

IFE Insights Reports

■ **Short-Cycle Programs:**

**Effective Responses to Enterprises' Needs
Through Educational Innovation**



**Tecnológico
de Monterrey**



**Institute
for the Future
of Education**

Effective Responses to Enterprises' Needs Through Educational Innovation

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Preface

Learning experiences are increasingly focused on developing skills, while the needs of today's job market change on a daily basis. These shifts require continuously seeking talent for new positions that adapt to the challenges of different industries. Resolving these demands is essential to advancing and improving processes and ways to perform various roles. However, it's also important to consider how to prepare professionals that companies are excited to hire.

The more advances are generated in the models for academic training, the access to quality education increases. However, access is a challenge for many people in Latin America and the world. Opportunities are affected by social and economic contexts, as well as the reproduction of obsolete systems that must be rethought and reassessed to know if there is a transcendental impact.

The commitment to programs that find an intersection between education that aligns with people who want to fill a position and build their future and companies' competency profiles has substantial value.

The catalog of educational offerings is broad; each option has unique characteristics but with a similar goal: to train young people to develop skills that will help them get a job.

The work of many organizations does not end there; they strive to accompany and ensure that they maintain that position. Their reach translates into a change of landscape and new opportunities.

Raising awareness and implementing these options more frequently requires transforming education to align with employment systems. The transformation must be systemic, profound, and with the joint participation of various actors to ensure that it happens. For this reason, this deployment intends to open a space for dialogue and future alliances.

This report derives from collaborating with *Generation Mexico*, the non-profit organization that closes the gap between job offers and youth unemployment. Its objectives align with the Institute for the Future of Education (IFE)'s purpose: to create the future of education that will improve the lives of millions of people worldwide. Our goal is to identify what other fellows are doing to impulse specific strategies and changes that evolve the trajectories of thousands of young people.

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Introduction

As new and streamlined ways of accomplishing a task appear, job requirements change. These transformations in the labor market affect people seeking employment worldwide. Ways to perform specific tasks evolve, leading employers to pursue talent that can adapt to changing situations; however, the available job-seeker profiles do not always match the search.

Training to perform a specific job role is usually a long process requiring a particular preparation that accredits the aptitude for specific skills and qualities. **Thus, various program options emerge that offer alternatives to teach new skills or renew the competencies necessary for another job.**

These options tend to be more concise and prepare young people from different backgrounds more agilely than traditional training models to embark on the world of work and achieve economic and social mobility.

To leverage the labor demand of certain professions, several educational institutions and civil society organizations have created Short-Cycle Programs (SCPs) designed to train qualified human capital in a relatively short period.¹ Usually, the duration varies between two or three years,² compared to higher education training of approximately five years.

Its definition may vary depending on different educational offerings and the depth of the programs; however, we have detected several attractive alternatives to help the youth to obtain a specialization and thereby a decent job.

This report aims to highlight the efforts of the organizations that coordinate these initiatives, their strategies, findings,

and plans. The selection of the following programs fulfills the description of preparing people in a short time (less than a year) to increase their technical and soft skills, apply for vacancies, occupy entry positions, and thrive in various workforce areas.

The information listed in this document was collected through interviews with each of the organizations, as well as data provided within their reports and websites.

The menu of short program offerings is diverse: some organizations have government support, some require financial compensation, and others are philanthropic. Even so, the contextual intersections of the reported organizations and the problems afflicting their target population consider the opinions of collaborating employers.

The initiatives practice active listening for feedback that nourishes their work and continuously update their material, also they develop replicable and scalable methodologies to amplify their impact. Above all, they provide a space for guiding and accompanying young people to integrate into the workforce and help improve their quality of life.

Adopting, accepting, and leveraging talent in these programs leads hiring companies to create effective methods to find and receive these people at their workplaces. From a global scale to countries in Latin America, this scenario poses growth opportunities not only for its young graduates but for actors from different sectors of the population, including employers.

¹ Ferreyra, M., Dinarte-Díaz, L., Urzúa, S., & Bassi, M. (2021). The Fast Track to New Skills, Short-Cycle Higher Education Programs in Latin America and the Caribbean. International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/World Bank. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/229bc91e-cdc0-53fb-8d1e-d2415f7e8cdc/content>

² Ídem

● The Challenges of Post-Pandemic Youth Employment

→ Structural Gap in the Labor Markets

"More than 10 million young people seek employment unsuccessfully in Latin America and the Caribbean."³ According to the International Labour Organization, the pandemic accentuated and increased the challenges faced by young people in the global workplace. Between 2019 and 2020, 15- to 24-year-olds lost more jobs than adults 25 and older.⁴ In 2022, 73 million young people worldwide were expected to be unable to find work by the end of the year.⁵ **Since the pandemic, the Mexican Institute for Competitiveness (IMCO) created a microsite dedicated to monitoring the dynamics of the labor market to identify changes in the structure and propose public policies to address the alterations of the crisis.**⁶

The labor market has faced insufficient jobs, inadequate income, and labor informality.⁷ This means that young people are offered worse working conditions, less job security, disconnection between employee and employer, lower income, and even the absence of a formal contract or legal benefits.

However, IMCO analyzed the number of jobs generated with data from the National Survey of Occupation and Employment (ENOE), which revealed that 2022 culminated with the production of 1.7 million jobs, an increase of 3.1% of the employed population.⁸ Although this was the highest annual increase since 2015, the effects of the pandemic and other factors prevailed. More formal jobs were created, but the figures indicate that more than half of the employed population (55.1%) had an informal job. The number of people with a formal position without benefits increased to 3.1%, and the creation of informal employment in 2022 were filled entirely by women without access to law benefits.

IMCO points out that the challenges related to the sufficiency and quality of employment persisted in 2022; which represents more than seven million people looking for a job or want to work but are not actively seeking.⁹ Currently, more than 700,000 young people between 20 and 29 seek but do not find employment.¹⁰

Mona Mourshed, CEO of Generation, argues that work is one of the most important ways to change a person's life trajectory because the transformation of their professional skills can lead to financial independence.¹¹ However, the process involves several factors. Mourshed points to the gap between what employers need in positions and professions, the skills for each, and what education and training systems prepare worldwide.

One barrier is an insufficient level of applied theory to practice. Another is limitations in

the hiring process. An obstacle Mourshed describes is needy populations with no solid educational experience, only a general apprenticeship, and who want to enter a position that requires a particular skill set or a specific position in the tech sector.¹²

Companies face scarcity challenges; even if they want to hire more people, only a few applicants are suitable for the positions. At other times, some professions experience high turnover, so companies have variations in productivity and quality results. On the other hand, some people have faced various training difficulties; for them, it's complicated to even get to the interview stage. Sometimes the algorithm used in recruitment areas discards profiles that do not have the correct keywords or contain different preparation. If companies invest more quality and time in recruitment processes and young people manage to demonstrate their skills, both parties benefit directly. Mourshed explains that companies cannot find diverse talent if they look in the same candidate pools as in the last decade.¹³

Due to all the factors listed before, a critical terminology is "Opportunity Youth" because several programs are directly geared to their needs. According to Youth with Decent Work, the multisectoral network that works for labor equity and inclusion, Opportunity Youth refers to people between the ages of 15 and 29 who are disconnected from work, education, or training. This concept also includes those with a job providing insufficient income, social security recipients, and those not attending school.¹⁴

3. OIT. (n.d.). Empleo juvenil en América Latina y el Caribe. <https://www.ilo.org/americas/temas/empleo-juvenil/lang-es/index.htm>

4. OIT. (2022). Tendencias Mundiales del Empleo Juvenil 2022. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/-dgreports/-dcomm/-publ/documents/publication/wcms_853332.pdf

5. ONU. (2022). El empleo juvenil es el más afectado por los efectos del COVID-19. [https://news.un.org/es/story/2022/08/1512872#:~:tex-t=La%20cantidad%20de%20j%C3%B3venes%20en%20Internacional%20del%20Trabajo%20\(OIT\)](https://news.un.org/es/story/2022/08/1512872#:~:tex-t=La%20cantidad%20de%20j%C3%B3venes%20en%20Internacional%20del%20Trabajo%20(OIT))

6. IMCO. (2020). Diagnóstico de los cambios en el mercado laboral en tiempos de COVID-19. <https://imco.org.mx/monitor/mercado-laboral/>

7. IMCO. (2022). Informalidad e insuficiencia de empleo limitan el mercado laboral en 2021. https://imco.org.mx/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/El-mercado-laboral-de-México-al-cierre-del-2021-Bolet%C3%81n_20220225.docx.pdf

8. IMCO Staff. (2023). 2022 cerró con la mayor generación de empleos en los últimos 7 años. El desafío persiste en la calidad. <https://imco.org.mx/2022-cerro-con-la-mayor-generacion-de-empleos-en-los-ultimos-7-anos-el-desafio-persiste-en-la-calidad/>

9. Idem

10. Gutiérrez, A. (2023). El complicado futuro que enfrenta la juventud mexicana. El Economista. <https://www.eleconomista.com.mx/capitalhumano/El-complicado-futuro-que-enfrenta-la-juventud-mexicana-20230226-0002.html>

11. Mourshed, M. & Lacina, L. (Host). (2023). Hire better in 2023: Lessons from Generation CEO Mona Mourshed. [Audio podcast episode]. In Meet the Leader. World Economic Forum. <https://www.weforum.org/podcasts/meet-the-leader/episodes/hire-better-2023-generation-ceo-mona-mourshed>

12. Idem

13. Idem

14. Jóvenes con Trabajo Digno. (2022). No son un problema son Jóvenes Oportunidad. <https://www.jovenescontrabajodigno.mx/tablero-de-redes-sociales>



The Opportunity of Alternative Credentials and Micro-Credentials

→ Short-Cycle Programs

According to the World Bank report "The Fast Track to New Skills, Short-Cycle Higher Education Programs in Latin America and the Caribbean," short-cycle programs (SCPs) are tools that develop qualified human capital in just two or three years.¹⁵ This is considered a quick way to obtain new skills for those who cannot pursue a university program for other responsibilities, people who could have a university education but are not willing to invest time and resources, or perhaps those who already have a degree and seek to prepare for a specific area of knowledge.¹⁶ **The SCPs can also be technical and technological programs, i.e., technical, tertiary, higher-technical level, technical careers, technological courses,¹⁷ technical-professional courses, professional careers, and higher technology courses.**

These practical programs focus on traditional areas of knowledge (advertising, hospitality, physiotherapy, logistics, graphic design, or electronics) and innovative areas (application design, digital animation data intelligence, web design, cybersecurity, and social networks). **They are also functional for improving in a current position or supporting students to get a job. María Marta Ferreyra, lead author of the World Bank report and a senior economist at the Global Engagement and Knowledge unit of the Education Global Practice of this organization, mentions that short-cycle programs are appropriate to address the challenges arising from the pandemic crisis in Latin America and the Caribbean because they respond nimbly to the demands of the labor market, satisfying the needs of students and companies.¹⁸**

Ferreyra argues that higher education institutions must offer flexibility in acquiring skills by providing quality SCPs. Carlos Felipe Jaramillo, World Bank Vice President for the Latin America and Caribbean region, states that the pandemic had immense repercussions, pushing millions of people into poverty.¹⁹ **He suggests that short-cycle programs in higher education have the potential to play a significant role in recovering from the jobs crisis. These courses can train people based on the needs of today's reality. According to the report's findings,²⁰ on a regional average, graduates of short-cycle programs earn 60% more than high school graduates without higher education.** Concerning employment, they outnumber high school graduates and dropouts from some bachelor's degree programs in formal work (82% versus 67%). The graduation rate of short-cycle programs is 57%, versus 46% for undergraduate students. These figures are relevant because students in short-cycle programs generally come from more disadvantaged backgrounds.

¹⁵ Ferreyra, M., Dinarte-Díaz, L., Urzúa, S., & Bassi, M. (2021). La vía rápida hacia nuevas competencias Programas cortos de educación superior en América Latina y el Caribe. Banco Internacional de Reconstrucción y Fomento/Banco Mundial.
<https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/229bc91e-cdc0-53fb-8d1e-d2415f7e8cdc/content>

¹⁶ Ibidem

¹⁷ Ibidem

¹⁸ Boletín Tec de Monterrey, (2022). Los programas cortos de educación superior serán clave en el futuro del aprendizaje: Tec de Monterrey y Banco Mundial.
https://tec.mx/sites/default/files/2022-05/2022.04.26%20Los%20programas%20cortos%20de%20educación%20superior%20serán%20clave%20en%20el%20futuro%20del%20aprendizaje%20Tec%20de%20Monterrey%20y%20Banco%20Mundial_Q.pdf

¹⁹ The World Bank. (2021). Short-Cycle Programs can Help Boost Employment and Economic Recovery in Latin America and the Caribbean.
<https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2021/09/28/short-cycle-programs-latin-america>

²⁰ Idem





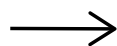
FACE
TO FACE



HYBRID



ONLINE



Bootcamps

Bootcamps are training tools that open alternative educational paths. These intensive programs are of short duration (approximately three to six months) and employ practical learning environments that resemble real situations.²¹ **Bootcamps have emerged as a response to the challenges of the digital revolution to develop human capital skills in various companies through the mastery of particular areas.**²²

These intensive courses help detect industry needs, adjust to the required teaching modalities (face-to-face, online, or hybrid), and stay updated on the latest trends.²³ Whether for private or non-profit purposes, they deliver specialized skills training. Their features make it possible to address the challenges of retraining and skills improvement efficiently and cost-effectively.

Companies benefit from working with bootcamp graduates mainly because of the need for human capital with skills in programming, artificial intelligence, or data analysis.²⁴

However, the practicality offered by these courses at a relatively low cost makes them accessible and open to different fields of training, even to different age ranges and positions.

²¹ Hernández, O. (n.d.). Los bootcamps llegaron a América Latina. <https://www.iadb.org/es/mejorandovi-das/los-bootcamps-llegaron-america-latina>

²² Cathles, A. y Navarro, J. (2019). La disrupción del talento El advenimiento de los bootcamps de programación y el futuro de las habilidades digitales. *Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo*.

²³ Ibidem

²⁴ Ibidem



Meeting employer's needs: Successful programs worldwide



Generation

Generation is a non-profit organization that aims to transform education into employment systems so that people can achieve economic mobility and improve their lives. Their program helps prepare and place people in careers that would otherwise be inaccessible to them.

This global network was founded by the consulting firm McKinsey in 2014. Currently, it has a presence in 17 countries and has impacted more than 78,988 people, of which 35,000 have been women.²⁶ Its work is to close the gap between young people's technical and soft skills through a replicable and scalable methodology that provides them with professional training and places them in entry positions.

So far, Generation has achieved a global employability rate of 90% after six months of training. 65% are still in their initial jobs one year after graduation, and 40% are able to save for their future two to six years after their training.²⁶ In addition, it has collaborated with more than 9,000 employers, from startups and small and medium-sized enterprises to publicly traded companies on the annual Fortune 500 list.²⁷

The student population faces different contexts and barriers to employment in each country. These are usually people aged 18 to 29 years looking for a job, who may have dependents, and most do not have a university degree. The program's mission is to provide them with a meaningful career and sustained well-being anywhere in the world. Its holistic methodology comprises seven elements to meet the the obstacles in the end-to-end employment value chain.



²⁶ Generation América Latina. (2023). Reporte Q1 Generation América Latina 2023. [PowerPoint Slides].

²⁶ Ibidem

²⁷ Ibidem



The Holistic Methodology Used in All Generation Programs





Generation aims to use this methodology to generate high employability and income results consistently across countries and occupations.

Education programs for employment must start with employers' latent needs, aligning with the demands of the labor market to train people for the solution that relieves their pain points.

Recruiting people with relevant intrinsic characteristics has value beyond their exam results. By identifying candidates with motivation and a focus on the future, training programs are more likely to succeed in placing the graduates in their first jobs, where, in turn, they have the will to acquire new skills.

Their curriculum includes technical and behavioral skills, supporting them to continue learning. Often, situations or external factors in people's lives force them

to drop out of school. Generation responds in such cases to and provide support to overcome those barriers that interrupt their education.

Also important is linking candidates to specific interview opportunities and participation in selection processes. This connection happens after the end of the program, where the skills developed are evaluated to demonstrate evidence of learning. In the words of Mona Mourshed,²⁸ CEO of Generation, "It's about, 'Let me show you what I can do, rather than you looking at my CV and assuming what I can or can't do based on where I went to school or based on the profession or background I have.' And that, by the way, is equally important for those just starting their career as those in the middle of their career. [...] It's about assessing demonstrations of skills so you can see their mastery."

Mourshed explains²⁹ that it is easy to implement a recruitment algorithm that filters the resumes to contemplate the best candidates. However, the current market requires the willingness to dedicate time to go deeper in the search for the talent companies need.

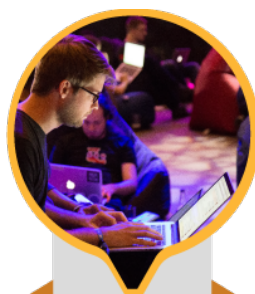
Generation makes an effort to return to employers after placement and offers to mentor up to three months after the graduate gets the job. Likewise, it monitors and processes this data to continue improving the program.

The organization works with employers to provide them with talented candidates with non-traditional profiles, proving that what counts is if the graduates can get the job done. This independent NGO (non-profit organization) has programs in more than 44 professions in various economic sectors.

Its programs include:

²⁸. Mourshed, M. & Lacina, L. (Host). (2023). Hire better in 2023: Lessons from Generation CEO Mona Mourshed. [Audio podcast episode]. In Meet the Leader. World Economic Forum. <https://www.weforum.org/podcasts/meet-the-leader/episodes/hire-better-2023-generation-ceo-mona-mourshed>

²⁹. Idem



Technology:

- Cloud Support Engineer
- Cyber Security Analyst
- Data Analyst
- Data Engineer
- Digital Customer Support
- Digital Marketing Analyst
- Front-end Developer
- **Videogames Developer**
- IT Support Specialist
- **Java Developer**
- **Junior Full-stack Developer**
- Technical Support Specialist
- **Mobile Applications Developer**
- **NET Developer**
- Quality Control Tester
- Robotic Automation Technology Software Developer
- Sales Force Developer



Health:

- Medical Administrative Assistant
- Disability Support Worker
- Nursing Assistant



Customer Service & Sales:

- Call Center Agent
- Commercial Sales
- Customer Service Supervisor
- Financial Sales
- Food & Beverage Butler
- Hotel Reception Staff
- Microfinance Vendor
- Retail Banker
- Retail Associate



Specialized Trades:

- Machine Operator
- Sewing Machine Operator

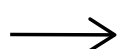


Green jobs:

- Photovoltaic Solar Energy Installer
- Technical Update Support
- Assistant in Bicycle Repair

Generation connects with employer partners to determine which positions they need filled and then recruits people to enter the program. Learners go through a training bootcamp for a specific profession up to four months. Interviews are then arranged with employers, and once people are employed, the program tracks the return on investment for graduates and employers. Today the program has around 25 million traceable and verifiable data points to determine what works in the courses.

Through the program, a Java developer in India will have the same content mastery as a developer in Kenya, the United States, or Mexico. Currently, the organization has a wide range of partners, including with governments to integrate the program within public workforce systems and achieve greater scale in. Preparing more talented people for employment.



Generation Mexico

This global network also has a strong presence in Latin America, impacting more than 5,900 young people.³⁰ The intervention philosophy for Mexico, Brazil, Chile, and Colombia aims to reduce student access barriers to training. The different programs address these obstacles by delivering computer equipment to those who do not have it, providing access to the internet, food allowance, and creating remote sessions to replace presential classes to reduce travel expenses, among others.

Forty-two percent of those who have participated in the program are women, half of whom have only completed secondary school, and some have started university education. Beyond employability, Genera-

tion in Latin America seeks to change the trajectories of its students through social and economic mobility. Between 50% and 60% of the graduates manage to save resources and reduce their debts, indicating the program's durable impact.

In Mexico, Generation has operated since 2015, and, to date, 3,413 students have graduated³¹ into transformative careers with well-paid employment. [Generation Mexico](#) launches its calls every three weeks to benefit young people in the country, notably reaching the metropolitan areas of Mexico City and Guadalajara. Through intensive 12-week courses (480 hours), students with high school or bachelor degrees (or truncated college degrees) develop various technical and soft skills in Java Full Stack programming. This profession is in high demand among employers due to the current talent gap, so students participate in real market projects. **Students have two instructors and two mentors who guide them in reinforcing soft skills and advise them on integrating into the labor force. In addition, graduates participate in job fairs where they present a work project as evidence of their acquired skills. The program in Mexico receives donations from companies and foundations that care about the employability of young people.**

Additionally, it collaborates with companies and industrial chambers to adapt the courses to the needs of the labor market. In this way, young people can find a job usually within 90 days after completing the course.

In Latin America, about 15% of the participants are employed (including informal positions) at the program's start. At the end of the courses, approximately 88% of

the young people find employment within six months of going through a Generation program.

Generation Brasil began in 2019 and, to date, has graduated 2,313 people. Its Sao Paulo, Campinas, Recife, and Rio de Janeiro programs offer Java Full-stack, Java Script, and Mobile & Net Developers. Generation Brasil also considers including new professions. The **Generation Chile** program launched in 2022 for students interested in being Full-stack Java Developers in Santiago. So far, they have 96 graduates and hope to add new professions. **Generation Colombia** has been in a pilot phase since 2022, providing courses in Java Full Stack and video game development in Bogota and nationwide, with 36 graduates currently.

Identifying the correct entry positions within companies gives people access to careers that would perhaps be unattainable. For example, Generation strives to attract women to tech, retain them in the program, and teach them so they can earn an income above the national average.

To successfully insert youth into the labor market, it is necessary to promote systemic changes involving all actors: young people (to understand their level of interest), governments (forging alliances and sharing best practices), and employers, who close the cycle. The latter has a fundamental role in Generation Latin America because more than 700 companies have hired students. Sixty to 65% of students go to companies that have already filled their vacancies with program graduates, indicating the employers' strong hiring recurrence. Identifying employers' vacancies is essential to find the intersection of the demand for talent and the ideal supply.

³⁰ Generation América Latina. (2023). Reporte Q1 Generation América Latina 2023. [Diapositivas de Power-Point].

³¹ Ibidem

Generation Mexico aims to be recognized by its employer partners as a source of qualified talent in various professional areas and by young people as a training alternative to start their successful professional development.

One of the sectors with a view to work in Latin America is green work, including jobs such as solar panel installers and electric vehicle technicians, which are in high demand.





YouthBuild

[YouthBuild](#) is a community-based learning program to help young people from 16 to 24 years old recover their education and acquire the skills to develop professionally.³² Its model is present in 18 countries and mainly provides practical construction training. However, it has diversified its offerings in hundreds of programs in the United States and globally to provide vocational training, educational services, case management, counseling, community service, and leadership opportunities for youth.

YouthBuild serves individuals who lack a high school diploma and financial resources. Its mission involves respecting and equipping young people with skills and mindsets that guide lifelong learning, adequate livelihood, and leadership.³³ Students in a YouthBuild program anywhere in the world can create meaningful and productive lives for themselves and their families and become engaged community leaders. Some of its programs adapt contextually to places such as South Africa, Costa Rica, Brazil, Kentucky, California, Georgia, Missouri, New York, Minnesota, Massachusetts, Baja California, Nuevo León, State of Mexico, Guanajuato, Chihuahua, and Mexico City.

→ YouthBuild México

As part of the international network, [Youth Build México](#) serves as a civil society organization with an alternative training model for young people, which focuses on developing

their skills for life and work, boosting their social mobility, and exercising their rights. It has extensive experience with marginalized and excluded people far from job opportunities, education, and training. In Mexico, this Youth on Course model (Jóvenes con Rumbo, in Spanish) started in 2012, although YouthBuild has been present in Mexico since 2004 through its social organization, Young Community Builders.

This initiative aims to improve access to decent jobs for disadvantaged young people through academic leveling, socio-emotional training, and employment skills.³⁴

Its coverage to date includes Tijuana, Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, Monterrey, Mérida, Comitán, Tapachula, the Mexico City Metropolitan Area (In the State of Mexico: Naucalpan, Ecatepec, Tepotzotlán, and Cuautitlán Izcalli. In Mexico City: Alvaro Obregón, Cuauhtémoc, Gustavo A. Madero, Iztapalapa, Miguel Hidalgo and Iztacalco) and Guanajuato (including León, Silao, Irapuato, Celaya, Acámbaro, Villagrán, and San Miguel de Allende).³⁵

Although some programs focus on young people who completed their high school education, YouthBuild Mexico does not require this to enter the program. The organization helps students continue studying through different modalities. The Youth on Course high schools have 18 months of training for young adults in open high schools to complete the orientation program through technical training supported by advisors who accompany them. This flexible alternative is relevant to their upper secondary

education focused on labor insertion. The schools currently operate in Guanajuato in the cities of León and Silao and five municipalities of Mexico City.

The youth centers offer a specific academic program for young people with educational lag who may not have completed secondary or primary school. They deliver support for basic academic skills such as reading comprehension, writing, mathematics, and digital skills and encourage the students to resume their studies through open platforms. Although not directly linked to formal education, the three- to six-month program (depending on the area) motivates them to continue.

In addition, they partner with the Jóvenes con Trabajo Digno (Youth with Decent Work) network to form the Integral Training for Work model, which prepares young people to meet the needs of a company or group of companies in a particular sector. In this program people are able to place themselves in specific vacancies, required and managed by particular companies.

One of the main challenges is the labor insertion of young people. Many industries request the completion of upper secondary education. The organization's high school program gets students to reconnect with their education and advance gradually to achieve the upper secondary education required. However, the organization encourages companies to make the hiring requirements more flexible to consider entry-level positions for young people with the necessary skills to perform the role, even if they do not necessarily have a formal education diploma.

³² Miller, O., Cummings, D., Millenky, M., Wiegand, A., & Long, D. (2018). Laying a Foundation: Four-Year Results from the National YouthBuild Evaluation. MDRC. https://www.mdrc.org/sites/default/files/YouthBuild_Final_508%20compliant.pdf

³³ YouthBuild. (2023). Home Page. <https://youthbuild.org/>

³⁴ YouthBuild México. (2023). Conócenos. <https://youth-buildmexico.org/quienes-somos/conocenos/>

³⁵ YouthBuild México. (2023). Planeación Estratégica (public synthesis). [PowerPoint slides].

Its strategic objectives include:³⁶

- 1 Professionalize the organization, its models, and strategies in all areas of impact. Also, maintain updated systems for efficient and effective management as members of the global networks YouthBuild and the Global Opportunity Youth Network (GOYN).
- 2 Expand the Youth on Course model, sustaining the quality of its results in the social mobility of young people and ensuring efficient processes between YouthBuild México and its partners.
- 3 Develop young people's leadership to participate as primary actors in the transformation for access to a decent life and work in at least three regions of the country.
- 4 Influence the primary actors in the public, private, and social sectors who directly and indirectly impact the employability of youth in at least three states.
- 5 Generate an exchange change of narrative about Opportunity Youth, influencing public opinion positively and showing their reality. Provide evidence of their skills to decision-makers in the public, private, and social sectors.

YouthBuild México has formed alliances with public, private, and social actors nationally to influence systemic changes that facilitate youth access to better economic opportunities. This second-chance education model expects to serve 19,500 young people by 2026.

Its growth plan for this year also implies more presence in the municipalities of Nuevo León (Monterrey, García, Escobedo, San Pedro, Santa Catarina, Apodaca,

Cadereyta, and Guadalupe), in Chiapas (Comitán and Tapachula) and possibly in Central America. YouthBuild México also seeks to respond to challenges with strategies for the future, for example, linking young mothers and fathers who do not have a family support network to care for their children with nurseries so they can continue their learning.



Global Opportunity Youth Network

In February 2021, YouthBuild México was selected as a facilitator of the [Global Opportunity Youth Network \(GOYN\)](#) in Mexico City. GOYN is a network of practices that links actors in the ecosystem of employable youth opportunities, joining civic organizations, private sector companies, government institutions, and academia to generate systemic changes and better opportunities for youth.

Globally, GOYN is led by the Aspen Institute Forum for Community Solutions and partners with Accenture, Prudential, Global Development Incubator, Catholic Relief Services, and YouthBuild International. It has established itself in nine cities around the world: Pune, the Jharkhand and Barwani region in India, eThekweni in South Africa, Mombasa in Kenya, São Paulo in Brazil, Bogotá in Colombia, Thiès in Senegal, and Mexico City in Mexico.

This initiative seeks to catalyze systemic changes in communities that promote employability and access to decent and sustainable economic opportunities. The network targets young people between 15 and 29 years old who are unemployed or in informal jobs in precarious conditions, out of

school, or with educational lag.³⁷

GOYN also proposes to understand how the youth employability ecosystem operates in various localities to collect data and evidence that identify systemic gaps that prevent youth from improving their quality of life.

The Global Opportunity Youth Network is a space for co-creation and collective participation of various sectors. In April 2022, it presented its work plan for the next five years in Mexico City, where it expressed their aspiration to increase economic opportunities with decent work and a gender approach for Opportunity Youth, specifically³⁸:

- 1 Improve employability conditions and expand employment and entrepreneurship opportunities with the support of public, private, and social actors and resources.
- 2 Influence educational public policy to increase the percentage of Opportunity Youth participants in Mexico City who complete upper secondary education. Promote women's equal access to non-traditional jobs, training, and employment.
- 3 Guarantee the participation of Opportunity Youth in labor and educational public policy issues.

So far, program prototypes have been implemented in different areas of the city, along with awareness campaigns and advocacy actions in education, labor, economic development, gender equity, and non-discrimination policy.³⁹

³⁶ Ibidem

³⁷ Red Global de Jóvenes Oportunidad. (2022). Plan a 5 años GOYN Ciudad de México. <https://youthbuildmexico.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Goyn-Mapa-de-Ecosistema-CDMX-VF.pdf>

³⁸ Ibidem

³⁹ Ibidem

Additionally, fundraising efforts are increasing to invest in employability and entrepreneurship trajectories for young people. This multi-stakeholder initiative has an advisory group of Opportunity Youth participants who provide feedback, therefore improving inclusion and distinct practices. The group is in charge of dialoguing, facilitating, and building young people's leadership to positively impact their communities and other areas of Mexico City.

They focus on three lines of action:

- 1 Dignified and sustainable ventures for youth.
- 2 Alliances for decent work.
- 3 Access to upper secondary education with a focus on worthy work.

However, each of these lines has its specific barriers. For example, concerning entrepreneurship, there is a lack of access to information and available resources because not all young people have an internet connection. The critical factors in an enterprise are training and proper resource management, so not having the means to conduct a venture is challenging and disadvantageous.

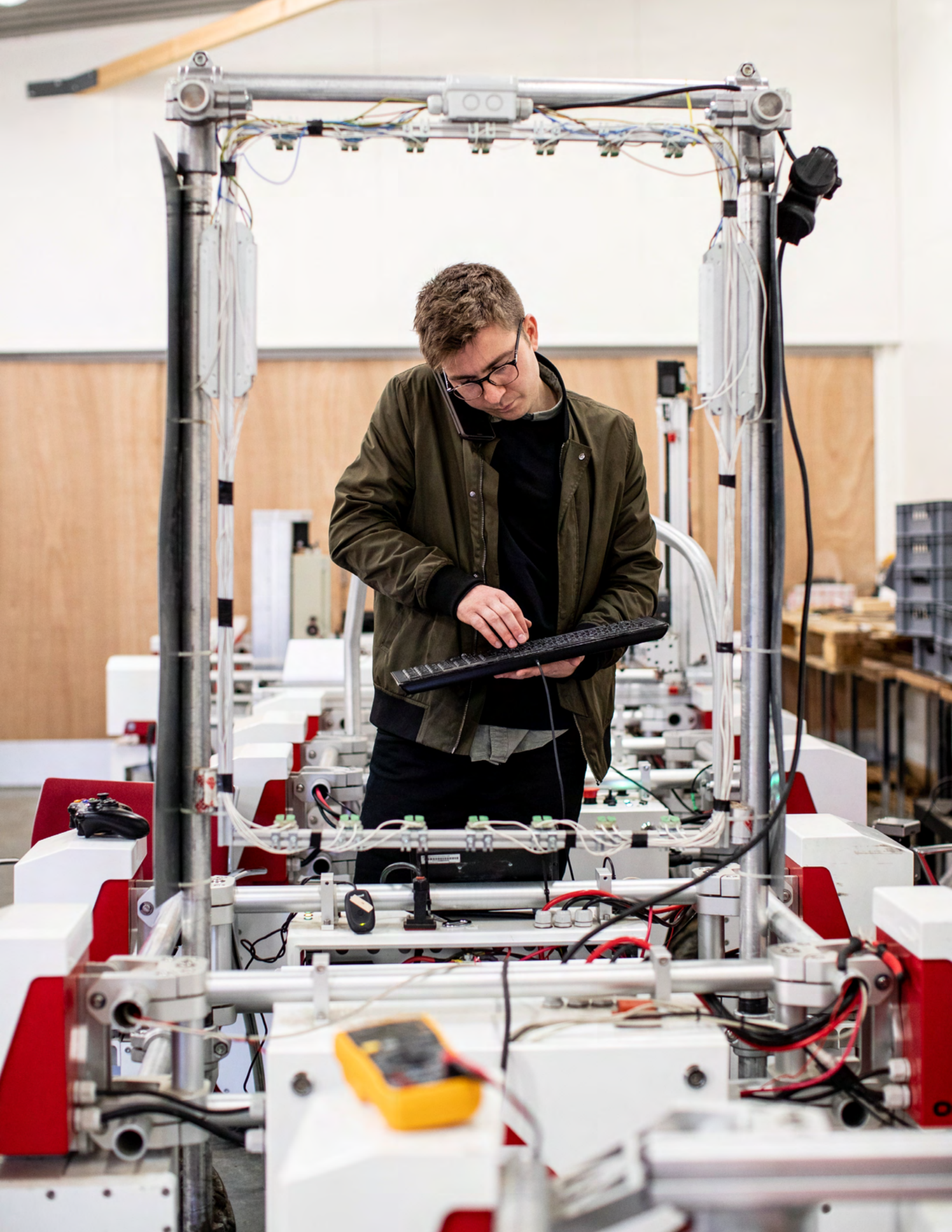
Concerning upper secondary education, a gap exists due to the location of educational institutions. Mexico City has the most significant economic growth and many high schools and universities. For young people who have to travel to access education experiences implies a considerable challenge, interfering with their financial routines to sustain their studies.

With regard to decent work, it is necessary to talk about employability and educational systems, since young people face difficulties in the hiring process due to their education. In these experiences, they can also face discrimination, for different reasons: from a person's place of residence to the results of standardized tests that measure their ability to develop in the workplace. Sometimes young people may not be familiar with these assessments and may not have the agility to respond, but they do have the required skills.

Several structural injustices emerge in these lines of action, but the youth advisory group is working to counter them. Likewise, there is an effort to consider the diversity of youth in the city: including people with visual disabilities, neurodiversity, members of the LGBTQI+ community, and displaced youth, among others, and their intersections and common ground.

GOYN's long-term goals include developing a comprehensive public policy and creating a public-private fund dedicated to the employability of Opportunity Youth. It also plans to establish a space for dialogue so that employers and women can know their needs for policies with a flexible gender perspective and offer a framework for female Opportunity Youth participants to promote their ventures.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Red Global de Jóvenes Oportunidad. (2022). Plan a 5 años GOYN Ciudad de México.
<https://youthbuildmexico.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Goyn-Mapa-de-Ecosistema-CDMX-VF.pdf>





International Youth Foundation

[The International Youth Foundation \(IYF\)](#) connects youth with opportunities to achieve the future they desire. **With more than 33 years of promoting global youth development, it has gained experience and partnerships to offer innovative, scalable, and sustainable solutions to the problems people confront.** Today, it has more than 600 implementing partners in over 100 countries. Its programs have sharpened and expanded to reach 7.7 million young people directly and 12 million more indirectly.

The non-profit organization started in 1990, and in 1991 the Esquel Foundation in Ecuador became the first member of the global network of partners. Since its inception, IYF has operated under the premise that educated, hard-working, and committed youth have the power to solve the world's most complex problems. **This philosophy inspired fundraising and awareness campaigns to form alliances with philanthropists and corporations recognizing how social impact affects their businesses.**

Rick Little, its founder, conducted a 1989 study of youth programs worldwide at the headquarters of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation (WKKF) in Battle Creek, Michigan. A year's research of interviews with experts, business leaders, philanthropists, public officials, and young people from around the world revealed opportunities for the future. Most international philanthropic resources for children and youth went to young people in higher education or under the age of five. However, the WKKF decided to bring new charitable institutions to invest in proven and effective youth programs that would lead to financial sustainability.

At present, the beneficiaries of the International Youth Foundation's programs are people between the ages of 16 and 29. These are upper secondary and technical upper secondary education students, young opportunity candidates, and traditionally under-represented youth (e.g., women in low-income families, young people without access to formal jobs or quality education, and young people outside the capital cities, among others).

The IYF aims to link young people with opportunities to transform their lives and communities, preparing them to be productive and engaged citizens. It has three main objectives: to make young people autonomous, boost economic activities,

and make systems more inclusive. In addition, IYF achieves these objectives by collaborating with members of the youth development ecosystem, such as businesses and foundations, multilateral organizations, and local leaders, communities, and young people. Local partners worldwide lead contextual initiatives supported by regional and national staff. These collaborations ensure solutions respond to actual needs, challenges, and opportunities.

Market analysis and in-depth interviews with employers detect job opportunities and growth sectors. Furthermore, the IYF encourages youth to share their perspectives, ideas, enthusiasm, and energy as an integral part of every solution to build inclusive programs.

Its initiatives also improve the alignment of technical competencies and life skills (critical thinking, communication, and teamwork), which equip young people to contribute effectively to a job, thrive in self-employment, or succeed in their entrepreneurial paths.

The International Youth Foundation continually hones a unique set of assets to address daily challenges and opportunities, including:

- Collaborative strategies that drive systemic change.
- Highly proven curricula, including [Passport to Success® \(PTS\)](#), for developing socio-emotional skills at an early age and My Career, My Future, to support the development of vocational guidance. IYF annually benefits 39,000 youth through PTS programs implemented in classrooms, work, community centers, and online.
- Diagnoses before the interventions to develop proactive strategies.
- Collaboration with the local public and private civic organizations.
- Networks to accelerate youth social entrepreneurship.
- Digital solutions adapted to young people.
- Skilled workforce development programs to meet the demands of the local employer sector.
- Development of impact approaches that include gender equality, social inclusion, and youth empowerment.
- Generation of sustainable capacity over time to develop scalable and lasting initiatives in local systems.
- Continuous measurement, evaluation, research, and learning cycles to fulfill the mission of linking youth to opportunities that transform their lives and future generations.

In Latin America, IYF has established

63

programs,

of which 16 are currently operating.

114,881 young people

have benefited from this program in the last five years and 1,729 teachers have been trained.

Today its programs operate in six countries with a 49% placement rate. Over the past decade, programs targeting Latin America and the Caribbean have contributed to changing more than 70 public policies in Mexico and Peru and developing campaigns to change gender norms throughout the region.

Nevertheless, several specific challenges persist in this region:

- The digital revolution constantly transforms industries, and regional education and training systems have many problems updating young people with the twenty-first-century skills required by employers. This phenomenon and the consequent skills deficit intensified with the pandemic.
- The impact of climate change, such as new rainfall patterns, rising temperatures, and increasingly intense, frequent storms, put communities and their livelihoods at risk.
- Regional migration patterns challenge the economic development of migrants' countries of origin, destination countries, and the communities they pass through.
- Violence disproportionately affects youth in the region, resulting in 77% of young men's deaths. Gender-based violence skyrocketed during the pandemic.
- Young people face closing educational and job opportunities; 14% do not receive education or training and are inactive in the labor market. In addition, young people who could be active in the labor market face an unemployment rate of 18%.

IYF guides young people to adopt a career orientation to overcome challenges and seize new opportunities. It contributes to their learning with experiences in community service, volunteering, research grants, youth councils, and intensive social action courses.

The foundation works with local partners to develop training that ensures young people acquire the life, technical, and entrepreneurial skills they need to cope in the local labor market. They consider strengthening the capacity of local youth and community service organizations and employers to be one of the most critical components of youth programs. Local organizations familiar with the issues and the population they serve create the most effective courses.

Although the foundation facilitates identifying companies' and organizations' strengths and gaps, it points out that the reality is complex. Even perfect information about employer demand and the capacity building of young people in educational institutions does not mean that young people can access decent work opportunities. For this reason, programs also focus on developing "connective tissue" within the employer sector, improving hiring and recruitment practices, reducing employment barriers, and creating equitable policies.

In this way, the International Youth Foundation aims that by 2025 young people achieve greater autonomy, can access more economic opportunities, and benefit from inclusive systems responding to their labor needs.





Laboratoria

[Laboratoria](#) is a social impact organization seeking to create a more diverse, inclusive, and competitive digital economy that allows all women to develop their potential in the technology sector. It offers an intensive remote six-month bootcamp for technical and life skills aimed at women who have not yet been able to start a professional career. Upon completing the program, the women connect with quality jobs in software development and user experience design, where they can begin their career paths. Laboratoria promotes a community of graduates who support each other's growth as future leaders in the sector.

Since its launch in 2014 in Lima, Peru, Laboratoria has aimed to transform the lives of thousands of Latin American women through a career in technology. So far, they have trained over 3,000 women, placing 87% in tech positions. More than 764 women in web development and user experience design have participated in Mexico since 2015. Laboratoria also has programs in Chile (2015), Brazil (2018), Colombia (2020), and Ecuador (2022).

More than 1,100 companies in Latin America have hired talent from Laboratoria; the companies and employing organizations that receive these competitive profiles are leaders in different sectors and industries, from commerce and banking to logistics and financial technology.

The size of organizations varies from large corporations to technology startups and software factories. This engagement has helped employers find the technical talent needed to grow their teams with diversity to create a better work culture and product offering.

Laboratoria noted the social imbalance that causes the exclusion of women in the digital economy. In Latin America, women fill less than 20% of technological vacancies, indicating a lack of diversity in the sector.⁴¹ Several factors cause this, such as ingrained ideas about the role of women in society, unconscious biases about female talent, and stereotypes disseminated through the "boom" of personal computers that distanced women from technology.

Although junior tech talent is indispensable for human capital in the digital age, and many efforts have strived to meet the demand for specialists that the industry requires, achieving goals is difficult without addressing the latent gender gap in the tech sector.

Laboratoria aims to reverse the inequalities that women face in accessing quality jobs. Therefore, the organization hopes for new job opportunities in an adequately remunerated area with much growth potential, which benefits men and women equally. This happens in companies where employees continue to advance equitably.

The organization believes that working to reduce the gender gap gives talented women more potential to enter a growing industry with good opportunities. It also offers companies diverse perspectives and ways to create valuable digital solutions. Hence, Laboratoria developed an innovative, practical methodology to prepare students without previous training in technology in a short time for the work world.

The training focuses on self-learning and team problem-solving to deal with any situation in the agile and changing work environment. In addition, the bootcamp activities are remote so that women living anywhere in Latin America can participate without geographical limitations. Some of the roles that Laboratoria's developers and designers can assume are⁴²:

- Front-end Developer
- UX Designer
- UI Designer
- Back-end Developer
- UX Researcher
- QA Analyst
- Mobile Developer
- UX Writer
- Java Full-stack Developer
- Service Designer

Laboratoria will continue to train thousands of women in Latin America to help them get jobs and grow in technology. Its current donations include one from the American lawyer and writer MacKenzie Scott to scale and spread its work significantly to every corner of the region.

⁴¹ Grupo de Expertas/os "Igualdad de género en la sociedad digital" (GEIGSD). Observatorio Nacional de las Telecomunicaciones y la Sociedad de la Información (ONTSI), Redes (2020). Competencias transformadoras para la igualdad de género en la sociedad y la economía digital. <https://www.observatorioigualdadyempleo.es/download/competencias-transformadoras-para-la-igualdad-de-genero-en-la-sociedad-y-la-economia-digital/>

⁴² Laboratoria. (2023). Contrata talento. https://talento.laboratoria.la/?utm_source=site-laboratoria&utm_medium=header



Tecnológico de Monterrey

Tecnológico de Monterrey is a non-profit, private institution committed to quality higher education in Mexico. Founded in 1943, its mission is to train its students comprehensively to transform their social, economic, political, and ecological reality to positively impact their environment.⁴³ The university has strived to create new learning spaces that respond relevantly to industry challenges and adapt to the changing needs of the labor market.

Since 2013, Tecnológico de Monterrey has invested in producing massive, open online courses. Its current offerings include 20 specialized programs on [Coursera](#) and 85 classes on this platform,⁴⁴ involving a wide variety of topics such as innovation and entrepreneurship, marketing, business, telehealth, telemedicine, leadership, project management, physics, calculus, administration, psychology, family businesses, social networks, data analytics, and writing, among others.

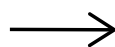
This set of courses aims to turn the graduates into experts on a given subject. As of today, approximately 109,000 students have enrolled in the specialties. The specialized programs may include three to five courses requiring a few months to complete. At the end of each course, the student receives a verifiable certificate in the institution's postgraduate programs. This methodology allows higher education students to delve into topics of interest, stay up-to-date, and increase their employability skills.

Similarly, the university collaborated with [edX](#) to produce four MicroMasters courses from leading educational institutions to advance a professional career. This series of postgraduate studies, lasting approximately six months, provide business-recognized learning and the opportunity to earn an accelerated and affordable master's degree⁴⁵. Apart from courses with professional certificates, the MicroMasters of Tecnológico de Monterrey offers professional skills programs in Negotiation and Leadership, Innovation and Entrepreneurship (in English or Spanish), and Humanities and Soft Skills.

In partnership with the company [2U](#), Tecnológico de Monterrey provides 24-week online bootcamps in data analysis and coding. Upon completion, the participant receives a certificate with digital insignias as evidence of the competencies acquired.

In another effort to redefine the traditional concept of learning, the Vice-Rector of Continuing Education at Tecnológico de Monterrey established [The Learning Gate](#).⁴⁶ This interactive and multidisciplinary space targets people seeking professional and human development regardless of age. With the help of flexible pathways, students strengthen and learn about competencies throughout life. Compact 10-hour modules allow customization of their learning paths. So far, it has three leadership paths and three data science paths; in the future, it expects to offer three finance paths and three marketing and sales routes.

Thus, Learning Gate students can bring new tools and strategies to their current job and perform in other functions and positions. The material covers five hours of theory; in the last two hours, students apply their acquired knowledge to challenges in a simulated environment. The results and evidence are recorded in the platform to validate the acquired competencies. The intention is to promote integral human flourishing and balance health, work, and life.



TecMilenio

The sister university of Tecnológico de Monterrey, TecMilenio, is a private institution founded in 2002 in Monterrey. Its model is an open and customizable platform for developing and recognizing competencies and a close accompaniment throughout each student's life to achieve their purpose.⁴⁷

TecMilenio has formal education programs, and a few years ago, they also opted for open education offerings. One of its initiatives is the Center for Competency Development (CCD), a digital space where people from the university and different companies collaborate to produce learning program content for courses in various formats.⁴⁸ Lifelong learners can acquire, update, and increase their skills through methodologies, diagnostic models, and evaluation instruments in a personalized model; both companies and students receive advice, training, and mentoring adapted to their needs.

The CCD offers over 400 classes where students acquire the necessary skills and abilities in a flexible educational environment. Students can participate individually or as part of a company's team in courses of different lengths to increase their professional value.

⁴³ Tecnológico de Monterrey. (2023). Conócenos. <https://tec.mx/es/conocenos>

⁴⁴ Tecnológico de Monterrey. (2023). Cursos y Programas MOOC. <https://mooc.tec.mx/es/cursos-y-programa-mas>

⁴⁵ EdX. (n.d.). Programa MicroMasters. EdX. <https://www.edx.org/es/micromasters>

⁴⁶ Observatorio del Instituto para el Futuro de la Educación. (2023). EduTrends: Aprendizaje a lo largo de la vida.

⁴⁷ TecMilenio. (2020). 18 datos que quizás no sabías de TecMilenio. <https://blog.tecmilenio.mx/propositi-vo/18-datos-que-quiza-no-sabias-de-tecmilenio>

⁴⁸ Centro de Desarrollo de Competencias. (n.d.). ¿Qué es el Centro de Desarrollo de Competencias? <https://cdc.tecmilenio.mx/conocenos>

Comparison Table: Key Findings

The initiatives listed above provide young people with opportunities to acquire decent jobs and a better quality of life. Their work lies in reducing the gaps that affect youth and their diverse contexts in Latin America and the world. Each one of them is unique in its programs' contributions and their strategies ensure value to their students. The initiative compilation below highlights their different qualities.

	Generation	YouthBuild	Global Opportunity Youth Network
	It is a non-profit organization that aims to transform education into employment systems and close the technical and soft skills gap of young people. Through a replicable and scalable methodology that provides professional training and helps place people in careers that would otherwise be inaccessible to them.	It is a civil society organization with an alternative training model for young people, an opportunity focused on developing skills for life and work, as well as promoting their social mobility and the exercise of their rights.	It is a network of practices that links actors in the youth employability ecosystem and seeks to catalyze systemic changes, in particular communities that facilitate access to decent and sustainable economic opportunities.
Location	Global: 17 countries (United Kingdom, France, Ireland, Italy, Spain, India, Kenya, Pakistan, Hong Kong, Singapore, Thailand, and Australia). Latin America: Mexico, Brazil, Chile and Colombia.	Global: 18 countries Mexico: Tijuana, Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua, Monterrey, Merida, Comitán, Tapachula, the Metropolitan Area of Mexico City and Guanajuato.	Global: Pune, the Jharkhand region and Barwani in India, E-Thekwini in South Africa, Mombasa in Kenya, São Paulo in Brazil, Bogotá in Colombia, Thiés in Senegal and Mexico City in Mexico.
Population that it serves	People between the ages of 18 and 29 looking for a job, who may have dependents, and most of whom do not have a university degree.	Youth between the ages of 16 and 24 who lack a high school diploma and financial resources.	Young people between the ages of 15 and 29 who are unemployed or with informal jobs in precarious conditions, out of school or with an educational gap.
Differentiator	Generation's purpose is to close the gaps in each of the components of its holistic methodology. In order to consistently and profitably generate high employability and income outcomes across all countries and occupations.	YouthBuild Mexico has as a requirement to enter the program not having completed upper secondary education. Among its approaches, the organization assists the young to continue studying through different modalities.	GOYN has an advisory group of young people to receive their feedback and improve inclusion and different practices. The group is in charge of dialoguing, facilitating, and building the leadership of young people in order to have a positive impact in their community and in some others in Mexico City.
Programs	More than 44 professions in different economic sectors: technology, health, customer service and sales, skilled trades and green jobs.	- Youth on Course - Youth on Course Center - Integral Training for Work	n/a
Duration	3 months	18 months	n/a

International Youth Foundation	Laboratoria	Tecnológico de Monterrey	TecMilenio
It is a non-profit organization that links young people with opportunities to transform their lives and communities, preparing them to be productive and engaged citizens.	It is a social impact organization that seeks to create a more diverse, inclusive, and competitive digital economy that opens opportunities for each woman to develop their potential in the technological field.	It is a private, non-profit institution, committed to the quality of higher education in Mexico.	It is a private institution in the city of Monterrey, with a model that allows students to study under an ecosystem of well-being and happiness.
Global: more than 100 countries Latin America: Antigua & Barbuda, Argentina, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Grenada, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Saint Lucia Uruguay, and Venezuela.	Latin America: Mexico, Chile, Brazil, Colombia and Ecuador.	Mexico	Mexico
People between the ages of 16 and 29, including students in upper secondary and technical upper secondary education, opportunity youth, as well as traditionally underrepresented youth.	Latin American women who have not yet been able to start a professional career, interested in quality jobs in software development and user experience design.	People who seek to become experts in a specific subject, or who wish to complement or validate a specialization.	People who aspire to develop skills throughout life according to their life purpose.
IYF has a set of assets they continually improve. In the last decade, programs targeting Latin America and the Caribbean have been involved in changing more than 70 public policies in Mexico and Peru, as well as developing campaigns to change gender norms throughout the region.	Laboratoria has an innovative and effective methodology that manages to prepare students for the world of work without previous training in technology in a short time. The intensive program develops self-learning and team problem solving.	Tecnológico de Monterrey has strived to create new learning environments that respond to the relevant challenges of the industry and adapt to the changing needs of the labor market.	The TecMilenio Competence Development Center is a digital space where, through a personalized model, both companies and students receive advice, training, and mentoring adapted to their needs.
16 current programs, including Passport to Success y My Career My Future.	Software development and user experience design.	Coursera: 20 specialized programs and 85 courses edX: 4 MicroMasters 2U: 2 bootcamps	More than 400 courses: students acquire the necessary skills and abilities in a flexible educational environment.
2 months	6 months	6 to 7 months	From 10 hours to 3 months





The Road Ahead

The World Bank report, “The Fast Track to New Skills: Short Higher Education Programs in Latin America and the Caribbean,” suggests that increasing the number of these courses and improving the quality of educational provision requires appropriate public policies.⁴⁹ The information on outcomes, costs, and returns of these programs is easy to disseminate; coupled with the storage and management of flexible academic credentials and pathways, these programs can reach their full potential.

But the report also warns about shortcomings in the process. For example, those who regulate these courses may assume that students should not choose these programs. Therefore, they do not collect or disseminate the necessary information to decide their criteria.⁵⁰ Or perhaps regulators recognize the financial hardships of young people but cannot reallocate public funds to those who need them. They might even favor implementing short-cycle programs that provide credits for a bachelor’s degree while not tracking how well they work; perhaps they might regulate through overly rigid rules, among other problem scenarios.

The authors propose not to rule out adopting these short courses but instead address the implementation failures that may arise and promote an open environment where institutions offer more and better programs. In this way, educational institutions can have prosperous academic offerings. Also, students can make informed decisions, and simultaneously, the various actors and sectors can meet their collective, individual, commercial, and economic needs.⁵¹

⁴⁹ The World Bank. (2021). Short-Cycle Programs can Help Boost Employment and Economic Recovery in Latin America and the Caribbean. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2021/09/28/short-cycle-programs-latin-america>

⁵⁰ Ferreyra, M., Dinarte-Díaz, L., Urzúa, S., & Bassi, M. (2021). La vía rápida hacia nuevas competencias Programas cortos de educación superior en América Latina y el Caribe. Banco Internacional de Reconstrucción y Fomento/Banco Mundial.

⁵¹ The World Bank. (2021). Short-Cycle Programs can Help Boost Employment and Economic Recovery in Latin America and the Caribbean. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2021/09/28/short-cycle-programs-latin-america>

→ Challenges

One of the challenges particular to Latin America is the digital revolution. It shapes industries frequently, so upgrading an organization's human capital with twenty-first-century skills is crucial.

The workplace requires people who can keep pace with the modern marketplace⁵² and who have specific transversal competencies, such as creativity and innovation; critical thinking/problem solving/decision making; communication and collaboration; information, media, and technology literacy; citizenship; life and career skills; and personal and social responsibility.⁵³ However, in Latin America, six out of ten students complete secondary school, and only one finishes with the minimum skills required to enter higher education or formal employment.⁵⁴

Not all young people can access technological tools or resources with an internet connection. Transversal barriers persist that have nothing to do with people's capacities. Challenges related to the repercussions of climate change, migration, recurrently violent regions, and the gender gap or discrimination are other obstacles that directly interfere with educational training.

Although several initiatives counteract factors that impede academic trajectory, the road ahead is still long. Many people who wish to study are mothers or fathers with preschool-aged children, and, unfortunately, society generally ignores this population because of their time and resource management problems.

In addition, the global unemployment rate may increase by 3%, meaning 208 million people out of work in 2023, according to the International Labour Organization's report, "World Employment and Social Outlook: Trends 2023".⁵⁵

⁵² Stauffer, B. (2022). What Are 21st Century Skills? Aeseducation.com <https://www.aeseducation.com/blog/what-are-21st-century-skills>

⁵³ Bakay, M. E. (2022). 21st-century skills for higher education students in EU countries: Perception of academicians and HR managers. *International Education Studies*, 15(2), 14. <https://doi.org/10.5539/ies.v15n2p14>

⁵⁴ Ramírez, M. y Viteri, A. (2020). El embudo de la exclusión educativa en Mesoamérica. *Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo. Washington D.C.* https://publications.iadb.org/publications/spanish/viewer/EI_embudo_de_la_exclusi%C3%B3n_educativa_en_Mesoam%C3%A9rica.pdf

⁵⁵ OIT. (2023). Los trabajadores podrían verse obligados a aceptar empleos de menor calidad como consecuencia de la desaceleración económica. https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_865260/lang-es/index.htm#:~:text=Se%20prev%C3%A9%20asimismo%20que%20el%20desempleo%20a%20escala%20mundial%20aumente,5%20C8%20por%20ciento

→ Opportunities

While many global population challenges are profound, there are opportunities to shorten their impact. For example, a pandemic adaptation was the adoption of remote work, which has favored increased employment opportunities and flexibility.

Some organizations that offer skills training programs do not have to work directly with governments. Still, their impressive results are an impetus to build public policies, making programs visible and improved due to contextual research.

One example is the Generation study of people in the middle of their careers to understand the difficulty of keeping updated or changing professions to access the labor market. Research revealed that older employees can adapt to changing jobs and mastering their new roles,⁵⁶ and there are many opportunities for training programs at different stages of life.

There is also the possibility of balancing and overcoming the various barriers. In Latin America, one way to close the talent and gender gap is to prepare women for the required positions. A solid case is the data provided in the report, "IT Talent: STEM Competitiveness in Latin America," from the Technology by PageGroup: By 2025, the region will need 3.5 million professionals specialized in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics).⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Mourshed, M., Jaffer, A., Cashman, H., Salazar Ruiz, K., & Sykes, J. (2021). Meeting the World's Midcareer Moment. *Generation*. <https://www.generation.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Meeting-the-Worlds-Midcareer-Moment-July-2021.pdf>

⁵⁷ Salvatierra, H. (2022). Las carreras STEM transformarán la economía en Latinoamérica. <https://iberonewsia.com/las-carreras-stem-en-latinoamerica-transformaran-la-economia/>



Conclusion

Short programs instruct people who wish to enter the labor market or those who want to consolidate different skills and knowledge for their professional growth. Although various successful programs adapt to other characteristics or needs, short courses are accepted when employers validate them and leverage them when hiring their staff.

The value of investing in meaningful training programs is profound: various areas of the company improve their operations due to the reduced talent gaps, fast training, and lower human capital costs keeping the workforce updated. Graduates from a short-cycle program have specialized skills in a given field. Likewise, the potential for young graduates of these courses to immediately enter the labor market is high, which is convenient in the face of the growing demand for specialized workers. The flexibility of the programs allows the students to continue their studies while working, thanks to the different learning modalities.

Employers require people with the skills and motivation to perform in a particular position. They recognize those willing to learn and take on new challenges, which occur frequently in today's labor market. At the same time, they are looking for personnel capable of adapting to influential trends and technological changes to face the corporation's present and future challenges. Organizations like the ones mentioned in this report prepare young people to meet these demands; the question is, are companies willing to hire them?

To resolve this question, educators and industry/government/civic partners must have deeper conversations and rethink their standardized processes. For example, is the recruitment process too strict? Do hiring personnel take the time to evaluate profiles? Are you willing to hire people without a completed bachelor's degree or higher education? The decision to employ young people prepared in a shorter period depends on all the various actors involved. However, those willing to leverage what Opportunity Youth can achieve will have a competitive advantage.

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