be determined by how much pre- training will be given (see recommendations four and five above). All partners should be finalized a minimum of three months prior to the event.

8. **Provide additional breaks throughout the day or reduce the length of the Ideathon day to account for interest and attention spans.** However, take care

not to hinder ad-hoc conversations, especially between youth and other stakeholders, as these interactions are also extremely valuable. One method is to have the youth engage throughout the Ideathon, then separate the presentation of the projects by municipality. Presentations could even be recorded and shown to the youth at another follow-on or alumni event.

Working with Panamanian youth beyond the Ideathon:

9. **IRI and other implementers should look for opportunities to increase the number and quality of positive interactions between municipal authorities, the private sector, university youth, or other community stakeholders and youth in Panamá.** IRI should consider a more formal, longer-term program for youth, such as a sustainable mentorship or internship program. This could be achieved through *De Joven a Joven*, embedding youth in Mayor's offices for a short period of time, or pairing university youth with *Centros del Alcance*. This type of program could contribute substantially to a change in mentors' perception regarding the role of youth in Panamá.
   a. When establishing these programs, formal youth participant selection should involve selection criteria to determine the individual's commitment to the program, the amount of time available to dedicate to the program, and relevant skills and abilities.
   b. The programs themselves should outline specific, attainable goals for participants, remaining cognizant of workloads and other pressures that youth may be facing and tailoring program responsibilities accordingly.
   c. These programs could be well-received by mayors and municipal authorities as mutually beneficial initiatives, especially if participating youth assist with their immediate needs/tasks. Furthermore, successful programs could promote rapport and potential shifts in mindset regarding the role of youth in Panamá.

10. **Activities where youth are "in the driver's seat" should be prioritized and expanded.** While still a novel concept in Panamá, such initiatives are very well received by both youth and implementers.
    a. Based on feedback from youth, making beneficiaries also the protagonists encouraged their participation in and commitment to the program.
    b. Involving Ideathon alumni in future activities allows them to constructively apply their experience and benefit new participants, transforming them from beneficiaries to mentors.

11. **Panamanian youth often have a strong desire to help their communities and especially each other; tap into this internal motivation whenever possible when conducting youth-focused programs.** Based on findings, youth mentioned

a willingness to address problems in their communities and help their peers, but simply did not know how to do so.

12. **Whenever possible, tap into existing networks or structures of the targeted demographic; in this case, youth.** In IRI's case, partnering with the *Centros de Alcance* was fundamental to sustaining youth participation in the Ideathon. The youth had pre-existing and well-established routines within the *Centros de Alcance*, and trusted and respected the *Centro* coordinators.

Appendix A: Detailed Methodology

First, evaluation questions were crafted to provide a framework for the research effort. These questions were formulated after a desk review of relevant project documents, including the initial proposal and semi-annual reports submitted to the funder, and designed to identify both the intended results (project proposal) as well as the emerging results (funder reports). The questions were refined several times, in close consultation with the program team, to appropriately capture and document both known and unknown results. Additionally, the third set of evaluation questions was designed to identify and elaborate upon lessons learned and best practices related to the Ideathon to inform future project design.

- **Evaluation Question 1:** How did the Ideathon change the perceptions of and expectations for youth's role in local communities?
    - o Did youth beneficiaries' perceptions of themselves change?
    - o Did the beneficiaries' expectations for their future role in the community change?
    - o Did the municipal authorities' expectations of the role of youth in the community change?
- **Evaluation Question 2:** Have interactions between Panamanian youth and community stakeholders changed after the Ideathon?
    - o Have interactions between Panamanian youth and the University of Santa Maria Antigua changed after the Ideathon?
- **Evaluation Questions 3:** From a project design and implementation perspective, what contributed to the success of the Ideathon?
    - o What lessons can be learned to further improve the design and implementation of similar projects in the future?

IRI's internal evaluation team then began data collection utilizing the finalized evaluation questions. Between August 10-17, 2016, the evaluation team traveled to Panamá to collect qualitative data from project beneficiaries, partners, IRI staff and other identified stakeholders (please see appendix C for a copy of all the data collection tools used). A total of 40 individuals (22 women and 18 men) were engaged via one-on-one in-depth interviews and interactive group interviews with the students. Semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted with the mayor, staff from the mayor's office, IRI staff, the media representative, the United Way representative and the *Centro* coordinators. While these interviews were conducted in Spanish, English transcriptions of each were produced by a professional translator from audio recordings. Group interviews were conducted with youth who participated in the Ideathon. Youth interviewees were selected by *Centro* coordinators based on the

students' schedules and availability after school. Prior to conducting every interview, the internal evaluation team provided informed consent to each participant regarding the interview process and how that information would be used in writing this report. The internal evaluation team obtained verbal permission to use the information and name of each individual included in this report. The group interview process was as follows: students were asked a question as a group and then responded by writing their thoughts and opinions on a brightly colored notecard. Volunteers were then asked to share what they had written on the notecard and respond to probing questions from evaluators, if necessary. The notecards were collected after each question was asked and translated afterward. All interviews were conducted with interpretation assistance (English-Spanish) and all interviews were recorded with an audio recorder. English transcriptions of the conversations were produced by a professional translator following the interviews.

Immediately following data collection, the evaluation team began analyzing the data through systematic coding of the English transcripts. After a cursory review of the transcripts, a code key was developed to guide the coding process, which was conducted by the internal evaluation team. After all transcripts were coded, draft findings were identified and used by the evaluation team to develop recommendations. Both the draft findings and recommendations were refined and validated with IRI's Panamá team. The final report was completed in September 2017.

Limitations
As with all carefully planned evaluations, there were some limitations to the design and implementation of this evaluation. IRI's internal evaluation team took steps to mitigate these limitations whenever possible. First, due to the lack of time and resources, the evaluation team was unable to gather any quantitative data to triangulate the qualitative data gathered during the evaluation. Ideally, pre and posttests measuring actual knowledge gain would have been distributed prior to and after IRI's interventions. In the absence of such tests, IRI relied primarily on the observations of *Centro* coordinators, who interacted most closely and frequently with youth participants, to assess changes in knowledge and capacity. Second, the interviews were conducted via interpretation by IRI's Panamá team staff. The quality of interpretation was high and any unclear statements were immediately addressed and clarified. Additionally, IRI believes that the interview transcripts significantly mitigated any misrepresentation that may have inadvertently occurred during the live, consecutive interpretation. While IRI Panamá staff were careful to explain their role as interpreters who made no judgements based on interviewees' responses, it is possible that their presence in the discussions influenced interviewees' responses. Finally, the internal evaluation team was reliant on the IRI Panamá team and on the *Centro* coordinators for

the sampling of interviewees. To mitigate this potential selection bias, the internal evaluation team repeatedly emphasized the importance of unbiased and impartial interviewee selection and questioned the rationale for interviewee selection repeatedly. The internal evaluation team also requested additional interviews while on the data collection trip.

Appendix B: Additional Supporting Evidence

Additional Supporting Evidence for Finding 1a.1:

- Eduardo: "I have improved as a person."
- Pastor: "There was a positive change; ambitious goals have been established in their personal lives and in their participation and integration in the work conducted in the Center and in the projection with other young people. Yes, there has been a change."
- Madiliz: "I think it was very good what happened in a single day [during the Ideathon] but I think it will help me in life…I felt excitement because we were experimenting [with] something that I never thought would happen. Since that day, I have learned a bit more and to not be shy."
- Emmanual: "I felt more committed and more responsible."
- Nayarith: "I think it did change me a lot. I have always had a few ideas to share but I guess I did not dare to do anything since I thought there were some people that were not interested or that were not going to pay any mind to those sorts of ideas. It has helped me in such a way, I now like sharing ideas…"
- Mayor of San Miguelito: "They themselves were surprised and noticed that they also could contribute and offer ideas and solutions to problems."
- Madiliz: "I think I have changed my way of being, behavior and address others with respect….my way of speaking…"
- Gabriel: "I learned many things, especially about responsibility and the commitment we have to help other youth people that do not know much about the topics. I feel very committed with this cause…for me, it was a grand opportunity and to be able to learn more about things I knew nothing about."
- Ivan: "There is some really talented youth that stood out with their drawings. We are also thinking on inviting them to fix, decorate the parks."
- Karla: "They owned the issue and I think they are learning…you can see…their evolution, it was a good evolution for them. [For example] the first time they presented they were in shorts and the second time they were dressed right and its important when you are going to present something."
- Jossi: "From *Tengo Una Idea,* a few things I liked the most was the knowledge, the learning experience. There were so many things one did not know about…"

Additional Supporting Evidence for Finding 1a.2:

- Malka: "…because it is a great idea to be part of this since it will help us support others. I do not mean just myself but supporting other talented adolescents. I have seen many talents and I have to help other young people that want to partake in the project."

- Anthony: "I feel we have changed together with other youth...Because it motivated us to always give each other support...and continue forward knowing we could either win or lose...."
- Jossi: "...support between friends and the fellowship led us to victory and to have a better experience."

Additional Supporting Evidence for Finding 2.1a:

- Ivan: "Their alliance was very motivating...there was an interaction with all the youth but the person [university mentor] who was assigned to work with us, really devoted himself to the interaction with the youth. I think that helped make them feel really good...He did not give them the answers but he did help them in things they unsure about. I think that participation was essential...That participation was very important."
- Ramsey: "The kids [university mentors] were so enthusiastic and very passionate about what they were doing, the volunteers [university mentors] also in that day they completely changed, I could feel. Because from the meeting before, they were ok, they were there, they were interested, but that day they were really engaged, they were really interested in what we are doing, doing their work."
- Daysi: "They had a [university] mentor assigned that provided them with the tools or anything they needed; if they had any sort of doubt because it seemed like they were project specialists or at least they managed the topic very well, they would give the youth guidance/orient them on how they could begin designing all the things they needed...They sort of mapped things out for them so they could start organizing their ideas and have them make sense."

Appendix C: Data Collection Tools

Interview protocol for <u>Mayors/Municipal Staff</u>

Informed Consent Statement: Thanks very much for taking the time to talk with us today. I'm _____ with the International Republican Institute, based in our Washington DC office. Specially, I'm from our research department and I'm here in Panamá today to better understand the results of the Ideathon that IRI's Panamá team organized in March 2016. Additionally, we are hoping to understand what factors were important to organizing and publicizing the Ideathon. Thus, we'd like to talk to you about your experience with/at the Ideathon. We will use the information that you share with us to write a report about what we learned. While the primary intent of the report is for internal IRI learning and adaptation purposes, some parts or all of this report may be made public. For example, we may post it on our website and we will share it with our funder, the National Endowment for Democracy.

Now, we'd like to ask you some questions about your experiences and thoughts regarding the Ideathon. Please know that there are no right or wrong answers. We are only interested in your honest thoughts, opinions and responses. Also, if there is a question that you don't feel comfortable answering, that's ok. You do not have to answer it. I will be taking notes on my computer to help me remember your responses. Knowing all of this, are you willing to participate in this discussion?

(Assuming they say yes) Great. Thank you. Also, would it be ok to use your name in the report? For example, we may want to list your name as giving a specific example or story. Would that be ok? Ok, great! Let's begin.

First, I'd like to know a little bit more about you and your position as mayor/municipal staff.

1. Please tell me a little about yourself.
    a. How did you come to be mayor/part of the municipality's staff? How long have you been one?
    b. What are some of the major issues/priorities for you/your position?
    c. What are some of the challenges that you face in your position/role?
2. Generally speaking, what are your impressions of youth in Panamá?
    a. What about youth in your municipality in particular?
3. What do you know about the Ideathon?
    a. What did you think when you first heard about it? (When the idea was first presented to you, what did you think about?)
    b. Were you involved with the Ideathon at all?
    c. If so, how? Please explain.
4. What expectations did you have for/about the Ideathon?
    a. Why?
5. Did you attend the Ideathon?

       a. Did the Ideathon meet the expectations you had?
            i. Why or why not?
       b. I'm sure you are very busy and have a lot of demands on your time. So, what made you want to attend the Ideathon? What piqued your curiosity?
       c. Did you watch any of the presentations?
       d. What did you feel when you were watching them?
       e. Do any of the presentations in particular stand out?
6. In your own opinion, do you think the Ideathon was successful?
       a. Why or not?
7. Has anything about your work changed since the Ideathon?
8. Has anything about your interactions with youth changed since the Ideathon?
       a. Like what? Can you give an example?
9. After the Ideathon, what do you think the role of youth should be?
       a. Has anything changed?
10. What did you think about the winning teams/ideas?
11. If you could change one thing about youth in Panamá, what would that be? (Money and time are not issues; think idealistically!)
12. Is there anything else that you think we should know about Panamá, the Ideathon, the youth or IRI's role in any of that?

Thank you so much for your time and your responses! This conversation will be extremely helpful for our research project.

Interview protocol for _Centro_ Coordinators

Informed Consent Statement: Thanks very much for taking the time to talk with us today. I'm _____ with the International Republican Institute, based in our Washington DC office. Specifically, I'm from our research department and I'm here in Panamá today to better understand the results of the Ideathon that IRI's Panamá team organized in March 2016. Additionally, we are hoping to understand what factors were important to organizing and publicizing the Ideathon. Thus, we'd like to talk to you about your experience with/at the Ideathon. We will use the information that you share with us to write a report about what we learned. While the primary intent of the report is for internal IRI learning and adaptation purposes, some parts or all of this report may be made public. For example, we may post it on our website and we will share it with our funder, the National Endowment for Democracy.

Now, we'd like to ask you some questions about your experiences and thoughts regarding the Ideathon. Please know that there are no right or wrong answers. We are only interested in your honest thoughts, opinions and responses. Also, if there is a question that you don't feel comfortable answering, that's ok. You do not have to answer it.

I will be taking notes on my computer to help me remember your responses. Knowing all of this, are you willing to participate in this discussion?

(Assuming they say yes) Great. Thank you. Also, would it be ok to use your name in the report? For example, we may want to list your name as giving a specific example or story. Would that be ok? Ok, great! Let's begin.

First, I'd like to know a little bit more about you and your position as a _Centro_ Coordinator.

1. Please tell me a little bit about the work of the _Centro_.
	a. How long have you been in this position?
	b. What sorts of programs do you have?
2. What expectations did you have for the Ideathon? What did you think it would be like?
	a. Did the Ideathon meet your expectations?
3. What about it piqued your interest? Why did you want youth to be involved?
4. What did you do to encourage youth to participate? What did you tell them?
5. In your opinion, what did the youth think about the Ideathon before they participated?
	a. How did they prepare?
	b. How did you/the _Centro_ help them prepare?
6. Do you think the Ideathon met expectations of the youth?
	a. Why or why not?

7. I understand that you are still in close contact with the youth. In your opinion, do you think participating in the Ideathon has affected the youth or changed anything for the youth or about the youth?

    a. How?

    b. Do you have any examples or stories that make you think that?

8. If you were do it again (participate in the Ideathon), what would you do differently?

    a. What would you change?

    b. Why? To what end?

9. What do you think needs to change to make the Ideathon better?

    a. Maybe youth need to be better/differently prepared for the actual event?

    b. Maybe media need a different role?

    c. Maybe IRI needs to play a different role/offer different or better role?

    d. What about the mayors?

    e. What about the university mentors?

10. Is there anything else that you think we should know about Panamá, the Ideathon, the youth or IRI's role in any of that?

Interview protocol for <u>University Student Mentors</u>

Informed Consent Statement: Thanks very much for taking the time to talk with us today. I'm _____ with the International Republican Institute, based in our Washington DC office. Specifically, I'm from our research department and I'm here in Panamá today to better understand the results of the Ideathon that IRI's Panamá team organized in March 2016. Additionally, we are hoping to understand what factors were important to organizing and publicizing the Ideathon. Thus, we'd like to talk to you about your experience with/at the Ideathon. We will use the information that you share with us to write a report about what we learned. While the primary intent of the report is for internal IRI learning and adaptation purposes, some parts or all of this report may be made public. For example, we may post it on our website and we will share it with our funder, the National Endowment for Democracy.

Now, we'd like to ask you some questions about your experiences and thoughts regarding the Ideathon. Please know that there are no right or wrong answers. We are only interested in your honest thoughts, opinions and responses. Also, if there is a question that you don't feel comfortable answering, that's ok. You do not have to answer it. I will be taking notes on my computer to help me remember your responses. Knowing all of this, are you willing to participate in this discussion?

(Assuming they say yes) Great. Thank you. Also, would it be ok to use your name in the report? For example, we may want to list your name as giving a specific example or story. Would that be ok? Ok, great! Let's begin.

First, I'd like to know a little bit more about you and your position as a university student mentor.

1. Please tell me a little bit about yourself and your role as a university mentor.
2. What made you want to get involved in the Ideathon? Why did you get involved in the Ideathon in this role?
3. What did you think about the Ideathon before it happened? What were your expectations?
4. What were your preparations with the youth like (before the Ideathon event)? What sorts of advice or guidance did you give?
5. Imagine that day (of the Ideathon) again. What were you feeling? What was memorable?
6. What has happened since the Ideathon?
    a. Are you still in touch with any of the participants?
7. Do you think it was successful?
    a. Why? Please be specific.
8. Do you think any of your ideas or opinions or interests have changed since the Ideathon?
    a. Can you give me a story or example about that?

9. What about the youth you have mentored? Are you still in touch with any of the youth?

     a. Since the Ideathon, have you noticed any changes in the youth you were/are mentoring?

10. If you were to participate in a similar event again, what would you like to see done differently? What do you think IRI can/should have done differently?

Interview protocol for <u>Panamanian Media</u>

Informed Consent Statement: Thanks very much for taking the time to talk with us today. I'm _____ with the International Republican Institute, based in our Washington DC office. Specifically, I'm from our research department and I'm here in Panamá today to better understand the results of the Ideathon that IRI's Panamá team organized in March 2016. Additionally, we are hoping to understand what factors were important to organizing and publicizing the Ideathon. Thus, we'd like to talk to you about your experience with/at the Ideathon. We will use the information that you share with us to write a report about what we learned. While the primary intent of the report is for internal IRI learning and adaptation purposes, some parts or all of this report may be made public. For example, we may post it on our website and we will share it with our funder, the National Endowment for Democracy.

Now, we'd like to ask you some questions about your experiences and thoughts regarding the Ideathon. Please know that there are no right or wrong answers. We are only interested in your honest thoughts, opinions and responses. Also, if there is a question that you don't feel comfortable answering, that's ok. You do not have to answer it. I will be taking notes on my computer to help me remember your responses. Knowing all of this, are you willing to participate in this discussion?

(Assuming they say yes) Great. Thank you. Also, would it be ok to use your name in the report? For example, we may want to list your name as giving a specific example or story. Would that be ok? Ok, great! Let's begin.

First, I'd like to know a little bit more about you and your position as a member of the Panamanian media.

1. Tell me a little bit about yourself and your position at MedCom.
2. What did you first think when you heard about the Ideathon?
3. Why did you decide to partner with IRI to support this program? Ideathon?
     a. What made you interested in it or want to support it?
     b. Why was it beneficial to you all to participate/support this?
4. Did you attend the Ideathon? Imagine you are at the Ideathon again.
     a. What were your impressions of the Ideathon?
     b. What did you think? What did you feel?
5. Do you think the Ideathon is different than other events or projects like this? (Have you attended/covered events like this previously?)
     a. If so, why? How? What makes it different?
6. How did you cover the Ideathon? What "angle" did you choose to show?
     a. Why?
7. What advice would you give IRI or similar groups seeking a partnership with the media?

a. When it comes to these types of events or collaboration, what would be more useful or beneficial to you?

b. What makes your job easier?

8. What did IRI and the other implementing partners do well?

9. What could they do better?

Interview protocol for <u>United Way Staff</u>

Informed Consent Statement: Thanks very much for taking the time to talk with us today. I'm _____ with the International Republican Institute, based in our Washington DC office. Specifically, I'm from our research department and I'm here in Panamá today to better understand the results of the Ideathon that IRI's Panamá team organized in March 2016. Additionally, we are hoping to understand what factors were important to organizing and publicizing the Ideathon. Thus, we'd like to talk to you about your experience with/at the Ideathon. We will use the information that you share with us to write a report about what we learned. While the primary intent of the report is for internal IRI learning and adaptation purposes, some parts or all of this report may be made public. For example, we may post it on our website and we will share it with our funder, the National Endowment for Democracy.

Now, we'd like to ask you some questions about your experiences and thoughts regarding the Ideathon. Please know that there are no right or wrong answers. We are only interested in your honest thoughts, opinions and responses. Also, if there is a question that you don't feel comfortable answering, that's ok. You do not have to answer it. I will be taking notes on my computer to help me remember your responses. Knowing all of this, are you willing to participate in this discussion?

(Assuming they say yes) Great. Thank you. Also, would it be ok to use your name in the report? For example, we may want to list your name as giving a specific example or story. Would that be ok? Ok, great! Let's begin.

First, I'd like to know a little bit more about you and your position at the United Way.

1. Tell me a little bit about yourself and the work of United Way in Panamá.

2. How/why were you interested in the Ideathon project?

3. Overall, do you think this was a successful project?

a. Why?

4. Was this a unique initiative for the United Way to support/participate in?

a. Why or why not? Can you explain?

5. It seems to me like the *Centros* de Alcance were very interested in and supportive of the Ideathon initiative. Why do you think they were supportive of this?

a. Or, how did you motivate them/encourage them to participate in the initiative?

6. Have you talked to any of the youth participants since they participated in the Ideathon?

       a. In your opinion, do you think any of their thoughts/opinions about engaging with local governments have changed? If yes, what?

       b. In your opinion, do you think any of their thoughts/opinion about themselves and their futures have changed? If yes, what?

7. If you were to participate in the Ideathon again, what would you have done differently? Please explain.

8. Would you consider partnering with IRI again? Why or why not?

9. Would you recommend other organizations like the United Way partner with IRI in the future?

       a. Why or why not?

10. Is there anything else that you think we should know about the Ideathon, IRI, Panamanian youth or anything related to that?

Appendix D: List of Interviewees

List of Interviewees:

	Title/Type	Name
Panamá City		
Santa Ana	*Centro* Coordinator	Ivan Richards (Pastor)
	Youth Participant 1	Erick Barrios
	Youth Participant 2	Kevin Martínez
	Youth Participant 3	Alberto Martínez
	Youth Participant 4	Raul Pahoza (?)
	Youth Participant 5	Aleyka Garenero
	Youth Participant 6	Nancy Aranez
	Youth Participant 7	Genesis Tápia
	Youth Participant 8	Hilary Caleres
	Youth Participant 9	Ruth Martínez
	Youth Participant 10	Abbys Maytín
	Youth Participant 11	Rada Martínez
Brooklincito	*Centro* Coordinator	Daysi Gómez
	Youth Participant 1	Nayarith Cruz
	Youth Participant 2	Carlos David González
	Youth Participant 3	Madiliz Campos
	Youth Participant 4	Yeimy Fajando
24 de Diciembre	*Centro* Coordinator	Eduardo Barsallo
San Miguelito		

	Mayor	Gerald Cumberbatch
	Centro Coordinator	Cecilia Moreno Rojas
Victoriano Lorenzo	Youth Participant 1	Gabriel Torrres
	Youth Participant 2	Malka Padilla
	Youth Participant 3	Jossibel Garriga
	Youth Participant 4	Emanuel Toribio
	Centro Coordinator	Jane Tinoco
	Centro Coordinator	Pastor Eusebio
San Pancracio	Youth Participant 1	Anthony Sánchez
	Youth Participant 2	Robinson
	Youth Participant 3	Mirna
	Media 1	Lilineś Urriola
	University Mentor 1	Marco Trudo
	University Contact 1	Samuel Vásquez
	University Contact 2	Itzel Córdoba
Other	United Way 1	Rina Rodríguez
	Mayor's Office 1	Maryann Graf Von Luxburg
	Mayor's Office 2	Karla Campos
	Mayor's Office 3	Lorena Gómez
	IRI RPD (field)	Marcelo Quiroga
	IRI PO/SPA	Christine Zaino
	IRI PA (field)	Ramsey Rodríguez