About AVPE

AVPE was founded in 2014 by Ed Thompson and Sam Bahour, who learned to know each other when Ed travelled to Palestine with Eyewitness Palestine; Sam was one of the featured speakers. Sam’s subsequent speaking tour in Chicago deepened their relationship. Both men saw the need to build bridges between American and Palestinian businesses—as a way to support Palestine, and a challenge to often-negative political interactions. Enlisting a board of professionals, Sam and Ed envisioned a volunteer non-profit organization that would connect businesses across the world. Today, the organization has transformed and expanded, with paid staff carrying out its important work in both countries. AVPE also cultivates a network of business people in the U.S. and Palestine who offer voluntary and paid advice and expertise.
The Israeli–Palestinian conflict has gone on for more than seven decades. It often seems that a viable and lasting resolution is distant and complex. At Americans for a Vibrant Palestinian Economy (AVPE), we believe economic development cannot—and should not—wait for political change.

We believe the effective use of business and economic levers can make life bearable for Palestinians and provide the experience needed to sustain dignified, empowering livelihoods—now and beyond.

Study after study has documented the debilitating constraints imposed on Palestinians that disrupt business and stifle the economy. In the name of security, the Israeli military stalls and blocks the movement of people and goods, interrupts daily life with patrols and violence, and maintains an atmosphere of insecurity that stifles normal planning and investment. Families are then unable to provide for their daily needs and become frustrated and resentful. Their political freedom is also tied to their economic freedom—the right to compete globally on a level playing field. And Americans and Palestinians working together create hope and a glimpse of economic expansion.

When Americans do business with Palestinians, their involvement brings not only new technology and markets but also a backbone of support that helps Palestinians to overcome the array of obstacles they face. By learning about Palestine, Americans challenge their own perceptions about the people and the conflict, laying the groundwork for better policies. Through connections to Americans, the Palestinian business community becomes more engaged and less isolated. Palestinian businesses produce numerous goods and products that are ripe for development and scale-up for the vast U.S. market. And Americans and Palestinians working together create hope and a glimpse of economic independence—a future in which Palestinians can compete globally on a level playing field.

Nevertheless, many Palestinian enterprises have found ways to survive and even thrive. Palestinian business owners, chasing the entrepreneurial dream, show amazing resilience and creativity in trying to overcome the man-made obstacles they face. This is where we come in. By the time Palestinian business people have coped with Israeli constraints and obstacles, they are spent and have little time to handle the usual business challenges that are key to success.

AVPE’s mission is to create social change and sow seeds of hope by building bridges between American and Palestinian enterprises, providing each with the knowledge, contacts, and context they need to collaborate and thrive.

A free, independent and growing Palestinian economy will make the entire region more secure. Every business transaction and job created plants another seed of hope so that Palestinians can constructively engage to build a future of freedom and economic independence. As impediments on the ground lift, these lasting relationships and investments will support vibrant economic expansion.

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Dear stakeholders,

We present this report during one of the most sensitive times in the U.S.-Palestine bilateral relationship, not to mention a time of great transformation in the respective histories of each nation. In the U.S., the administration is consciously turning the economy inward. Palestine’s economy, on the other hand, is nearing collapse due to the direct impact of decades of Israeli military occupation, but also because the U.S. administration seeks to punish Palestinians for rejecting its policies by withholding financial support. The Trump administration has also severed ties with Palestinians—formerly allies—closing the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) office in Washington, D.C., dismissing its diplomat, moving the U.S. embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, and, most dramatically, merging the U.S. Consulate in East Jerusalem (which was established in 1844) with the internationally-disputed relocated U.S. Embassy in Jerusalem. It has also effectively—and ominously—green-lighted the annexation of land by declaring the occupied Golan Heights to be under Israeli sovereignty.

Despite this crisis, AVPE is more determined than ever to contribute to cooperative Palestinian-Israeli relationships that create hope and a future of freedom and economic independence for Palestinians. We strongly believe that a growing Palestinian economy will make both Palestinians and Israelis more secure.

This report relates AVPE’s strategic redirection based on experience garnered since its founding in 2014. The years of 2016, 2017 and 2018 were a period of analyzing what works, doubling down on successful formulas, hiring staff, and emphasizing knowledge transfer.

We entered 2016 with a portfolio of more than 20 Palestinian companies who were interested in exporting products or services to America. In the last half of 2015 and the first half of 2016, the board worked to find U.S. partners for these Palestinian companies. In July of 2016, the rectors met in Chicago to assess our progress and fine-tune our business model. That resulted in a new model, one that emphasizes targeted bridging services.

2016 was a year of learning; we refined our business model, put the organization on firm financial footing, and dedicated paid human resources to our vision.

We had discovered that American enterprises were unable to stay engaged with Palestinian companies through phone calls, emails, and on-line conferences. We needed committed staff in Palestine to build and maintain relationships with businesses and business organizations. In 2017, we added a part-time operations person in Palestine, Reema AbuShaheen, to do this crucial work—work that we were unable to do from thousands of miles away in America.
In April 2017, AVPE’s president, Ed Thompson, spent three weeks in Palestine, coordinating with AVPE’s chair Sam Bahour, Reema AbuShaheen, and Nisreen Musleh, one of our Palestinian directors, to refine our business model and test out ideas with Palestinians in the local business community.

In July 2017, the board approved the new business model and developed materials to market our services to Palestinian companies. Our revised model now focuses on fulfilling precise requests from those persons or companies wishing to connect to American or Palestinian markets. This revised approach better reflects the incremental nature of building trust and relationships in order to enter new markets. We also signed agreements with several business organizations and presented our services to their members, seeking to attract them to do business in the U.S. Toward the end of 2017, the Trump administration made decisions with drastic implications for Palestinians. Even though we have never received any government funding, AVPE was unable to get traction in an atmosphere where Palestinians were quite angry at the U.S. Few saw doing business in the U.S. as viable or desirable.

We doubled down on our efforts and began a hiring search for a U.S.-based operations person. AVPE’s president again visited Palestine in January 2018 for one week promoting the organization in Hebron and meeting with other businesses and business organizations in the West Bank. By April of 2018, AVPE had hired Layla A. Kaiksow as part-time America Operations Officer. We were fortunate to find an American with Arabic language skills, raised in Madison, Wisconsin, who had also lived for 12 years in the West Bank.

By the end of 2018, AVPE had generated a dozen projects to build bridges between American and Palestinian business people. We worked with a class at DePaul University to develop a new website that was brought online in the summer of 2018. On three separate visits, Layla began forming relationships with many of the friends, donors, and volunteers of AVPE in the Chicago area.

In 2019, we hit the ground running, having honed our new field-tested model. The political challenges only reinforce for us that our work can be instrumental in changing the reality on the ground to one that is transformative, constructive, and offers hope for a better future. Help us run better and faster by donating, following and liking us on social media, signing up for emails and to volunteer time for in-kind services or to become a virtual advisor.

Sam Bahour, Chair of the Board

Edward Thompson, President

A NEW WORK MODEL

OUR SERVICES

AVPE can help with requests for information, advice, coaching, mentoring, training and other ways that solve problems, transfer knowledge, build organizational capabilities and broaden perspectives.

ADVICE on:
- entering American markets;
- trade show attendance and participation;
- leadership, operations, or other skills or problems that prevent businesses from achieving their potential

SAMPLE DELIVERY to American consumers and distribution channels.

FIND PALESTINIAN PRODUCTS OR SERVICES that individuals and businesses can market in the U.S.

LOCATE PALESTINIANS WITH SPECIAL TECHNICAL SKILLS for Americans and U.S. businesses seeking service development partners outside the U.S., and entry points to Middle East and North Africa markets.

PROVIDE PUBLICLY AVAILABLE INFORMATION TO POTENTIAL INVESTORS who want to make financial investments in Palestine.

PLEASE SEND US ANY SPECIAL REQUESTS—WE ARE GLAD TO CONSIDER THEM!
HOW WE WORK

1. REQUEST SUPPORT
2. REVIEW PROPOSAL
3. GET RESOURCES
4. PROVIDE FEEDBACK

Complete a project initiation application and be interviewed by our staff to ensure we can access the specific resources you are requesting. You will be asked to provide a compelling description of your request and your business venture so that it generates interest when circulated among AVPE’s networks.

Our team prepares a letter of commitment that details the specific request(s) made, what AVPE will provide, and the guidelines for how we will work together—as well as a timeline for completion and a fee for the work.

Once the project is completed, all parties will be asked to submit feedback—to ensure we met your needs, and that AVPE continues to provide the best support possible. This feedback will also be used to generate stories about our work and Palestinian/American business cooperation, to market our services and yours, and to expand our advisory network.

Bethlehem and the surrounding villages are dotted with small workshops where artisans craft unique olive wood icons, arabesque-painted ceramic dishes and a variety of embroidered clothing and home decor products.

Working alone, and facing restrictions on movement, difficult transport, lack of capital, and other challenges of living under military occupation, most of these artisans would find it difficult to eke out a living from their products.

But Bethlehem Fair Trade Artisans (BFTA), an umbrella non-profit organization, has found a way out of the closed-off West Bank for its producers. Using AVPE’s services, it has forged a path for Palestinian goods into the homes and offices of the vast U.S. market. And for these craftspeople, every sale is a lift up—out of poverty and into opportunity.

“BFTA planned a promotional trip to the U.S. with the goal of meeting great new clients,” says BFTA Executive Director Suzan Sahori. “When I landed in NYC and began my mission by attending the B2B Trade Fair in Dallas, the disappointing outcomes made me very pessimistic. BFTA only received small orders.” The organization could not stand out in the fray, and Sahori feared that the costly trip had been a waste.

It was only after the fair, when AVPE set up face-to-face meetings for Sahori with 13 different fair trade partners across the U.S., that she saw the possibilities for her organization and the craftspeople it represents.

“I met the most wonderful people,” says Sahori today, “kind and hospitable, especially with the support of Layla Kaiksow, who arranged days full of different meetings in different cities. Without her dedication, I would have been lost.”

The results were even better: six new American customers and a partner to assist BFTA with storage and distribution of its handicrafts in the U.S. Working together, BFTA and AVPE have been able to magnify the reach of the small enterprises that characterize the handicrafts industry, helping them gain a foothold in an export market. And bigger, better markets means more Palestinian families with food on the table.

CASE STUDY

BETHLEHEM ARTISANS FORGE PATHWAY TO U.S. MARKETS

Using AVPE’s services, Bethlehem Fair Trade Artisans forged a path for Palestinian handicrafts into the vast U.S. market.
WHERE WE WORK

AVPE is incorporated in Illinois, with board members and staff located in Chicago, Detroit, Ames (Iowa), Madison (Wisconsin), Houston, and Boston. It has supported businesses in Chicago, New York City and Austin (Texas), and has a network of contacts all over the United States. At the same time, it has board members and staff in the West Bank town of Ramallah and several agreements with business-oriented organizations that span Palestine.

THE OCCUPIED WEST BANK & GAZA STRIP

The Palestinian town of Ramallah shown here sits less than 30 miles from the coast and Tel Aviv. But the barrier that Israel started to build in 2002—a series of high cement walls, guard towers, monitored fences, gates and checkpoints—blocks access to ports and Israeli markets. A permit system requires Palestinians who seek to travel—sometimes only within the West Bank—to obtain permission from Israel’s military government. The Gaza Strip has been under blockade since 2006, with Israel’s military heavily restricting goods and people that enter and leave the small, fenced territory. A crossing to Egypt is only accessible sometimes and to some people.

The West Bank is home to 2.8 million Palestinians. Some 600,000 Jewish Israelis live there in settlements that are illegal under international law. Gaza’s 1.9 million Palestinians have seen three military aggressions by Israel in the past decade.
KEY EVENTS

April 19-20, 2016, in Atlanta, Georgia - AVPE’s president represents AVPE at the Atlanta Summit of Churches in the U.S. and the Holy Land, a landmark meeting of Palestinian and American religious leaders held at the Carter Center in Atlanta with more than 100 participants.

April 1, 2017, in Ramallah, West Bank – AVPE hires Reema AbuShaheen as its Palestine Operations Officer.

July 2016, in Chicago, Illinois – AVPE directors meet to assess and fine-tune the AVPE model of operations, ultimately deciding to move away from volunteer representation to paid staff that can work more closely with Palestinian and American business people.

August 2016 – AVPE’s website hosted a letter signed by more than 40 Palestinian companies and AVPE requesting the CEO of PayPal to meet to discuss entering the Palestine market. A meeting with PayPal staff was held in Washington, D.C. in December.

November 2017, in Ramallah, West Bank – AVPE spoke to a full house at the Ramallah/Al-Bireh Chambers of Commerce, also signing an agreement to cooperate on creating relationships between Americans and Palestinians. Attendees included over 30 Palestinian companies in various economic sectors.

February 22, 2018, in Charleston, South Carolina – Henry L. Ravenel Jr., Chairman & CEO of the Southeastern Chamber of Commerce invited AVPE President Ed Thompson to speak briefly about successful Palestinian businesses at the organization’s Emerging Leaders Gala 2018 in Charleston, South Carolina. The black tie event brought together over 100 leaders and supporters to recognize nearly a dozen award recipients. The invitation was extended due to Mr. Ravenel’s interest in adding an international dimension to the work of the Southeastern Chamber. After meeting with AVPE Chair Sam Bahour in Ramallah, an acquaintance of Mr. Ravenel had recommended that he talk with AVPE in the U.S.

April 1, 2018, in Madison, WI – AVPE hires Layla A. Kaiksow as its America Operations Officer.

January 2018 – AVPE launches a new website describing its services.

October 17, 2018, in Provo, Utah – AVPE’s president spoke of the organization’s experiences on a panel entitled “Palestine & Humanitarian Efforts of NGOs & Non-Profits: Hope and Challenges” alongside Palestinians and Americans at Brigham Young University. The Museum of Peoples and Cultures was opening an exhibit entitled “Returning to Bethlehem: A Cultural Pilgrimage.”

December 5, 2018 – AVPE presents its work to more than 50 community members from the greater Chicago area, hosted by Muslim Community Center of Morton Grove, IL, and partnering with Hands of Peace, which brings together young Palestinians, Israelis, and Americans to develop leadership and peace-building skills.

July 2018, in Ramallah, West Bank – Members of the Palestine Information Technology Association learned more about AVPE’s mission to build bridges between Palestinian and American businesses and discussed how Palestinian IT companies can compete in the U.S. market, and signed a Memorandum of Understanding about how PITA and AVPE can work together.

Summer 2018 – AVPE launches a new website describing its services.

2016 2017 2018

Al-Wafa Plastic Industries is located in Hebron in the West Bank, and produces several kinds of plastic containers.

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Entrepreneurship in Palestine

There are approximately 240,000 Palestinian small businesses among five million Palestinians, employing more than 85% of private sector workers and contributing more than 55% of the Palestinian GDP. Women run one-fourth of small and medium enterprises, although their participation in the overall labor force is lower than nearly every other country. A large proportion of these businesses are family-owned and operated.

Industrial and agricultural sectors have shrunken in recent years, and sectors producing non-tradable goods expanded in turn. Unemployment has been chronically high, up to 26.9% in 2016 (18.2% in the West Bank and 41.7% in Gaza). Many enterprises are begun out of necessity, which lends itself to a comparatively high failure rate. In 2012, 42% of Palestinian entrepreneurs (and two-thirds of female and youth entrepreneurs) were driven by need rather than by opportunity, according to Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) data. Overall, entrepreneurial activities in Palestine are in a nascent stage, and facing numerous obstacles—not least the ubiquitous occupation.

Source: “The Occupied Palestinian Territory: An Employment Diagnostic Study,” Regional Office for Arab States, 2018.
GETTING IT RIGHT

AVPE’s vision is really great, even though it may be difficult to implement. AVPE’s team works hard to meet their objectives and achieve success stories in both the U.S. and Palestine. As a result of our cooperation, my company was able to reach a client interested in our Palestinian olive oil. We sent a sample and began discussing prices. We all hope that things will proceed well with this valuable client and that this is the beginning of more cooperation and more success with AVPE.

Adnan Jaber, General Manager
Export Circles

I was introduced to AVPE by Nisreen Musleh while brainstorming ideas for my new company. I was not yet ready to benefit from AVPE’s services, however, Reema AbuShaheen (AVPE’s Palestine Operations Officer) still worked hard to help me find the right resources. Reema was just amazing! She introduced me to another program that was exactly what my project needed. I am already thinking seriously about how AVPE can support my company at a later stage and look forward to being in touch in the near future. Grateful for Reema and AVPE!

Rula Jadallah, Founder, CEO
MyLB Speaks Palestinian

AVPE has opened product sourcing opportunities for us that previously seemed inaccessible. In 2016, I launched a new business—mebl | Transforming Furniture—the centerpiece of which is a global representation of beautiful furniture handcrafted from reclaimed wood and metal. We are trying to promote greater sustainability in the furniture industry. My colleagues and I had been eager for two years to source furniture from talented Palestinian furniture-makers, but honestly, we were having trouble making inroads. Since beginning to collaborate with AVPE, the ball is now rolling! We have begun discussions/negotiations with one promising Palestinian design shop that makes handsome furniture from used materials. Thank you AVPE!

Michael J Hirschhorn, Founder/CEO
mebl | Transforming Furniture
meblfurniture.com

I had been looking at the Bethlehem Fair Trade Artisans website to see if their products would be a good fit for my new non-profit business, when I heard about the coming trip to the U.S. of their executive director. I invited Ms. Sahori to stay with me at my home on Martha’s Vineyard, to give a talk about BFTA at a local public library, and to meet merchants who might be interested in carrying the beautiful BFTA handcrafted products. Many thanks to Ms. Kaiksow and AVPE.

Linda Cohen, Founder
Olive Branch Fair Trade Inc.
olivebranchfairtrade@gmail.com

AVPE attended a sweets expo to assist its partners in finding markets in the U.S.

Arab Americare Foundation (AAF) really benefited from the expertise of the AVPE team; we hosted them as part of our Youth Leadership Program. We welcomed the esteemed Mr. Sam Bahour to conduct mock job interviews and Ms. Reema AbuShaheen to share on the importance of continued professional development. Working with AVPE added great value to AAF and the services we were able to offer our youth participants. We are excited to continue building this cooperation.

Carol Ziadeh, Program Manager
Arab AmeriCare Foundation

AVPE provides a very valuable service to Palestinian businesses, helping them succeed in the U.S. market by providing advice, networking, representation, and more! Every member of the staff has bent over backward to help my small business succeed, and their efforts had a tangible impact.

Haithem El-Zabri, Owner
Palestine Online Store
palestineonlinestore.com

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AVPE’s new approach emphasizes networking with private sector umbrella organizations in order to magnify impact and effort. We recruit and maintain a voluntary network of hundreds of individuals that stand ready to put us in touch with people they know with expertise, and another narrower network of U.S. and Palestine experts able to meet the specific requests that businesses submit to us for fulfillment. In 2017 and 2018, we signed four agreements with Palestinian organizations in order to expand our reach and develop strategic business relationships.

Supporting Palestine and PITA in Technological Innovation

Due to the scarcity and lack of access to the resources needed for major industry, Palestine’s Information, Communications and Technology (ICT) sector has long been touted as a key area for economic growth. The Palestinian Information Technology Association of Companies (PITA) represents more than 150 major ICT companies in Palestine’s emerging technology and startup ecosystem. Founded in 1999, PITA has become the driving force and information resource in advancing ICT sector interests, holding the annual Expotech featuring an array of Palestine’s ICT innovators.

AVPE and PITA signed an MOU to support Palestinian ICT firms seeking to expand their reach to the U.S. and access American start-up resources. AVPE staff presented its array of services to a full house of PITA members.

Partnering with Arab–Americare, Building Human Resources

Like many countries in the region, Palestine has a large youth population with shrinking employment prospects. U.S.-based Arab–Americare Foundation seeks to advance the professional and economic wellbeing of young Palestinian professionals in the West Bank, as they are the future of the Palestinian workforce and economy. It seeks to improve their employability and invest in training, thus supporting Palestinian economic stability and growth—like AVPE’s overarching objective. Once graduates received Arab–Americare’s job readiness training, AVPE helped to place the new workers with companies in the AVPE network.

Broadening AVPE’s Reach Through the Ramallah & Al-Bireh Chamber of Commerce

The Ramallah & Al-Bireh Chamber of Commerce and Industry was established in 1950 by fewer than 100 merchants that banded together to protect their interests. Today, the organization’s membership numbers over 5,000 enterprises in what has become Palestine’s temporary economic/business headquarters, until it can be reestablished in Jerusalem. One of the Chamber’s roles has been to establish relationships with Chambers of Commerce in neighboring Arab states, dispatching delegations to pursue commercial relationships. It also advocates locally for beneficial regulation and tax laws.

AVPE presented its services to the Chamber at the Memorandum of Understanding signing ceremony, during which the two organizations agreed to cooperate in the mutual interest of bridging Palestinian companies with U.S. markets.

Connecting Creative Entrepreneurs with U.S. Knowledge and Technology

B-Hub is an innovation space within Birzeit University (located in Birzeit, outside Ramallah) designed to nurture entrepreneurial ideas in an environment that offers business development strategies, academics, and infrastructure.

B-Hub serves all potential Palestinian entrepreneurs, whether they are students at the university or not, as well as owners of existing companies of any size or focus. Potential entrepreneurs are provided a comprehensive and integrated range of support including idea generation, business, production, and technological support services, clustering and networking opportunities, and incubation space. Existing companies receive support until they meet target revenues. B-Hub also promotes social equality and green development practices.

AVPE has pledged to work with B-Hub to support entrepreneurs seeking to enter U.S. markets, and more generally with business development support that capitalizes on the experience AVPE has in its ranks.
BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Members of the AVPE Board of Directors bring diverse backgrounds and perspectives in their shared commitment to helping the Palestinian people develop work and life opportunities that will give them hope for a better future. Each member has a personal story that has led to better understanding of the unique challenges Palestinians face and a desire to help. Our board is comprised of realists and optimists, successful thinkers and doers who have made their mark on the business world, education, government and non-profit service and have now signed on to make an even bigger difference for the Palestinian people.

Dima Abushaaban, Treasurer

Dima Abushaaban is a corporate strategy professional with a focus on U.S. healthcare, based in Chicago. She has expertise in management consulting with both private corporations and the public sector, focusing on stimulating organizational efficiency and performance and driving key business decisions through rigorous analysis. She has also advised entrepreneurs in the development of new businesses focusing on market entry, growth strategy, and sustainability. She has lived and worked both in the U.S. and across the Middle East.

Geoffrey Lewis, Compliance

Geoffrey Lewis is a lawyer practicing in New York and Massachusetts. His law practice focuses on trial work and, more particularly, all aspects of family law. In addition, he engages in substantial cross-border business development work in a variety of fields. Active both in Boston and nationally in a number of Jewish organizations over many decades, he is International Co-Chair of the Abraham Initiatives and serves on the board of American Friends of Peace Now. For decades, Mr. Lewis has advocated for a just and peaceful solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Sam Bahour, Chair & Co-Founder

Sam Bahour is a business development consultant based in Al-Bireh-Ramallah, Palestine. His firm, Applied Information Management, specializes in start-ups. Sam is a Palestinian-American who was born and raised in Youngstown, Ohio. He was instrumental in starting several key Palestinian companies, among them the Palestinian Telecommunications Company and Bravo Supermarkets, and speaks regularly to visiting delegations.

Ed Thompson, President & Co-Founder

In 2007, Chicago-based Ed Thompson retired after nearly four decades of consulting in the business community so he could spend all his discretionary time advocating for a just peace in that land between the river and the sea. He met Sam Bahour in 2008 and organized a Chicago speaking tour for him in 2013. The two co-founded AVPE in 2014.

Sana’a Hussien, Secretary

Sana’a Hussien is an attorney in Chicago, IL. For 25 years, Sana’a has represented clients and organizations in corporate development, business and commercial real estate transactions, international business development, and estate planning. She has served on various international delegations and international legal programs. Sana’a is a Palestinian-American, born and raised in Chicago.

Al Asfour, Board Member

Albert Asfour, based in Detroit, is a retired mechanical engineer who engaged in the global automotive market as international sales and marketing manager for a component company. After retirement, Albert started an automotive consulting firm for manufacturers in the Pacific Rim and is active in promoting education for young Palestinians. He also promotes Palestinian products in the U.S. and Mexico.

Nisreen Musleh, Board Member

Founder and managing director of RITAJ Managerial Solutions in Ramallah, Palestine, Nisreen Musleh led her firm from start up to market leadership in professional training management and language services.

Arnold Cowan, Board Member

Arnold R. Cowan, Ph.D., is the Wells Fargo Professor of Finance at Iowa State University in Ames, Iowa. His teaching and research interests are in corporate finance and banking. Arnie is the founder and CEO of Cowan Research, producer of Eventus, an analytical software package for academic research that uses financial market data.
Reema AbuShaheen, Palestine Operations Officer

Reema AbuShaheen is a Business Development Manager with a solid background in management, fundraising, and strategic planning. She worked as part of a global team at Microsoft as a technology evangelist. She was awarded both the Marketing Best Practices Award and Project Execution Best Practice Award over Microsoft Middle East, Africa, and Europe. Reema holds a Bachelor of Science in Computer Information Technology and a Masters in Strategic Planning and Fundraising (Honors). Reema joined AVPE in April 2017 as the Palestine Operations Officer.

Layla Kaiksow, America Operations Officer

Layla A. Kaiksow was raised in Madison, WI and recently returned to the U.S. after living abroad for 12 years in Palestine. Layla is currently based in Houston, Texas with her husband and two children. She has extensive experience working in fair trade and is a World Fair Trade Organization certified Fair Trade Auditor. She holds a Masters degree from the School of Oriental and African Studies (University of London) in International Economic Development. Her professional experience consists of work in various fields of international development, including fair trade, agriculture, women, children, and media. Layla joined AVPE in April of 2018 serving as the America Operations Officer.

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- Indiana Center for Middle East Peace, Inc.
- Rockefeller Brothers Fund
- U.S. Foundation (anonymous)
### FINANCIAL OVERVIEW 2016-18

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ITEMS</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Carryforward liabilities &amp; fund balances at start of year</td>
<td>($46,787)</td>
<td>$25,843</td>
<td>$49,609</td>
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<tr>
<td>Donations and other income</td>
<td>$86,670</td>
<td>$41,630</td>
<td>$22,106</td>
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<td>Donations for fiscal sponsorship</td>
<td>$31,822</td>
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<td>Transfer to fiscal sponsorship less fee</td>
<td>($30,331)</td>
<td>($18,126)</td>
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<td><strong>NET ASSETS</strong></td>
<td>$41,374</td>
<td>$68,542</td>
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<td>Administrative Expense</td>
<td>($6,195)</td>
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<td>($4,737)</td>
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<td>Program Expense</td>
<td>($6,802)</td>
<td>($12,055)</td>
<td>($29,221)</td>
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<td>Fundraising Expense</td>
<td>($2,535)</td>
<td>($1,656)</td>
<td>($2,508)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Expense</td>
<td>($15,532)</td>
<td>($18,933)</td>
<td>($36,466)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL ASSETS</strong></td>
<td>$25,843</td>
<td>$49,609</td>
<td>$37,654</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ed and Sam visit Palestine’s first planned city, Rawabi, north of Ramallah, for a briefing from company staff.
AT AVPE, WE BELIEVE AMERICANS AND PALESTINIANS SHOULD BE PARTNERS FOR HOPE THAT CREATE BRIDGES FOR CHANGE.

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AVPE is a U.S.A. 501(c)(3) Illinois nonprofit organization that delivers a range of services to promote engagement and relationships between American and Palestinian business people. These services include using AVPE networks in the U.S. to find individuals who have the experience and expertise to fulfill requests from Palestinian business people. This may involve requests for information, advice, coaching, mentoring, training and other ways that solve problems, transfer knowledge, build organizational capabilities and broaden perspectives. These connections primarily will happen through virtual meetings but may also involve face-to-face meetings in Palestine or the U.S.