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LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN (LAC) READING EVALUATION CONTRACT

First Annual Central America Workforce Development Report



July 2018

This publication was produced for review by the United States Agency for International Development. It was prepared by Emilie Bagby, Edith Felix, Patricia Costa, and Nancy Murray of Mathematica Policy Research.

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DISCLAIMER

The authors' views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Agency for International Development or the United States Government.

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The opinions, conclusions, and any errors in this report are the sole responsibility of the authors and do not reflect the official views of USAID or Mathematica.

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ACRONYMS

CARSI	Central America Regional Security Initiative
CAYAC	Community At-Risk Youth Advisory Committees
CBT	Cognitive Behavioral Therapy
CEN Strategy	United States Strategy for Engagement in Central America
COMPAS-T	Comprehensive Positive Assessment Tool
DAI	Development Alternatives Incorporated (DAI Global, LLC)
EF	<i>Empleando Futuros</i> (Employing Futures)
EFS	Education for Success
EOP	End of Project
FADCANIC	Fundación para la Autonomía y el Desarrollo de la Costa Atlántica de Nicaragua
FY	Fiscal Year
HDI	Human Development Index
ICA	Institutional Capacity Assessment
ICT	Information Communications Technology
IDB	Inter-American Development Bank
ILA	Institutional Landscape Analysis
INFOP	<i>Instituto Nacional de Formación Profesional</i> (National Vocational Training Institute)
KII	Key Informant Interviews
LAC	Latin America and the Caribbean
LMA	Labor Market Assessment
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
OCA	Organizational Capacity Assessment
PNDH	<i>Plan Nacional de Desarrollo Humano</i> (National Plan for Human Development)
RACCN	<i>Región Autónoma de la Costa Caribe Norte</i> (North Caribbean Coast Autonomous Region)
RACCS	<i>Región Autónoma de la Costa Caribe Sur</i> (South Caribbean Coast Autonomous Region)
RENET	<i>Red Nicaragüense para la Educación Técnica</i> (National Network of Technical Education)
SEL	Social and emotional learning
TVET	Technical Vocational Education Strengthening
TVET-SAY	Technical Vocational Education Strengthening for At-Risk Youth
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USG	United States Government
VIP-RA	Violence Involved Persons Risk Assessment
WFD	Workforce Development

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A. Purpose and background of the Workforce Development Learning Agenda

Several countries in Central America continue to face major challenges to their development, including weak political and judicial systems, high levels of poverty, high unemployment rates, widespread insecurity, and high levels of emigration. Although employment may not necessarily end involvement in criminal activities, better employment opportunities are more likely to reduce it. Empirical evidence has found that a one percentage point decrease in youth unemployment leads to 0.34 less homicides per 100,000 inhabitants (Chioda 2017). Investments in human capital can play an important role in discouraging participation in criminal behavior by increasing the prospects of youth finding better employment opportunities. In 2015, the United States launched the U.S. Strategy for Central America (CEN Strategy) to assist the region with its development challenges.¹ The CEN Strategy is a bipartisan, multiyear plan focused on three lines of action: promoting prosperity, improving security, and strengthening governance in the region. From fiscal year (FY) 2015 to FY2018, the CEN Strategy has provided over \$2.6 billion in foreign assistance to the region through the Department of State and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).

Under the USAID-funded Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) Reads Evaluation contract, the USAID LAC education team tasked Mathematica Policy Research (Mathematica) with producing a series of annual reports from 2018 to 2020 tracking progress of workforce development (WFD) investment in Central America to assist in reporting against the CEN Strategy. These reports will facilitate USAID's reporting to Congress on the achievements of six large USAID-funded WFD projects² expected to account for a total of \$181 million in investments in the sub-region. The six projects are occurring in the Northern Triangle countries (Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador) as well as Nicaragua and Jamaica (Table ES.1).

Table ES.1. Six WFD projects included in the report

Project name	Country	Implementing partner	Duration	Budget (USD millions)	Targeted youth age range
<i>Proyecto Puentes / Bridges (Bridges Guatemala)</i>	Guatemala	World Vision	2017–2022	65.0	15–24
<i>Empleando Futuros / Employing Futures (EF Honduras)</i>	Honduras	Banyan Global	2016–2021	19.8	16–29
<i>Avanza / Advance (Advance Regional)</i>	Guatemala, Honduras, and Jamaica	FHI 360	2015–2020	35.0	17–30
<i>Puentes para el Empleo / Bridges to Employment (Bridges El Salvador)</i>	El Salvador	DAI Global, LLC (DAI)	2015–2020	42.2	16–29
<i>Proyecto Aprendo y Emprendo / Technical Vocational Education Strengthening for At-Risk Youth (TVET-SAY Nicaragua)</i>	Nicaragua	Creative Associates	2015–2019	10.0	14–29
<i>Educación para el Éxito / Education for Success (EFS Nicaragua)</i>	Nicaragua	Fundación para la Autonomía y el Desarrollo de la Costa Atlántica de Nicaragua (FADCANIC)	2010–2019	9.0	10–29

Note: Source materials from World Vision, Banyan Global, FHI 360, DAI, Creative Associates, and FADCANIC.

¹ The CEN Strategy was updated in 2017.

² USAID defines each project as an "activity" but since each project includes a variety of activities (or sub activities), in this report we use the term "project" to refer to the whole package of activities.

This first annual report covering WFD investments in Central America provides early information on how projects are reaching their targets of training at-risk youth³ so they can obtain employment. Four of the projects (Bridges Guatemala, Advance Regional, EF Honduras, and Bridges el Salvador) covered in this report are still early in their implementation and have not yet achieved their full planned set of services (indeed, these four projects are still refining the design of some key activities). Therefore, this initial report summarizes project planning and customization activities related to assessing the local labor market, building the capacity of local organizations to conduct WFD training, refining project design, and initial rollout of WFD training activities. TVET-SAY and EFS in Nicaragua are further along and have provided WFD training to their targeted beneficiaries; in those cases, we can assess beneficiaries' employment up to six months after completion of the trainings. For all projects, we discuss the potential for achieving initial targets upon project completion.

B. Focus areas and methodology

The annual reports will cover select project achievements in four focus areas important to WFD programming: (1) beneficiary participation, (2) beneficiary employment or education after completing the project, (3) engagement with the private sector and other actors in the labor market, and (4) WFD organizational capacity strengthening. Each focus area incorporates several common indicator categories that are used by all six projects to report to USAID on project success. The selection of these focus areas and indicators for reporting projects' progress was based on discussions with USAID and project implementers. These annual reporting efforts on the combined efforts of the projects may also facilitate communication and the exchange of learnings between the existing WFD programs. Additionally, they may inform the design and implementation of future WFD programs in LAC, where national governments, USAID, and other donors have made a variety of WFD investments.

In order to understand the progress and achievements of each project for this report, we compiled quantitative and qualitative information from various sources. We used key project documents and data, including monitoring and evaluation plans, work plans, and annual reports. We also collected indicator data using a template we developed to guide the projects on how to easily provide information on the common indicators on which we will report. We interacted directly with project staff to ensure the data collected in the tool were correct and that we appropriately understood project activities and reports.⁴

C. Findings

In this first annual report, we present information summarizing the initial rollout of activities of the six WFD projects and some early findings about beneficiary enrollment and completion. We focus on the FY2017 beneficiary-level accomplishments of the six WFD projects and include their FY2017 and end-of-project (EOP) targets as benchmarks. It is important to note

³ For the purpose of readability, when we discuss projects altogether, we refer to their targeted beneficiaries as "at-risk youth". However, Bridges Guatemala and Advance Regional use the term "disadvantaged youth" and Bridges El Salvador uses "vulnerable youth".

⁴ We reviewed the indicator data shared by projects for inconsistencies, however it was beyond our scope of work to further assess the quality of the data and information shared. USAID does conduct its own data quality assessments of indicator data included in project quarterly and annual reports to USAID.

that FY2017 accomplishments and targets appear far from EOP targets because with the exception of EFS Nicaragua, projects have either not started working with beneficiaries or have been working with beneficiaries for two or less years. Since in FY2017 most projects did not expect to have many or any WFD training completers, the first annual report only presents some early information on beneficiary employment after training completion. In future annual reports, we will include a more detailed discussion on employment findings and will also compare cumulative project accomplishments against EOP targets. There are also projects that do not have a specific target for some indicators, and therefore we cannot report accomplishments against targets.

Although all projects include a common set of WFD activities and have similar goals of improving employment of at-risk youth, the risk level of targeted beneficiaries and the support they need varies greatly by project. The targeted beneficiaries across the six projects include youth ages 14 to 30. In addition, the EFS Nicaragua project offered primary and secondary scholarships to youth ages 10 to 24.⁵ All projects focus on supporting at-risk, vulnerable, or disadvantaged youth, but the level of risk varies significantly across projects and countries (Table ES.2). The six projects include a combination of technical and soft or life skills training; however the length of time and the amount of time per week for which beneficiaries receive support varies significantly. These differences explain some of the variations in completion and employment targets seen across projects. For example projects with multi-year WFD training programs will report on the enrollment of a cohort of beneficiaries during one fiscal year and measure their completion and employment status two to three years later.

Table ES.2. Details on the beneficiaries targeted by each project

Bridges Guatemala	Employing Futures Honduras	Advance Regional (Guatemala, Honduras & Jamaica)	Bridges to Employment El Salvador	Technical Vocational Education Strengthening for At-Risk Youth Nicaragua	Education for Success Nicaragua
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ages 15 to 24 and from the Western Highlands 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ages 16 to 30 from targeted high-crime communities • Out of school • Youth at primary, secondary, or tertiary risk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ages 17 to 30 • Completed secondary education • Limited economic resources • Living in communities with high indices of delinquency or violence • From indigenous and Garifuna communities • Marginalized due to their ethnic origin, gender, religion, disabilities, or sexual orientation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ages 16 to 29 from targeted high-crime municipalities • In school or out of school, with a 9th-grade education • Need support to either complete high school or find employment • Demonstrate a commitment to their own development and the time and effort required to search for and maintain employment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ages 14 to 29 from the Caribbean Coast • At-risk youth, living in unsafe neighborhoods or communities; or traditionally excluded youth including those from marginalized indigenous or afro-descendant communities, the disabled, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex • Out of school and unemployed, but having passed the minimum grade required by the TVET courses • Extremely poor • Demonstrated vocation for the career selected • Potential personal leadership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At-risk youth, from high crime and violent areas in Nicaragua; youth that are particularly at risk, falling into criminal/gang activity or drug and alcohol abuse; youth with little schooling whose further employability options are severely curtailed; youth from marginalized indigenous and afro-descendant communities. <p>Primary scholarship recipients:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ages 10 to 16 • Only completed 3rd grade or the first cycle of accelerated primary education <p>Secondary scholarship recipients:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ages 14 to 24 • Only completed 6th grade or accelerated primary school <p>TVET training:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ages 16 to 29 • Only completed 6th grade or accelerated primary school

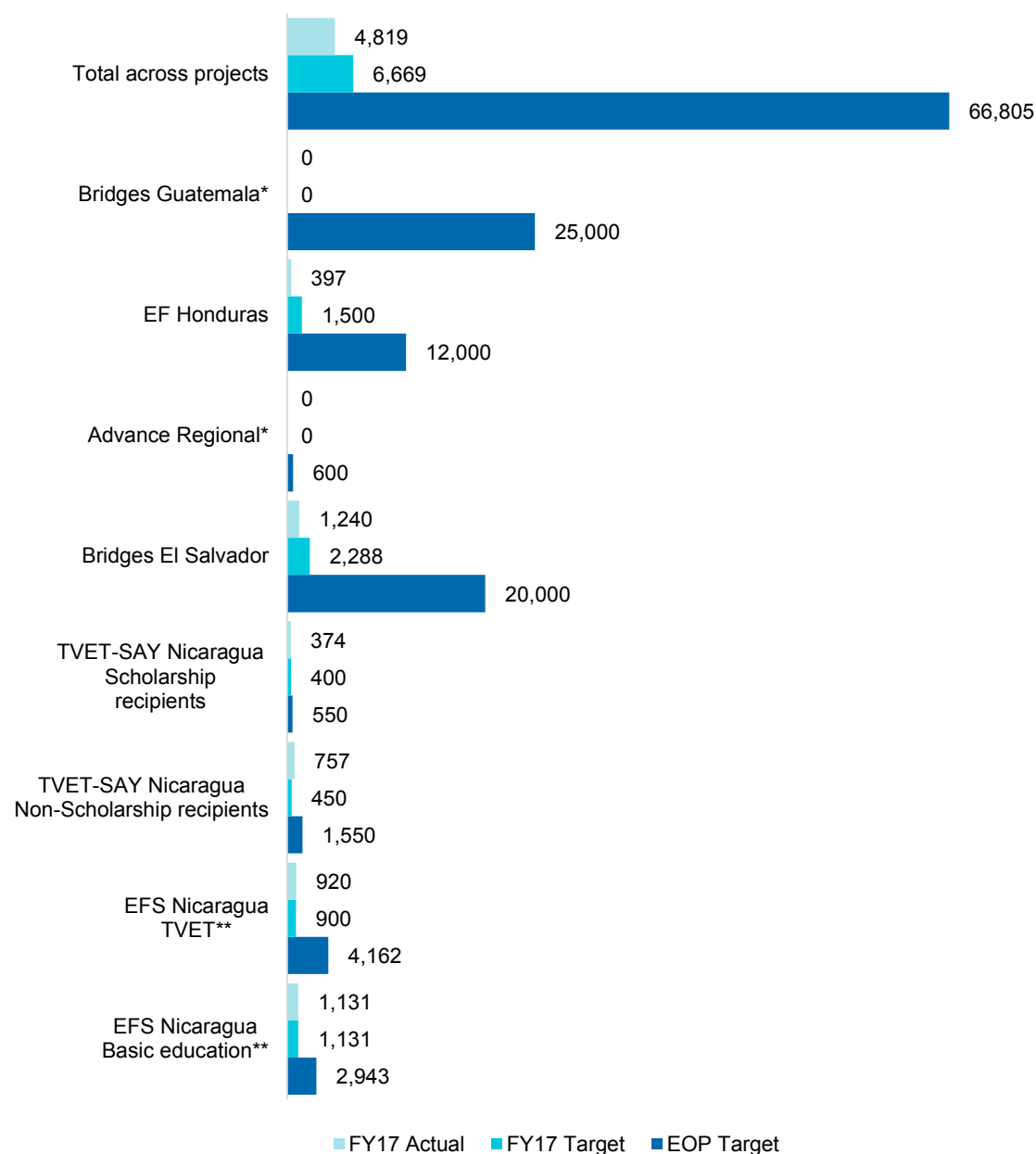
Note: Source materials from World Vision, Banyan Global, FHI 360, DAI, Creative Associates, and FADCANIC.

⁵ According to USAID's youth policy, the age range for youth is ages 10 to 29.

Recruiting and screening potential youth beneficiaries requires a large effort. Projects are conducting a great deal of outreach through local partners to identify youth who are eligible to receive the WFD training. For EF Honduras, Bridges El Salvador, TVET-SAY Nicaragua, and EFS Nicaragua, the recruitment process includes administering assessments to determine eligibility and/or the appropriate WFD service for each beneficiary. Approximately 37 percent of those reached through the recruitment process have enrolled in project services thus far.⁶ However, there is large variance across the three projects with recruitment data, EF Honduras, Bridges El Salvador, and TVET-SAY Nicaragua; with each enrolling 66, 28, and 89 percent of recruited beneficiaries, respectively. These findings demonstrate that in order to enroll large numbers of individuals, projects have to invest significant efforts in connecting with the right candidates.

On the whole, projects are not too far from meeting their initial ambitious beneficiary enrollment targets. Thus far, the six projects succeeded in enrolling 72 percent of the targeted number of fiscal year (FY) 2017 beneficiaries despite the substantial effort required to initiate project activities and target WFD training program content to the local labor market. The actual number enrolled during FY2017 was 4,819 beneficiaries. This is lower than the targeted number (6,669) due to delays in the rollout of WFD training activities and difficulties enrolling at-risk youth (Figure ES.1).

⁶ This measure only considers projects with FY2017 recruitment data. TVET-SAY Nicaragua does not collect recruitment data on non-scholarship recipients. EFS Nicaragua did not have consolidated data on recruitment available in their M&E system for FY2017 activities, but the project will have data for FY2018 activities.

Figure ES.1. FY2017 enrollment numbers versus project targets

Notes: Source material from World Vision, Banyan Global, FHI 360, DAI, Creative Associates, and FADCANIC. Projects have differing end dates. At the time of writing this report, we did not have confirmation on Advance Regional's targets for enrollment.

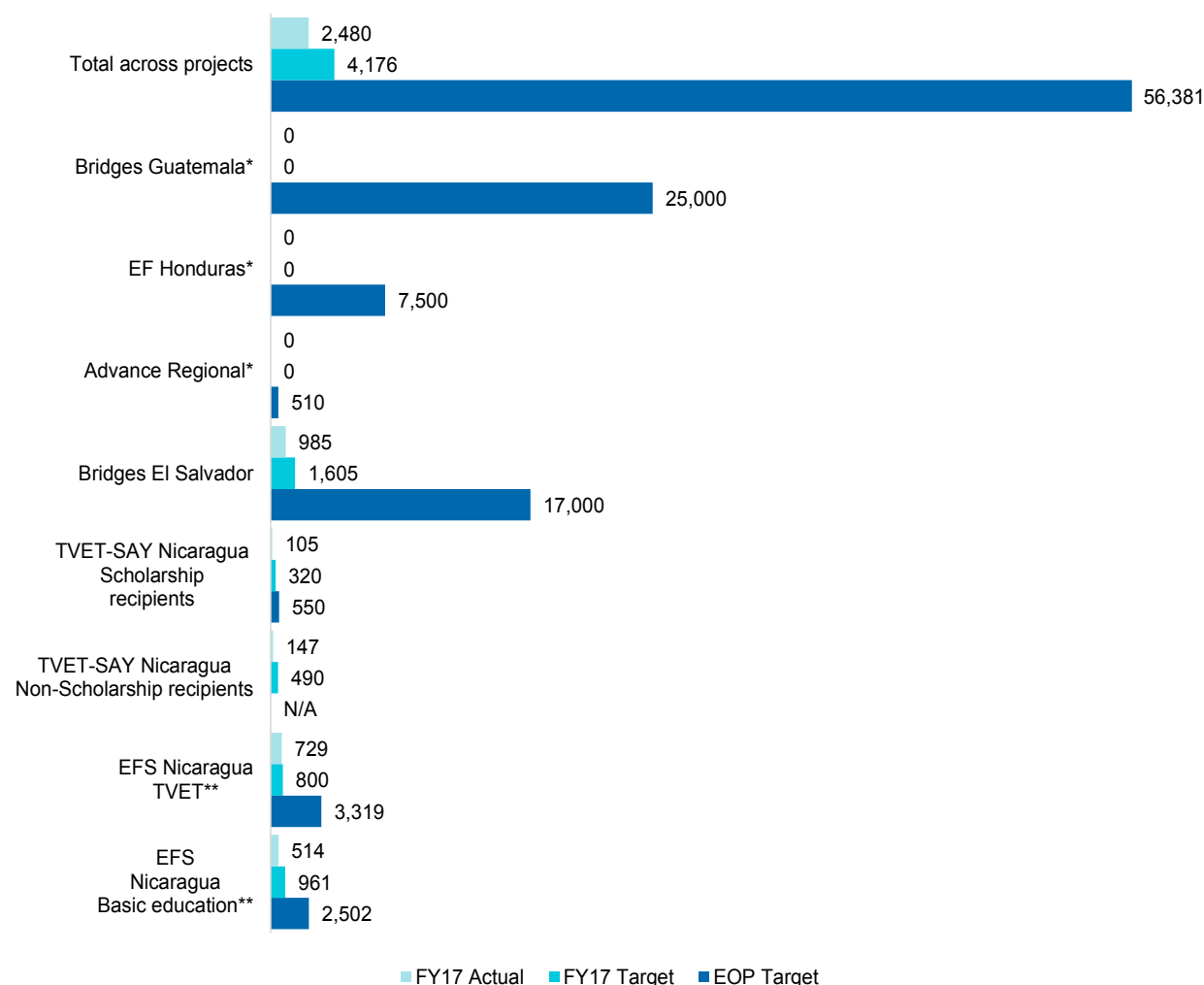
*Bridges Guatemala and Advance Regional will start working with beneficiaries in FY2018.

**EFS Nicaragua's EOP target includes FY2010 to FY2019 beneficiaries. In FY2017, there were 873 new beneficiaries (those who first enrolled in FY2017) and 47 continuing beneficiaries (those who first enrolled in a previous fiscal year but continue to be enrolled in FY2017) enrolled in TVET programs. FY2017 primary and secondary scholarship recipients (basic education) included 608 new and 523 continuing beneficiaries.

Program completion rates are in line with targets. The youth program completion rate across projects in FY2017 was 51 percent. This rate is not too far from the targeted 63 percent completion rate for the year (Figure ES.2). Completion numbers vary across projects and years

because of the variation in duration of training programs. Expected completion rates may also differ across years because of the duration of some training programs. For example, some beneficiaries enrolled in FY2017 may not complete training until FY2020. Projects expect approximately 86 percent (or 56,381) of beneficiaries to complete integrated skills training programs by the time all projects are completed.⁷

Figure ES.2. FY2017 completion numbers versus project targets



Notes: Source materials from World Vision, Banyan Global, FHI 360, DAI, Creative Associates, FADCANIC.

At the time of writing this report, we did not have confirmation on Advance Regional's targets for completion.

*Bridges Guatemala, EF Honduras and Advance Regional, do not expect to have any completion data until FY2018 or later, depending on the duration of WFD training.

**EFS Nicaragua's EOP target includes FY2010 to FY2019 beneficiaries. In FY2017, there were 702 new beneficiaries and 27 continuing beneficiaries who completed their trainings. FY2017 primary and secondary scholarship recipients (basic education) included 219 new and 295 continuing beneficiaries who graduated.

N/A = TVET-SAY Nicaragua does not have an EOP completion target for non-scholarship recipients.

⁷ The EOP completion rate calculation excludes TVET-SAY Nicaragua non-scholarship recipients since the project does not have an EOP target for them.

There are some early differences between males and females in WFD training program enrollment and completion. For enrollment in integrated skills trainings, the gender breakdown across projects is similar, with 2,495 males and 2,318 females enrolled in FY2017 (Table ES.3). At completion, there is a slight difference between male and female completers across projects, with 51 percent (1,271) of enrolled males completing training compared to 52 percent (1,209) of enrolled females completing.

Table ES.3. FY2017 beneficiary achievements disaggregated by sex

	Bridges Guatemala	EF Honduras	Advance Regional	Bridges El Salvador	TVET-SAY Nicaragua Scholarship recipients	TVET-SAY Nicaragua Non- Scholarship recipients	EFS Nicaragua Basic education	EFS Nicaragua TVET	Total across projects
Enrollment									
Male		169		622	210	413	560	521	2495
Female		226		618	164	340	571	399	2318
Completion									
Male				503	54	45	276	393	1271
Female				482	51	102	238	336	1209

Notes: Source materials from World Vision, Banyan Global, FHI 360, DAI, Creative Associates, and FADCANIC. Missing sex information for two EF Honduras beneficiaries. Shaded cells indicate not applicable.

Across age groups, enrollment in WFD training is highest for youth in the 20 to 24 age range, whereas the completion rate is highest among those ages 25 to 30. Most of the beneficiaries enrolled by projects in FY2017 were ages 15 to 24. The 15 to 19 age group included 1,615 enrollees, and the 20 to 24 group included 1,880 (Table ES.4). Beneficiaries ages 25 to 30 had a completion rate at 72 percent and those ages 20 to 24 had a completion rate of 51 percent, compared to 48 percent for those ages 15 to 19.

Table ES.4. FY2017 beneficiary achievements disaggregated by age group

	Bridges Guatemala	EF Honduras	Advance Regional	Bridges El Salvador	TVET-SAY Nicaragua Scholarship recipients	TVET-SAY Nicaragua Non- scholarship recipients	EFS Nicaragua Basic education	EFS Nicaragua TVET	Total across projects
Enrollment									
Ages 10–15							815		
Ages 15–19		179		387	130	205	292	422	1615
Ages 20–24		128		590	192	500	22	448	1880
Ages 25–30		90		263	51	52	2	50	508
Completion									
Ages 10–15							387		
Ages 15–19				287	38	16	121	316	778
Ages 20–24				475	34	64	6	371	950
Ages 25–30				223	33	67		42	365

Notes: Source materials from World Vision, Banyan Global, FHI 360, DAI, Creative Associates, and FADCANIC. We present findings disaggregated by USAID standard age groups, however some projects cover different ages. For EF Honduras and Bridges El Salvador, the 15 to 19 age group only includes beneficiaries ages 16 to 19. For TVET-SAY Nicaragua, the 15 to 19 age group includes 5 completers that are age 14 and the ages 25 to 29 group includes 42 completers that are age 30. TVET-SAY Nicaragua is missing enrollment data for one beneficiary. Shaded cells indicate not applicable.

Projects are successfully engaging with the local labor market in various ways. To tailor training interventions to the demands of the local labor market, all projects conducted or plan to conduct assessments of local labor markets (LMAs) or similar studies during their first years of implementation. These assessments provided valuable information on key sectors in each country and skills demanded by potential employers, as well as employer perceptions of gaps in current training programs. As part of these assessments, projects conducted interviews and roundtable discussions that helped develop partnerships with the private sector. These partnerships can be leveraged into possible internship or employment opportunities for youth, or even serve as additional funding sources for projects. Some projects also worked with the private sector to help incentivize employment of at-risk youth by proposing changes to their internal recruitment and hiring practices (Table ES.5).

Table ES.5. Private sector engagement activities, by project

Type of private sector engagement	Bridges Guatemala	EF Honduras	Advance Regional	Bridges EI Salvador	TVET-SAY Nicaragua	EFS Nicaragua
Understanding labor market needs (LMA or other reports)	X	X	X	X	X	X
Influencing organizational hiring practices	X		X	X	X	
Leveraging funds for project implementation	X	X	X	X	X	X

Notes: Source materials from World Vision, Banyan Global, FHI 360, DAI, Creative Associates, and FADCANIC.

X Indicates the project is engaging in the activity.

The six projects covered in this report work with existing organizations or institutions in their countries to provide WFD training to youth.⁸ In doing so, projects work to build organizations' capacities, contributing to the sustainability of their interventions by leaving behind institutions with better-trained teachers, updated curricula, and, in some cases, updated infrastructure. Projects conduct assessments of the capacity of local organizations that are then used by projects to develop the plan for strengthening local organizations' capacities and updating WFD programming. Thus far, all six projects have engaged in such activities to a varying degree of completion.

D. Summary

Each of the six projects on which this report focuses is in progress, and all six will end between 2019 and 2022. By the end of FY2017, the projects had completed the majority of their initial activities to contextualize program activities to the target populations and local labor markets. Three of the six projects have begun training and graduating beneficiaries from their training programs. Equipped with information from the local assessments, as well as with initial experience gleaned from the beginning of the training programs, many of the WFD projects will focus on rolling out their integrated programs and training significantly greater numbers of youth in FY2018 than in FY2017.

In FY2018, all projects will be working with beneficiaries, and most will continue with building local organizational capacity and working with local labor market actors. The Bridges

⁸ Advance Regional focuses on strengthening tertiary education institutions.

Guatemala and Advance Regional projects will begin training their first groups of beneficiaries. The other four projects will continue their work with beneficiaries and some will also expand to other targeted geographic areas and or offer additional WFD support services. Given that projects have had success in reaching and beginning to train beneficiaries after having assessed local labor markets, there is reason to expect that they will reach their targets by the end of projects despite not fully reaching targets in FY2017. Additionally, in FY2018, EF Honduras will finalize its LMA and Bridges Guatemala will build on Advance Regional's Guatemala LMA through a market study of employers. In FY2018, Bridge El Salvador and TVET-SAY Nicaragua anticipate updating their LMAs.

All projects will also continue to work with the private sector to facilitate linkages and partnerships. Furthermore, all projects will implement WFD organizational strengthening activities. Projects will continue strengthening the organizations engaged in FY2017, which may include follow-up visits and assessments to measure progress and develop improvements plans. EFS Nicaragua has the dual role of strengthening its implementing organization (FADCANIC) while providing additional support to organizations with which they work. TVET-SAY Nicaragua will complete the strengthening of 8 TVETs. Bridges Guatemala will launch their organizational assessment of 25 educational institutions and EF Honduras will begin a second cohort of training for WFD administrators, managers, and trainers.

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. Purpose of the Central American WFD report

Many countries in Central America continue to face major challenges to their development, including weak political and judicial systems, high levels of poverty, high unemployment rates, and widespread insecurity. As a result of these conditions, the region has continued to be one of the main sources of migrants and narcotics flowing into the United States. In recent years, Central America has received increased attention and financial support from U.S. policymakers, who have determined that it continues to be in the national security interest of the United States to help address the region's challenges.

In 2015, the U.S. launched a broad, comprehensive effort called the U.S. Strategy in Central America (CEN Strategy). The CEN Strategy is a bipartisan, multiyear plan focused on three lines of action: promoting prosperity, improving security, and strengthening governance in the region. Under the CEN Strategy, the U.S. has provided over \$2.6 billion in foreign assistance in the last two fiscal years. USAID is currently implementing projects under each of the CEN Strategy's three lines of action. Current USAID projects funded through the CEN Strategy include workforce development programs (WFD), behavior-change counseling for youth most at risk of engaging in violent behavior, and capacity building for civil society organizations.

Under the USAID-funded Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) Reads Evaluation contract, the USAID LAC education team tasked Mathematica Policy Research with producing a series of annual reports from 2018 to 2020 tracking progress of WFD investments in Central America to assist in reporting against the CEN Strategy. Specifically, the purpose of the reports is to facilitate USAID's reporting to Congress on some of the CEN Strategy's key achievements, in particular, those of six of the ongoing USAID-funded WFD projects implemented in Central America and the Caribbean. These projects represent an important portion of Congress' investment in Central America under the CEN Strategy. The reporting will cover select project achievements in four focus areas: (1) beneficiary participation, (2) beneficiary employment or education after completing the project, (3) engagement with the private sector and other actors in the labor market, and (4) WFD organizational capacity strengthening. Each of the focus areas includes key indicators shared by the projects. These annual reporting efforts on the combined efforts of these WFD projects may also facilitate communication and the exchange of learnings between the existing WFD projects. Additionally, they may inform the design and implementation of future WFD programs in LAC, where national governments, USAID, and other donors have made a variety of WFD investments.

This first annual report covering six WFD projects provides early information on the how projects are reaching their targets of training at-risk youth⁹ so that they can obtain employment. Most of the projects covered in this report are still early in their implementation and have not yet achieved their full planned set of services (indeed, several projects are still refining the design of some key activities). Therefore, this initial report summarized planning and customization

⁹ For the purpose of readability, when we discuss projects altogether, we refer to their targeted beneficiaries as "at-risk youth". However, Bridges Guatemala and Advance Regional use the term "disadvantaged youth" and Bridges El Salvador uses "vulnerable youth".

activities related to assessing the local labor market, building the capacity of local organizations to conduct WFD training, refining project design, and initial rollout of WFD training activities for most projects. A couple of the projects are further along and have provided WFD training to their target beneficiaries; in those cases, we can assess beneficiaries' employment up to six months after completion of the trainings. For all projects, we will discuss the potential for achieving initial targets upon project completion.

B. Overview of WFD projects included

USAID selected six WFD projects across four different Central American countries—Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, and Nicaragua—to discuss in this report.¹⁰ The projects aim to increase workforce readiness and future income-generating opportunities for at-risk or disadvantaged youth ages 10 to 30 in project countries by offering a variety of WFD and education-related services, as well as by working with the local private and public sectors to facilitate employment of trained youth. The projects also aim to contribute to violence and crime prevention by providing at-risk youth with soft and life skills training. All selected projects began implementation between 2015 and 2017 except for Education for Success (EFS) in Nicaragua, which started in 2010 (see Table I.1). All projects are currently ongoing and will end between 2019 and 2022, with an expected duration of four to five years (except for EFS Nicaragua, which will last nine years through its completion in 2019). The total amount budgeted for the six projects is \$181 million, with individual project budgets ranging from \$9 million to \$65 million.

Table I.1. Project summary details (name, country, implementer, duration, budget, targeted youth)

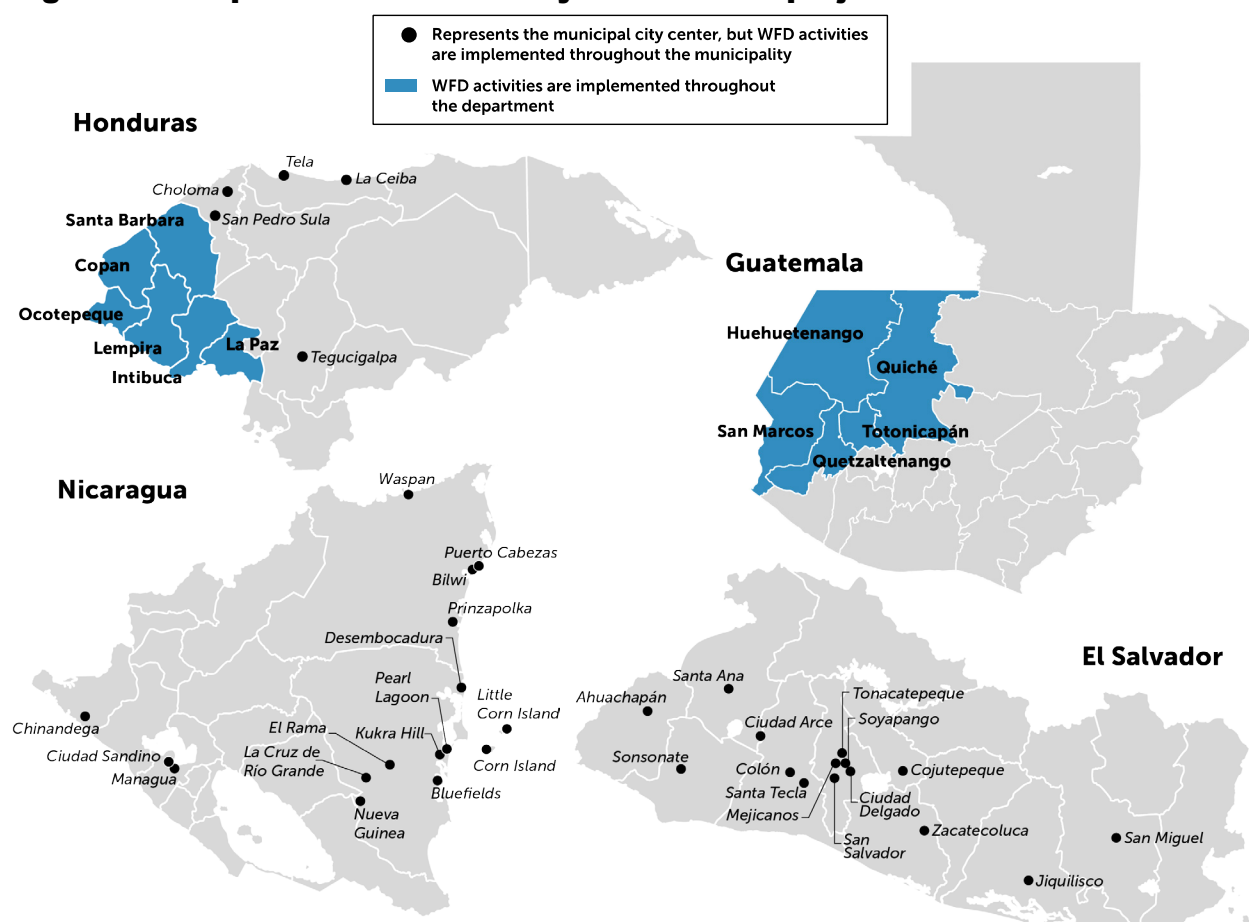
Project name	Country	Implementing partner	Duration	Budget (USD millions)	Targeted youth age range
<i>Proyecto Puentes / Bridges</i>	Guatemala	World Vision	2017–2022	65.0	15–24
<i>Empleando Futuros / Employing Futures</i>	Honduras	Banyan Global	2016–2021	19.8	16–30
<i>Avanza / Advance Regional</i>	Guatemala, Honduras, and Jamaica	FHI 360	2015–2020	35.0	17–30
<i>Puentes para el Empleo / Bridges to Employment</i>	El Salvador	DAI Global, LLC (DAI)	2015–2020	42.2	16–29
<i>Proyecto Aprendo y Emprendo / Technical Vocational Education Strengthening for At-Risk Youth</i>	Nicaragua	Creative Associates	2015–2019	10.0	14–30
<i>Educación para el Éxito / Education for Success</i>	Nicaragua	Fundación para la Autonomía y el Desarrollo de la Costa Atlántica de Nicaragua (FADCANIC)	2010–2019	9.0	10–29

Note: Source materials from World Vision, Banyan Global, FHI 360, DAI, Creative Associates, and FADCANIC.

¹⁰ One project is working with universities in three countries –Guatemala, Honduras and Jamaica. Because the Jamaican context is so different from Central America, we do not discuss it in this report.

The six WFD projects target specific geographic areas with high levels of at-risk youth or WFD institutions serving at-risk youth (see Figure I.1). In Guatemala, *Proyecto Puentes* (Bridges Guatemala) will be implemented in the Western Highlands of Guatemala within the following five departments: Quetzaltenango, Huehuetenango, Totonicapán, Quiché, and San Marcos—due to high poverty and high rates of migration. In Honduras, the *Empleando Futuros* or Employing Futures Project (EF Honduras) targets high-crime areas in the following five municipalities: Tegucigalpa, San Pedro Sula, Choloma, La Ceiba and Tela. The LAC Regional Workforce Development Program called *Avanza* (Advance Regional) is working with universities in Guatemala, Honduras, and Jamaica. In Guatemala, Advance Regional is prioritizing the same departments as Bridges Guatemala. In Honduras, it is targeting the same areas as EF Honduras, as well as the following six departments Ocotepeque, Copan, Santa Barbara, Lempira, Intibuca and La Paz. In El Salvador, the *Puentes para el Empleo* or Bridges to Employment Project (Bridges El Salvador) is being implemented within the following 15 high-crime municipalities: Ahuachapán, Ciudad Arce, Ciudad Delgado, Cojutepeque, Colón, Jiquilisco, Mejicanos, San Miguel, San Salvador, Santa Ana, Santa Tecla, Sonsonate, Soyapango, Tonacatepeque, and Zacatecoluca.

In Nicaragua, *Proyecto Aprendo y Emprendo* or the Technical Vocational Education Strengthening for At-Risk Youth project (TVET-SAY Nicaragua) is working in five municipalities of Nicaragua's South Caribbean Coast Autonomous Region (RACCS) — Bluefields, Corn Island, Little Corn Island, Nueva Guinea and El Rama; two municipalities in Nicaragua's North Caribbean Coast Autonomous Region (RACCN)—Waspan and Bilwi; and three municipalities in the Pacific region— Managua, Ciudad Sandino and Chinandega. The *Educación para el Éxito* or Education for Success Project in Nicaragua (EFS Nicaragua) was originally implemented in three municipalities of Nicaragua's RACCS—Bluefields, Kukra Hill, and Pearl Lagoon—from 2010 to 2013. During its second phase (2013 to 2016), the project expanded to two additional municipalities in the region (Corn Island and Desembocadura de Rio Grande), and in its third phase (2017 to 2019), it expanded to three more municipalities (Puerto Cabezas, Prinzapolka, and Waspan) in Nicaragua's RACCN. The municipalities where both Nicaragua projects are working in are locations where crime and violence is the highest. Figure I.1 shows the areas in Latin America where project activities are being implemented.

Figure I.1. Map of areas covered by the six WFD projects

Notes: Developed by authors based on source materials from World Vision, Banyan Global, FHI 360, DAI, Creative Associates, and FADCANIC. The maps of Honduras and Guatemala show WFD activities for EF Honduras and Advance Regional. The map of Nicaragua shows WFD activities for TVET-SAY Nicaragua and EFS Nicaragua.

C. Outline of report

This report is organized into six chapters. In Chapter II, we provide contextual information about the region, including reviewing the evidence on the impacts of WFD interventions on key outcomes of interest and describing the socio-economic context and U.S. assistance to Central America. We also describe the six WFD projects. In Chapter III, we discuss the WFD focus areas covered in the report and how they were chosen. In Chapter IV, we report the findings to date for each WFD focus area. In Chapter V, we discuss the six projects' progress towards their goals and objectives, and what we expect to cover in future annual reports.

II. CONTEXT

A. Link between human capital and security

Youth unemployment and crime are consistently and positively related. Empirical evidence has found that a one percentage point decrease in youth unemployment leads to 0.34 less homicides per 100,000 inhabitants (Chioda 2017). Although employment may not necessarily end involvement in criminal activities, better employment opportunities are more likely to reduce it (Chioda 2017). Better employment with a higher income discourages youth from participating in crime by increasing the cost of engaging in criminal behavior instead of earning a formal income (Lochner 2004). Therefore, human capital investments can discourage participation in criminal behavior by increasing the prospects of youth finding better employment opportunities.

Education plays a crucial role as a form of investment in human capital. A better education can help youth find higher quality employment, while also giving them the opportunity to engage in positive activities instead of criminal ones. The empirical literature finds a highly negative correlation between measures of crime and education (Ewert and Wildhagen 2011; Carvalho and Soares 2016). Formal education can influence crime and violence through cognitive development (the construction of thought processes such as problem solving and decision making), as well as noncognitive (related to motivation, integrity, and interpersonal interaction including personal attributes such as temperament and attitudes) and emotional development. For example, school-based social and emotional learning (SEL) programs promote a variety of noncognitive skills, such as skills to recognize and manage emotions, establish positive relationships, and make responsible decisions. There exists compelling evidence of a strong association between noncognitive development and positive youth outcomes, including reduced crime and violence (Gutman and Schoon 2013). To find employment, youth must also be equipped with the skills needed and valued in the labor market. Thus, a policy priority of Central American countries is providing youth with such skills through WFD training programs.

B. Overview of the evidence of how WFD interventions can affect human capital accumulation, employment, and poverty

Youth unemployment is a critical global challenge. There is broad consensus in the literature that early joblessness has long-lasting consequences, not only for individuals and their families, but also for societies as a whole. Research indicates that prolonged or repeated periods of early joblessness can impose a lifetime earnings penalty of up to 20 percent and lead to more joblessness later in life (Gregg and Tominey 2005). Disconnected youth are also more vulnerable to suffering from poor physical and mental health and to becoming involved in the consumption and trade of drugs, crime, and possibly even terrorism (International Monetary Fund 2012; Ali 2013). The global scale and long-lasting consequences of youth unemployment have resulted in the rollout of many youth WFD programs around the world. Some of those programs have focused mainly on the provision of technical and cognitive (thought processes) skills, but an increasing number include a variety of complementary components such as life skills and on-the-job trainings.

The current literature on WFD programs examines the effects of multicomponent programs. A review of 54 studies published between 2001 and 2012 found positive results from performance evaluations of specific multicomponent vocational training programs, especially for

countries from Latin America and the Caribbean, echoing findings from the World Bank (Almeida et al. 2012) that integrated programs combining on-the-job training, classroom components, skills training, and counseling are the most effective (Olenik 2013). This section provides a summary of the evidence on these different components.

Most of the existing literature explores the effects of WFD interventions on skills improvements and labor market outcomes. WFD interventions typically measure improvements in cognitive skills through assessments administered before and after the interventions and improvements in noncognitive skills through self-reported surveys or observer reports (Kautz et al. 2014). For labor market outcomes, evaluations of WFD interventions typically focus on short-term employment and earnings measures, since conducting longer-term follow-ups is more difficult. Some WFD interventions also conduct labor market assessments (LMAs) to understand what skills employers are looking for, and target interventions to those skills (Bertrand et al. 2017).

Security outcomes such as violence prevention and crime reduction are additional long-term impacts of interest for WFD interventions targeting youth living in high-crime areas. However, given the difficulty of an intervention having immediate effects on these outcomes, there is limited evidence related to the effects of WFD programming on such outcomes.

Technical and vocational skills training. Technical and vocational skills training is a core component of most WFD programs. Aside from formal primary and secondary schooling, these types of training commonly incorporate programming to facilitate cognitive skills development. The trainings typically attempt to compensate for low-quality or incomplete formal education, and teach trade-specific skills. The evidence indicates that employers pay high premiums to contract workers with higher academic skills (Tyler 2004). However, the literature has only found positive results for classroom-based technical and vocational skills trainings alone in very specific cases. In the U.S., Schochet and colleagues (2008) conducted a randomized evaluation of Jobs Corps, a national training program providing general education, social skills, and parenting and health education, along with vocational training. They found improvements in educational attainment, employment rates, and earnings; however, results for most participants faded after the first few years. Maitra and Mani's (2017) study of a vocational education program for young women in India found slightly positive effects on employment (wage and self-employment and earnings). Most recently, McKenzie (2017) reviewed 12 studies on the impact of vocational training program. The review found that only three studies (out of nine) saw a statistically significant impact on employment and two studies (out of nine) found a statistically significant impact on earnings. There is also mixed evidence on the effects of providing training vouchers on employment outcomes, with results varying by the program's target populations (Huber et al. 2018; Görlitz and Tamm 2016; Kaplan et al. 2015).

On-the-job training. The most promising technical and vocational skills training programs are combined with on-the-job training components (Bertrand et al. 2017). Technical and vocational training programs with apprenticeships or internships had some positive effects on employment, but it is unclear which program component or combination of components is responsible for the positive effects. A randomized evaluation of *Jóvenes en Acción* in Colombia found that three months of classroom training followed by a three-month apprenticeship increased the probability of employment and led to higher wages (Attanasio et al. 2011). In the

Dominican Republic, a randomized evaluation of the *Juventud y Empleo* program found that job training combined with a short-term internship had positive impacts on wages one year after the training, but no effects on employment (Card et al. 2011). A modified version of the *Juventud y Empleo* program that provided better internship placement support found increases in the probability of men working in the formal sector (Ibarraran et al. 2014). Existing evidence also suggests the more successful programs are those that involve the private sector in curriculum and training-methods development or in providing internships or apprenticeships (Hirshleifer et al. 2014; Chakravarty et al. 2016).

Life or soft skills training. Another key best practice of WFD interventions is to complement technical and vocational training with noncognitive skills development. There is a growing body of evidence from developed countries on the effectiveness of soft skills interventions; unfortunately, there is not a clear consensus on which soft skills are most critical for success in which labor markets. Kautz et al. (2014) define noncognitive skills as “the personal attributes not thought to be measured by IQ tests or achievement tests. These attributes go by many names in the literature, including soft skills, noncognitive abilities, character skills, and socioemotional skills.” Evidence on the importance of noncognitive skills for success in the labor market comes from employer surveys and roundtables (Kautz et al. 2014). Kluve et al. (2016) found no clear evidence on a connection between soft skills and better labor outcomes among young people worldwide. The existing literature includes programs that found a positive correlation between life or transferable skills and various employment-related outcomes for youth, especially TVET programs that combined technical and vocational training with training on transferable skills (Kautz et al. 2014; Rankin et al. 2015; Tripney et al. 2013). A recent review that focuses on poor and fragile states found that investments in soft skills during early adulthood seem very promising, especially when combined with investments in technical and vocational skills (Blattman and Ralston 2015).

Cognitive behavior therapy (CBT). In addition to life or soft skills training, WFD programs often also include cognitive behavior therapy (CBT). Most of the evidence on the effects of CBT interventions arises from observational and non-experimental studies and the outcomes are mostly confined to behavioral indicators or reported behavior, therefore additional research is needed in order to understand the effect of CBT as a part of WFD programming. Below we summarize the rigorous evidence showing CBT’s positive effects on behavior outcomes. Hoffman et al. (2012) define modern CBT as “a family of interventions that combine a variety of cognitive, behavioral, and emotion-focused techniques.” CBT has been effective for the treatment of anxiety disorders, somatoform disorders, bulimia, anger and control problems, general stress disorders, and criminal behaviors (Hofmann et al. 2012). In the case of developing countries, Blattman and Ralston (2015) have argued that CBT has potential as a tool to improve employment outcomes, particularly when coupled with technical and life skills training. One rigorous evaluation of an eight-week CBT intervention in Liberia found that those receiving the therapy experienced a reduction in antisocial behaviors, but only those who received both therapy and a \$200 cash grant had a persistent reduction (Blattman et al. 2015). Cook et al. (2014) implemented a randomized evaluation of a Chicago Public Schools program offering academic and social-cognitive training to disadvantaged male youth. The study found significant increases in math test scores, higher expected graduation rates, and a large (but not statistically significant) reduction in criminal behavior during the program year (Cook et al. 2014). The Job Corps and ChalleNge residential programs for at-risk youth in the United States also included

social and character skills components, but their evaluations found only short-term effects on crime and earnings (Schochet et al. 2008; Millenky et al. 2012).

Self-employment interventions. WFD programs often also offer interventions intended to help youth obtain self-employment, either in the formal or informal sector. Cash or credit programs combined with training have been shown to be effective, although usually only in the short term. Self-employment interventions are important in Central America given the prevalence of small businesses (*microempresas*) and the high rates of employment in the informal sector. These interventions include entrepreneurship and business skills training, as well as the provision of initial capital to start a business. Blattman et al. (2016) looked at the impact of providing vocational training and seed capital to groups of poor, unemployed youths in rural Uganda to help them become self-employed artisans. Compared to youth in the control group, grant recipients were twice as likely to be engaged in a skilled trade as nonrecipients were, and had substantially higher earnings (38 percent) and work hours (17 percent). Blattman and Ralston (2015) review found that “capital-centric” programs, defined as interventions providing “hand-outs” such as start-up grants, cash infusions, and in-kind capital transfers, can cost-effectively stimulate self-employment and relieve credit constraints, sometimes in combination with skills training, mentoring, or other services (Banerjee et al. 2015; Bandiera et al. 2013; Fafchamps et al. 2011).

Evidence gaps. The existing literature on the effects of WFD interventions in developing countries has several important gaps. Overall, there is an important knowledge gap regarding what combinations of services are most effective at improving employment and wages and in what contexts specific combinations are effective. Moreover, there is a lack of evidence on the effect of WFD interventions on intermediate outcomes, including behavior, knowledge, and attitudes, as well as longer-term outcomes of interest in addition to employment and income, such as crime and violence prevention.

There are also gaps related to the evidence on the effects of different WFD components:

- **Technical and vocational skills training.** Few of the existing evaluations collected information beyond one year after training, so there is limited knowledge about longer-term effects.
- **On-the-job training.** The existing evidence does not disentangle the effects of apprenticeships or internships from other WFD program components.
- **Life or soft skills training.** Evidence on the effectiveness of soft skills training is limited and mixed; therefore, there is a need to explore the potential of this training in developing countries, especially when combined with the provision of technical skills.
- **CBT.** As yet, there is no evidence that CBT programs affect employment outcomes, even when they are combined with other WFD components; more evidence is also needed on whether they can be generalized to other developing countries and groups of at-risk youth.

C. Central America

The countries in Central America share many development challenges with each other, including high levels of poverty, low levels of human capital development, and high levels of

unemployment and insecurity, as depicted in Table II.1. Although all are middle-income countries, economic growth has been slow for most of them (World Bank 2017a). In education, almost all countries face low secondary school completion rates and a high percentage of unemployment among youth ages 15 to 24 in the labor force. All countries, also have high time-related underemployment rates, measured as the percent of the total number of persons in employment who are willing and available to increase their working time.¹¹ Most also rank among the top 10 in the world in homicide rates.¹² Furthermore, in most of these countries, at least 10 percent of the population has emigrated. For additional details on the socio-economic context of each country see Appendix A.

Table II.1. Socio-economic indicators for WFD project countries

Country	2015 Human Development Index (HDI)	2016 Annual GDP growth (%)	2016 National poverty rate (%)	2015 Lower secondary completion rate (%) ^a	2014 Upper secondary completion rate (%) ^b	2014 Educational attainment for population ages 15 to 24 (years)	2015 Intentional homicides per 100,000 inhabitants	2015 Unemployment rate (%)	2017 Youth (ages 15–24) unemployment rate (%)	2016 time-related underemployment rate (%)	2015 Emigrant population (%)
El Salvador	0.680	2.4	35 ^c	88	27 ^f	9.1	109	5.9 ^f	14.0	8.9	23%
Guatemala	0.640	3.0	59 ^d	63	27	6.0	31 ^d	2.4	5.6	9.6	6%
Honduras	0.625	3.6	66 ^e	53	23	8.1 ^f	64	7.4	10.9	11.7	7%
Nicaragua	0.645	4.7	30 ^d	90	N/A	7.5 ^g	12 ^h	5.3 ^f	10.4	25.8 ^h	11%

Notes: Data sources include the following: CEN Strategy Context Indicators; World Bank World Development Indicators; UNDP Human Development Report 2016; Nicaragua National Development Information Institute; United Nations Population Division; UN Office on Drugs and Crime's International Homicide Statistics; Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean; International Labour Organization Database of Labour Statistics. ^a Lower secondary completion for youth ages 15–24; ^b Upper secondary completion for adults 25 and older; ^c 2015 data; ^d 2014 data; ^e 2016 data; ^f 2013 data, ^g 2009 data, ^h 2012 data.

N/A = Not available.

D. U.S. assistance to Central America

In recent years, the focus of U.S. policy in LAC has been “to advance durable institutions and democratic governance, defend human rights, improve citizen security, enhance social inclusion and economic prosperity, secure a clean energy future, and build resiliency to climate change” (Meyer 2017a). The FY2017 foreign aid budget request of \$50.1 billion included \$1.7 billion for the region through the State Department and USAID. About 43 percent of the requested funds were for Central America, with the majority going to the Northern Triangle countries. Bilateral aid to countries in the region supports a variety of development activities, including those intended to strengthen government transparency and effectiveness, improve access to quality education, and improve business environments (see Table II.2).

¹¹ The International Labour Organization defines time-related unemployment as “all persons in employment, who satisfy the following three criteria during the reference period: a) are willing to work additional hours; b) are available to work additional hours i.e., are ready, within a specified subsequent period, to work additional hours, given opportunities for additional work; and c) worked less than a threshold relating to working time i.e., persons whose hours actually worked in all jobs during the reference period were below a threshold, to be chosen according to national circumstances” (ILO 2018).

¹² Homicide rates in these countries also vary significantly at sub-national level.

Table II.2. USG funding in Central America, by WFD project country or regional program (appropriations in millions of current U.S. dollars)

Country / program	FY2015	FY2016	FY2017
El Salvador	46.6	68.9	72.8
Guatemala	108.1	134.1	140.4
Honduras	66.3	98.8	95.3
Nicaragua	12.1	10.0	9.7
Central America Regional Security Initiative (CARSI)	270.0	348.5	329.0

Note: Based on USG budget data.

The U.S. government has supported Central America's security efforts through CARSI since FY2008. From FY2015 to FY2017, Congress has appropriated \$923.8 million to Central America under CARSI (see Table II.1). The activities funded by CARSI fall under three broad categories: (1) narcotics interdiction and law enforcement support, (2) institutional capacity building focused on the long-term capacity of law enforcement and justice sector institutions, and (3) prevention programs targeting the conditions that make communities vulnerable to crime and violence. In 2017, the Obama Administration launched the U.S. Strategy for Engagement in Central America (CEN), which primarily focuses on the Northern Triangle countries. Congress appropriated \$1.4 billion: \$760 million in FY2016 and \$655 million in FY2017. The CEN Strategy's main objective is "the evolution of an economically integrated Central America that is fully democratic; provides economic opportunities to its people; enjoys more accountable, transparent, and effective institutions; and ensures a safe environment for its citizens" (Meyer 2017b). The CEN Strategy includes three pillars of action: (1) promoting prosperity and regional integration, (2) strengthening governance, and (3) improving security. In particular, it seeks to reduce violence so that no country in the region is ranked in the top 10 countries globally in homicide rates, reduce youth unemployment rates by half, and reduce poverty rates to below 40 percent over the next decade. Several of the WFD projects covered in this report receive some CARSI funding, as they are designed to contribute not only to positive training and employment outcomes, but also to violence prevention.

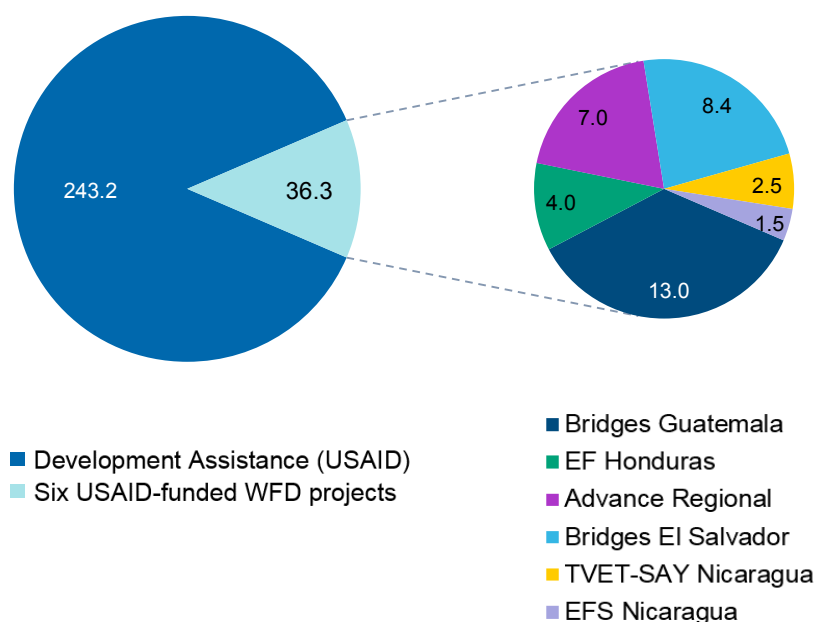
E. Description of six WFD projects included in this report

USAID currently funds a diverse set of activities related to workforce development under the CEN Strategy's prosperity pillar. This pillar includes both demand- and supply-side interventions for increasing employment in Central American countries. Demand-side interventions focus on supporting enterprise growth and productivity to create more employment opportunities. Supply-side interventions are designed to improve the skills and workplace preparedness of youth so they are more marketable to employers, by both working directly with youth, as well as with businesses and training centers to ensure the alignment of youth WFD programs with their labor force needs. Supply-side interventions may also offer labor market bridging support to help youth find new or better employment. (Fox and Kaul 2017). The WFD activities funded by USAID are important supply-side interventions for addressing Central America's youth unemployment challenge; USAID has other projects related to the demand side, primarily economic growth projects, that are not discussed in this report.

USAID's WFD activities also support the CEN Strategy's security pillar by aiming to improve citizen security in Central America. To achieve this goal, many WFD activities in Central America target youth who are susceptible to violence and crime. Most of the WFD projects included in this report target youth at risk of violence and/or living in high crime areas. Through WFD training, at-risk youth can improve their technical and soft skills to help find new or better employment. New or better employment opportunities can reduce at-risk youth's susceptibility to violence and criminal behavior. Moreover, the soft skill trainings offered by WFD projects can also contribute to reducing risk factors and to a reduction in risky behaviors.

The six WFD projects covered in this report represent \$36.3 million in USAID investment in FY2017 (which is 13 percent of development assistance in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua) (see Figure II.1). Through their full duration, the six projects are expected to account for \$181 million in investments in the region.

Figure II.1. FY2017 USAID investment in the six WFD projects against development assistance in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua (appropriations in millions of current U.S. dollars)



Notes: Source materials from Meyer 2017a, USAID, World Vision, Banyan Global, FHI 360, DAI, Creative Associates, and FADCANIC. For five projects, we use an average annual value based on the full contract amount and project duration in years. For EFS Nicaragua, we include the reported actual FY2017 obligated amount.

The six WFD projects in this report are building on the existing evidence for program implementation in the literature and on previous experience from other WFD programs implemented in the same countries with USAID or other donor funding, as well as by national WFD institutions. These programs use an integrated approach to WFD, implementing a package

of best practice interventions. Several programs also incorporate research to contribute to the literature on WFD programming.¹³

1. Bridges Guatemala

Goals and objectives: The project's goal is to improve the quality of life of youth ages 15 to 24 in the Western Highlands of Guatemala through increased employment, education, and general well-being. Bridges aims to empower youth by providing them access to information, knowledge and skills, and participation in income-generating opportunities. The project will focus its activities on (1) improving cognitive, soft, and entrepreneurial skills of youth; (2) providing more employment and entrepreneurship opportunities; and (3) reducing barriers to accessing social services (World Vision 2017a).

Activities: Bridges Guatemala will conduct several activities including (1) building the capacity of WFD service providers; (2) working with WFD service providers to train a target number of 25,000 youth (those completing the core skills curriculum) in skills that are in demand by employers, including soft and technical skills in a variety of sector; and (3) work with youth in job placement and with employers to engage youth (World Vision 2017a, 2017b). As a part of the training, youth beneficiaries will participate in approximately six hours a week for six months in a core technical and soft skills training program. After completing the core skills curriculum, beneficiaries can choose to enroll in technical courses offered by the project's implementing partners. Beneficiaries may also choose to continue their primary, middle, or high school education after completing the core skills curriculum (World Vision 2017a, 2017b).

2. Employing Futures Honduras

Goals and objectives: The overall goal of EF Honduras is to increase employment and protective factors for at-risk youth ages 16 to 29. EF Honduras has three specific project objectives: (1) provide youth at primary, secondary, and tertiary risk¹⁴ with comprehensive WFD services with improved job placement and self-employment rates; (2) strengthen the institutional capacity of the national TVET institution, *Instituto Nacional de Formación Profesional* (INFOP),¹⁵ to provide quality technical and vocational training and governance and to effectively align training and governance with private sector needs; and (3) provide youth at tertiary risk with services that lead to improved legal income generation (Banyan Global 2016a).

¹³ In addition to midterm evaluations that will facilitate program improvement, the EF Honduras project is conducting an impact evaluation that will measure the project's impact on increased employment and enhanced employability of beneficiaries.

¹⁴ Youth at primary risk are those who, despite living in areas with high levels of violence, exhibit few signs in thoughts or actions related to violent behavior, or who have a large number of protective assets, such as a strong family or positive peer group. Youth at secondary risk are those who exhibit signs in either thoughts or actions related to violent behavior, or who do not have protective assets. Youth at tertiary risk are those who have already engaged in criminal or violent behavior. See Guzman et al. (2017) for a detailed description.

¹⁵ INFOP is an autonomous institution tasked with governing and regulating non-formal technical and vocational training in Honduras. INFOP also runs several training centers throughout the country.

Activities: To achieve its project objectives, EF Honduras is conducting several different activities including (1) strengthening the institutional capacity of INFOP; (2) partnering with local service providers to offer comprehensive WFD services to the project's youth beneficiaries, with the following standard components: (a) life skills training, (b) CBT, (c) basic labor competencies, (d) vocational/technical skills, and (e) a capstone course; (3) offering youth at tertiary risk individualized components through an integrated development plan¹⁶; (4) strengthening and creating entrepreneurship and livelihood programs for beneficiaries; (5) providing post-training entrepreneurship support to interested youth participants, including support to develop business plans and obtain access to finance, and mentoring¹⁷; and (6) implementing a labor bridging strategy with the following components: (a) internships, apprenticeships, on-the-job training, job shadowing, or some other form of supervised practical experience, (b) continued mentoring or accompaniment, (c) involvement in youth support groups, (d) career counseling and job placement services, and (e) follow-on support offered beyond employment, including on-site visits and continued access to career services and group. The approximate duration of the comprehensive WFD training program is a minimum of 474 hours completed in a period of about six months; the project aims to have 7,500 youth complete the training (Banyan Global 2016a).

3. Advance Regional

Goals and objectives: The project's goal is to increase employment opportunities among disadvantaged youth ages 17 to 30. To achieve this goal, the project focuses on (1) improving the quality of technical skills training at the tertiary education level and (2) facilitating access to tertiary education (FHI 360 2016).¹⁸

Activities: Advance Regional focuses on strengthening the institutional capacity of prioritized tertiary education programs within select institutions in Guatemala, Honduras and Jamaica, including universities, community colleges, and training institutions. Youth beneficiaries of Advance Regional receive services through these educational institutions. The project's activities include: (1) offering educational institutions updated curriculum support for two-to-three year technical training degree programs that respond to local labor market demands, access to learning materials, training of staff, and support to other nonacademic services, such as setting up or strengthening career centers and mentoring programs; (2) providing a subset of youth beneficiaries scholarships to attend the degree programs (the project aims to support 300 youth through scholarships) in order to facilitate access to tertiary education¹⁹; (3) offering soft and technical skills as well as labor bridging support to youth beneficiaries (internships, links to possible employment, and access to a career center); and (4) creating links with the private sector

¹⁶ EF Honduras is using the Violence Involved Persons Risk Assessment (VIP-RA) to help determine which interventions each beneficiary should receive.

¹⁷ EF Honduras' entrepreneurship and livelihood support activities are still under development.

¹⁸ Advance Regional is similar to other WFD projects in that they focus on disadvantaged youth as beneficiaries; the primary difference is their focus on post-secondary technical degrees.

¹⁹ The scholarship program is tailored to the needs of individual youth but could include support to cover costs of transportation, financial support to cover tuition, and, in some limited cases, financial support to study in a U.S. institution for six months

to ensure that institutional strengthening activities respond to market demand and trained youth find internship opportunities (FHI 360 2016).

4. Bridges to Employment El Salvador

Goals and objectives: The central goal of the Bridges El Salvador is to increase and improve employment of vulnerable youth ages 16 to 29 living in the high-crime municipalities. The project has three objectives: (1) improve the enabling environment for youth WFD and employment through better laws and hiring practices, (2) improve the quality of WFD services that effectively respond to market demand to insert vulnerable youth into targeted economic sectors, (3) improve workforce readiness of targeted at-risk youth. The project focuses on working with employers and developing youth skills needed for the high-growth sectors of agroindustry, manufacturing, information communications technology (ICT), and tourism (DAI 2016a, 2016b).

Activities: Bridges El Salvador is implementing a variety of activities to achieve its project objectives including (1) engaging the private sector through its support of private firms in the development of internal policy improvement plans intended to increase youth hiring and its work with employers and associations to establish, identify, and/or improve training programs that cover the needs of the four-high growing sectors; (2) contracting with WFD service providers to implement employment training programs based on the *empresa-centro* model, which includes training in a center plus real-world experience for beneficiaries through an internship; (3) improving life skills curricula and training service providers in their adoption and application; (4) facilitating access to career counseling and mentoring services for beneficiaries including (a) providing a brochure on career opportunities, (b) developing “business cafes” for sharing knowledge and creating peer networks, and (c) holding job orientation sessions that will include counseling on labor market demand, mentoring with recruitment managers, and registering on online job databases; and (5) selecting and developing some service providers as “one-stop shop” activity hubs to coordinate WFD services, including additional training, information on job fairs, resume writing, interview preparation, among others.²⁰ With the exception of some ICT courses that may last nine months and a training in the plastics industry that lasts six to nine months, all other technical and soft trainings last between 8 and 12 weeks. Bridges El Salvador hopes to graduate 17,000 youth before the program ends in 2020. All youth participating in technical and soft skills trainings receive stipends (\$5 to \$7 per day) to be used for transportation, food, and child care (DAI 2016a, 2016b).

5. Technical Vocational Education Strengthening for At-Risk Youth Nicaragua

Goals and objectives: The project’s main objective is to expand opportunities in technical vocational training, entrepreneurship, life skills training for strengthening resilience and violence prevention, and job placement for at-risk youth ages 14 to 29 living in the Caribbean Coast. The project’s activities focus on (1) improving collaboration and information sharing among centers by establishing or strengthening a network of training centers, (2) strengthening private TVET centers, and (3) providing integrated attention to at-risk youth from the Caribbean Coast by

²⁰ Each service provider is evaluated on an ongoing basis through the technical vocational education and training capacity assessment tool (TVET-CAT). The project used results from the initial TVET-CAT to develop a customized capacity-building plan for each service provider.

expanding opportunities in technical and vocational training, entrepreneurship, resilience strengthening, life skills, individual psycho-social counseling, violence prevention, and job placement (Creative Associates 2016a).

Activities: To achieve its main objective, TVET-SAY Nicaragua is implementing several different activities including (1) strengthening the capacity of eight private TVET centers, including expanding course offering, integrating in the curricula an innovative life skills training approach, and improving the quality of trainings and career services to facilitate job placement²¹; (2) providing at-risk youth with scholarships to participate in two and a half- to three-year technical careers offered by the eight private TVET centers and trade courses; (3) establishing private sector alliances to offer scholarship funding for participation in the eight centers, help the centers better align their course offerings with youth labor market demand, and provide employment opportunities; and (4) improving collaboration and exchange amongst training centers through the establishment of national, regional, and sectorial networks. TVET-SAY Nicaragua worked with USAID to develop the Comprehensive Positive Assessment Tool (COMPAS-T) to identify at-risk youth to be offered scholarships and to measure their level of risk before and after participating in trainings.²² They hope to graduate 2,100 beneficiaries from technical careers by the end of the project in 2019 (Creative Associates 2016a, 2016b, 2016c).

6. Education for Success Nicaragua

Goals and objectives: The project's goal is to assist at-risk youth ages 10-29 through an integrated program that helps them develop and use educational and life skills needed for a productive life of work, service and professional development. The EFS Nicaragua provides support through the formal education system as well as through technical vocational training institutions (FADCANIC 2014).

Activities: The EFS Nicaragua project is implementing a variety of WFD activities including: (1) providing at-risk youth ages 10 to 24 with primary and secondary school scholarship; (2) offering scholarship recipients, as well as additional beneficiaries participating in the formal education system, with comprehensive package of wraparound and life skills training including (a) life skills education, (b) access to after-school tutoring and homework clubs, (c) peer mentoring, and (d) psycho-social counseling; (3) providing life skills training and scholarships for participation in technical vocational training offered by certified institutions to at-risk youth ages 16 to 29 in the following two different modalities (with a duration of 120 hours to two years): (a) basic secondary technical degrees and (b) apprentice-level community-based technical courses; (4) offering EFS Life Skills Education program to youth in both modalities to complement the technical trainings; (5) providing select youth in the technical vocational programs psychological counseling; (6) offering EFS youth entrepreneurial seed

²¹ TVET-SAY Nicaragua adjusted the USAID OCA tool leading to organizational capacity assessment tool (OCA-T). The OCA-T is designed to measure and strengthen the capacity of TVETs to provide WFD services tailored to the critical needs of at-risk youth. The project used results from a baseline OCA-T to create individualized action plans for each center, and will update the capacity assessments annually.

²² The COMPAS-T measures 12 risk factors and five protective factors. TVET-SAY administers the COMPAS-T to beneficiaries, before and after training completion, as well as six months after completion. The tool includes an early warning system useful for identifying beneficiaries who need individual counseling.

funding to select youth who have completed technical vocational training; (7) training parents, teachers, and community volunteers to support program beneficiaries; (8) creating links with the private sector to identify employment opportunities for youth who have completed technical and vocational skills training; and (9) strengthening the institutional capacity of FADCANIC (FADCANIC 2014, 2016a).

F. WFD Community of Practice

The six WFD projects included in this report are part of the LAC WFD Community of Practice that was created as a part of Mathematica's work with USAID to synthesize the projects' experiences through annual reports and meetings. The purpose of the WFD Community of Practice is to foster sharing and learning among USAID missions and implementing partners from USAID-funded WFD projects in Central America. The information and learnings exchanged will be used to facilitate learnings across WFD projects that are currently active in the region and to inform the next generation of WFD activities funded in the region and across the globe.

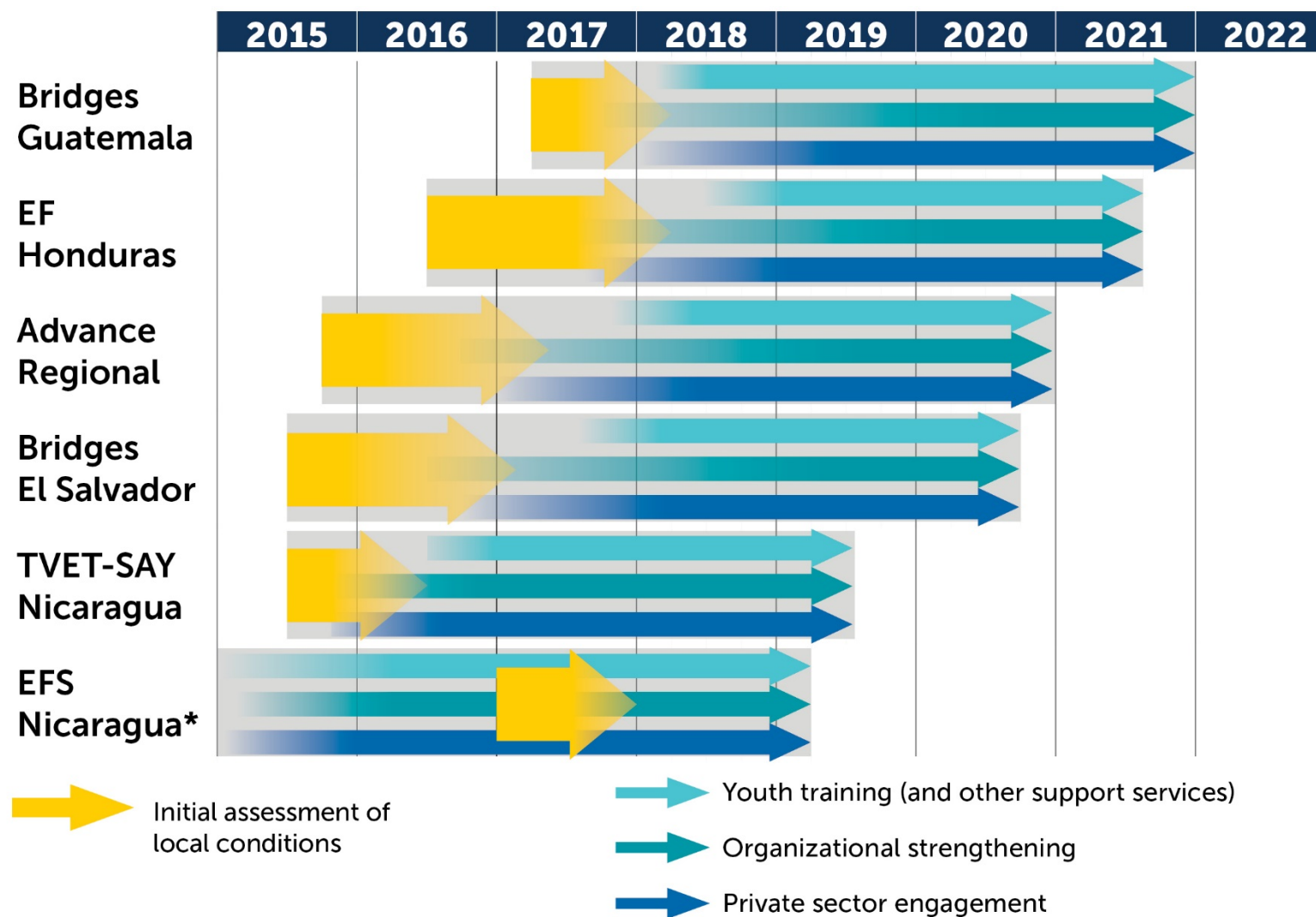
G. Contribution to USAID WFD and Central America strategies

The purpose of this first annual Central America WFD report is to provide information on the accomplishments related to current WFD investments by the U.S. in Central America. The reporting includes early learning and initial outputs from the six WFD projects across the four selected focus areas. These early learnings will complement the other CEN Strategy monitoring and evaluation work happening in the region. Although some activities implemented by projects aim to improve labor market demand, most focus on supply-side interventions designed to improve the human capital of targeted youth. These supply-side interventions complement the other demand-side and economic growth activities currently financed in the region, which are not the focus of this report. This report summarizes key learnings from the different studies completed by projects to date, including assessments about the labor market and WFD service providers at the start of each project, and also provides information on the initial outputs from each project activity, including information on the number of youth beneficiaries and service providers reached to date.²³

²³ In subsequent reports, we will draw conclusions about project successes and overall effectiveness. When doing so, it will be important to remember the context in which projects are operating, the rigor of any evidence on project effectiveness provided, and differences in design and implementation across projects.

III. FOCUS AREAS

The projects included in this report have similar activities that include **initial assessments of local conditions**. These assessments include analyzing private sector demand for skills through labor market assessments (LMA) and studies on the existing capacity of local WFD service providers. Once these assessments are completed, projects begin to roll out a series of interventions including **private sector engagement** activities, **organizational strengthening** interventions, updating or developing training courses for teachers or students, and **training and other support services** for youth. In Figure III.1, we summarize the timeline of rollout of project activities, situating each in the calendar years in which they are implementing.

Figure III.1. Project rollout

*EFS Nicaragua conducted an initial assessment of local conditions in newly added municipalities during each of its three rollout phases, 2010, 2012, and as depicted above in 2017.

Note: Developed by authors based on source materials from World Vision, Banyan Global, FHI 360, DAI, Creative Associates, and FADCANIC.

For this report, we focus the discussion on four areas important to WFD programming that can facilitate learning across projects as well as contribute to learning for the CEN Strategy's WFD investments. Each focus area incorporates several common indicator categories that are used by the six WFD projects included here to report on project success to USAID. The selection of these focus areas and the indicators on which to report to demonstrate progress was based on discussions with USAID and project implementers (Table III.1). In order to understand the progress and achievements of each project for this report, we compiled quantitative and qualitative information from key project documents and data, including monitoring and evaluation plans, work plans, and annual reports. We also collected indicator data using a template we developed to guide the projects on how to easily provide information on the common indicators we will report on. We interacted directly with project staff to ensure the data collected in the tool was correct and that we appropriately understood project activities, and reports.²⁴

Table III.1. WFD report focus area, description, and indicator category

WFD focus area	Focus area description	WFD indicator category
Beneficiary participation	Number of persons enrolled and completing WFD programs or activities	Number of beneficiaries enrolled in the WFD program and/or activity
	Number of persons in formal and/or non-formal education (may include secondary or post-secondary schooling or training programs)	Number or percentage of beneficiaries completing the WFD program and/or activity
Beneficiary employment or investment in employability	Number of persons employed, newly employed, or better employed (including better self-employment) as a result of participation in USG-funded workforce development programs	Number or percentage of beneficiaries with new or better employment
	Number of persons in formal and/or non-formal education (may include secondary or post-secondary schooling or training programs)	Number or percentage of beneficiaries enrolled in formal or non-formal education programs
Engagement with private sector and other actors in the labor market	Alignment of WFD programs to private sector labor needs/changes in private sector practices to recruit and employ youth; partnerships formed and money leveraged to support WFD programs	Understanding labor market needs
		Influencing organizational hiring practices (to hire project target populations)
		Funds leveraged (from private sector, public sector, or other donors)
WFD organizational capacity strengthening	Improvement in organizational capacity to deliver WFD services to at-risk youth in the community	Number of WFD service providers strengthened
		Organizational capacity assessment (OCA)
		Number of new/revised WFD programs

Note: Developed by authors based on source materials from World Vision, Banyan Global, FHI 360, DAI, Creative Associates, and FADCANIC.

²⁴ We reviewed the indicator data shared by projects for inconsistencies, however it was beyond our scope of work to further assess the quality of the data and information shared. USAID does conduct its own data quality assessments of indicator data included in project quarterly and annual reports to USAID.

Beneficiary participation. This focus area includes information on the participation of youth beneficiaries in WFD activities from program recruitment to completion. In Appendix B, we describe the different types of WFD activities that involved working directly with beneficiaries across projects. The first indicator category measures the number or percentage of beneficiaries enrolled in the WFD program or activity. The second measures the number or percentage of beneficiaries completing the WFD program and/or activity. In Figure III.2, we illustrate the general progression of beneficiary participation in youth WFD training programs whose goals are for youth to obtain gainful employment. This progression includes outreach to potential beneficiaries, determination of eligibility, beneficiary enrollment in the training program, beneficiary completion of the training program, and beneficiary employment or additional education. Despite a large outreach effort to identify potential beneficiaries, recruitment and eligibility activities vary from project to project and only some projects collect data on these steps. However, all projects collect data on enrollment and completion, allowing them to monitor progress. As mentioned in the descriptions of the projects earlier, the length and composition of each WFD training varies by project; therefore, targets for each indicator vary significantly across projects.

As beneficiaries progress through the training program, beneficiaries may decide to end their participation in the program for various reasons. Beneficiaries may decide to drop out to return to school or because they obtain employment; this is called positive dropout. They may also drop out of the training without having other productive things to do; this is considered nonpositive dropout. Projects do not systematically collect additional data on those who leave their training programs prior to completion; therefore, the current data do not allow us to group program leavers into the two categories. However, some projects may collect additional data on these noncompleters through surveys they conduct.²⁵

Beneficiary employment or investment in employability. This focus area captures information on beneficiaries after WFD program completion. The focus is on whether program completers are employed or investing in their employability by continuing their education. This relates to the CEN Strategy's focus on helping youth in the region find legitimate employment opportunities so they are less susceptible to recruitment by gangs or other criminal organizations. The first indicator category measures the number or percentage of beneficiaries with new or better employment. The second measures the number or percentage of beneficiaries enrolled in formal or non-formal education programs. Figure III.2, depicting beneficiary progression through training and future employment, also indicates the points in time after beneficiaries complete the WFD program where projects collect information from them. All projects follow up with youth who complete the WFD interventions six months after program completion. Some projects also collect information from the same youth immediately following or 12 months after program completion. Because of this time frame and the length of time beneficiaries may need to participate in the different training components, many projects will not report employment numbers until their last years of implementation. Other projects with short time frames from start to finish of the WFD training program will have information on employment well before the project end date.

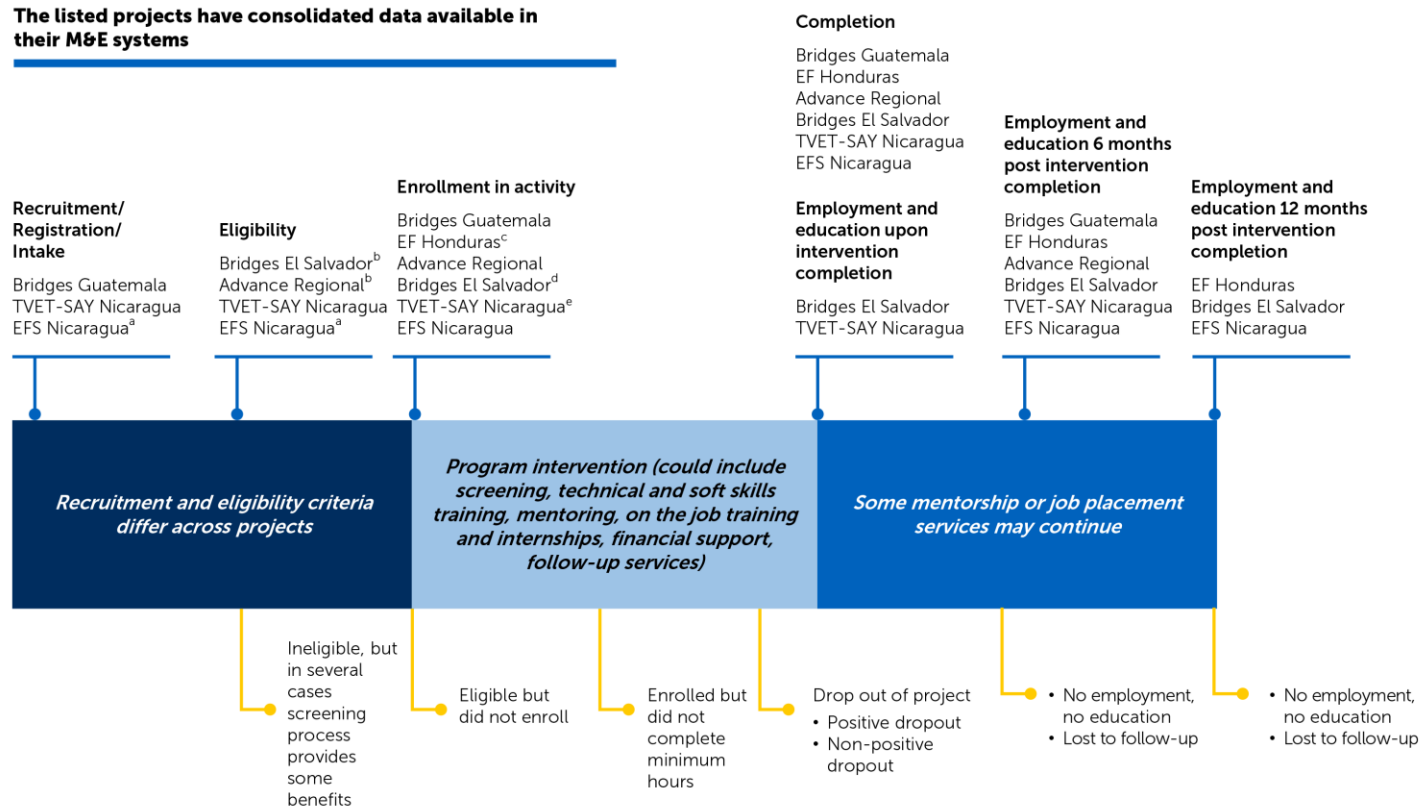
²⁵ EF Honduras is following up with non-graduates. They have a custom indicator: "Number of EF at-risk youth participants, graduates, and non-graduates, with positive outcome beyond the standard employment indicator."

Engagement with the labor market. This focus area includes information on the alignment of WFD programs to the private sector's labor needs and to changes in employers' recruitment practices. Additionally, it covers partnerships formed in support of WFD with the private and public sector as well as other donors. The CEN Strategy's efforts also focus on developing partnerships between academia and the private sector and improving the linkages between education and labor market needs. This focus area includes three different indicator categories. The first category covers learnings from the LMAs conducted by projects to understand labor market needs. The second category includes information on each project's efforts to influence the private sector's hiring practices so that the targeted youth populations can more easily find employment. The final category captures information on the funds from different sectors and international donors that projects have leveraged.

WFD organizational capacity strengthening. This focus area captures improvements in the organizational capacity of WFD service providers to deliver services to youth. These organizational improvements relate to the CEN Strategy's efforts to facilitate access to quality education. This focus area includes three different indicator categories. The first category measures the number of service providers strengthened by the project. The second includes qualitative information on the organizational capacity assessments conducted by projects with providers. The third measures the number of WFD programs created or revised by projects.

Figure III.2. Beneficiary progression through WFD training programs, including key moments when projects collect consolidated data for their M&E systems on enrollment, completion, and employment

The listed projects have consolidated data available in their M&E systems



Moments when beneficiaries or potential beneficiaries are no longer followed

^a Plans to have consolidated data available in their M&E system for FY2018 activities

^b Eligibility screening is part of the recruitment process

^c Risk-assessment and 24 minimum hours of participation

^d 16 minimum hours of participation

^e One full week of participation

Note: Developed by authors based on source materials from World Vision, Banyan Global, FHI 360, DAI, Creative Associates, and FADCANIC.

IV. FINDINGS TO DATE

A. Youth training and support services

Throughout their duration, the six WFD projects together expect to enroll at least 66,805 beneficiaries in integrated skills training programs focused on helping youth develop technical, soft, and life skills.²⁶ Appendix B includes more details on each project's WFD activities. In this section, we describe the profile of the targeted beneficiaries, as well as project efforts to recruit, enroll, train, and graduate beneficiaries. We also discuss goals for employment and investing in future employment once beneficiaries complete training programs.

1. Profile of targeted beneficiaries

During FY2017, all projects except Bridges Guatemala and Advance Regional started or continued to implement WFD activities with beneficiaries aged 14 to 30 (as shown earlier in Figure III.1). In addition, the EFS Nicaragua project also offered primary and secondary scholarships to youth ages 10 to 24. Although each one has a specific definition for youth targeted, all projects focus on supporting at-risk or disadvantaged youth. Projects aim to contribute to violence and crime prevention by offering at-risk youth comprehensive WFD services with soft and life skills components. Table IV.1 includes details on the beneficiaries targeted by each project.

- In Guatemala, the Bridges project will begin working with disadvantaged youth ages 15 to 24 in FY2018. As part of phase II implementation, the project has already started working in about 100 communities located in 15 Western Highland municipalities²⁷ They define youth living in the Western Highlands as disadvantaged due to high rates of poverty and low education achievement rates, as well as limited services and opportunities for youth. These are some of the factors contributing to the high migration rates from the Western Highlands.
- In Honduras, the EF project began serving youth at primary and secondary risk in six communities within three of the five target municipalities.²⁸ In FY2018, EF Honduras will expand to the other two target municipalities and will begin working with youth at tertiary risk. The target population is out-of-school youth (primarily young men) between the ages of 16 to 29 who are the most at risk of being perpetrators of violence, and those who have already engaged in violent or criminal behavior.
- The Advance Regional project will begin working with beneficiaries in FY2018. It has already identified specific criteria for disadvantaged youth ages 17 to 30, including the following: limited economic resources, living in communities with high indices of delinquency or violence, from indigenous communities, or marginalized. Youth must have completed secondary education.

²⁶ At the time of writing this report, we did not have confirmation on Advance Regional's final targets, therefore we use the targets included in the project's M&E and life of project plans.

²⁷ In Phase III, the project will continue working in these 15 municipalities and expand to work in an additional 10 municipalities, for a total of 25 municipalities.

²⁸ The EF Honduras project worked in the municipalities of Tegucigalpa, San Pedro Sula, and Tela.

- In El Salvador, the Bridges project originally selected 15 high-crime municipalities in which to work; it is currently only working with vulnerable youth ages 16 to 29 from 8 of these municipalities.²⁹ Bridges defines vulnerable youth as those “in need of technical training, education, psychosocial support, or related assistance to complete their education or to find, keep and/or improve employment” (DAI 2016b). Table IV.1 includes examples of the types of beneficiaries targeted by the project.
- In Nicaragua, the TVET-SAY and EFS projects both worked with at-risk youth from the Caribbean Coast in 2017. TVET-SAY’s beneficiaries are at-risk youth ages 14 to 30 and EFS’ beneficiaries are disadvantaged youth ages 10 to 29. In Table IV.1, we list the projects’ detailed eligibility criteria.

Table IV.1. Details on the beneficiaries targeted, by project

Bridges Guatemala	EF Honduras	Advance Regional	Bridges El Salvador	TVET-SAY Nicaragua	EFS Nicaragua
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ages 15 to 24 and from the Western Highlands 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ages 16 to 30 from targeted high-crime communities • Out of school • Youth at primary, secondary, or tertiary risk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ages 17 to 30 • Completed secondary education • Limited economic resources • Living in communities with high indices of delinquency or violence • From indigenous and Garifuna communities • Marginalized due to their ethnic origin, gender, religion, disabilities, or sexual orientation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ages 16 to 29 from targeted high-crime municipalities • In school or out of school, with a 9th-grade education • Need support to either complete high school or find employment • Demonstrate a commitment to their own development and the time and effort required to search for and maintain employment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ages 14 to 29 from the Caribbean Coast • At-risk youth living in unsafe neighborhoods or communities; or traditionally excluded youth including those from marginalized indigenous or afro-descendant communities, the disabled, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or intersex • Out of school and unemployed, but having passed the minimum grade required by the TVET courses • Extremely poor • Demonstrated vocation for the career selected • Potential personal leadership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At-risk youth, from high crime and violent areas in Nicaragua; youth that are particularly at risk, falling into criminal/gang activity or drug and alcohol abuse; youth with little schooling whose further employability options are severely curtailed; youth from marginalized indigenous and afro-descendant communities. <p>Primary scholarship recipients:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ages 10 to 16 • Only completed 3rd grade or the first cycle of accelerated primary education <p>Secondary scholarship recipients:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ages 14 to 24 • Only completed 6th grade or accelerated primary school <p>TVET training:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ages 16 to 29 • Only completed 6th grade or accelerated primary school

Note: Source materials from World Vision, Banyan Global, FHI 360, DAI, Creative Associates, and FADCANIC.

2. Recruitment and eligibility screening

Prior to enrolling beneficiaries in training activities, projects invest a significant amount of time recruiting and screening youth who are at risk and eligible to participate. Activities around recruitment and eligibility screening are key to attracting youth who demonstrate an interest in

²⁹ In FY2017, Bridges El Salvador worked in the following municipalities: San Salvador, Santa Tecla, Colon, Ciudad Arce, Soyapango, Ciudad Delgado, Zacatecoluca, and Mejicanos. The project might expand to some of the other originally selected municipalities in future years.

being trained and who are more likely to complete the program and find employment. Recruitment strategies vary across projects, but all projects work with local entities with ties to target communities to identify and attract at-risk youth. Throughout the life of the projects, recruitment efforts continue to identify and enroll potential beneficiaries across multiple cohorts participating in the projects. In FY2017, 4 projects spent a large amount of effort reaching out to potential beneficiaries. In Honduras, local organizations with community ties carried out the recruitment and selection of the EF project's youth beneficiaries. In El Salvador, Bridges conducted 70 outreach and recruitment events in partnership with other organizations and local government stakeholders. The TVET-SAY Nicaragua project implemented a youth engagement campaign to facilitate their recruitment efforts. As part of the campaign, scholarship recipients from the TVET-SAY's Youth Advisory Council promoted project activities in their communities to supplement recruitment activities. EFS Nicaragua worked with their Community At-Risk Youth Advisory Committee (CAYAC) members to recruit and select beneficiaries. The Bridges Guatemala and Advance Regional projects did not recruit any beneficiaries during FY2017, but both projects will work with local entities to recruit youth in FY2018.

In several cases, the recruitment process includes administering assessments to determine eligibility and/or the appropriate WFD service for each beneficiary. During FY2017, EF Honduras administered a risk-level assessment tool to 600 youth, with 13 percent identified as youth at secondary risk (defined by the project as those exhibiting several signs of violent behavior) and the rest as youth at primary risk (defined by the project as those exhibiting few signs of violent behavior). Based on the identified risk level, youth were referred to EF Honduras training programs with varying support levels. In El Salvador, 4,395 youth participated in Bridges' eligibility screening process. The four-hour process involves completing a registration form and either a psychometric test or a personal interview. Because of the fairly lengthy intake process, it is likely that only youth interested in the Bridges El Salvador training program would apply to, and possibly participate in, the program. In Nicaragua, the TVET-SAY project used a risk-level assessment tool, an interview, and remedial course grades to determine scholarship eligibility. In FY2017, 420 potential TVET-SAY beneficiaries went through this process. The EFS Nicaragua project also used a social risk assessment tool to determine eligibility for primary and secondary scholarships.³⁰

Thus far, projects have engaged in only a small portion of the expected recruitment activities. Approximately 37 percent of those reached through the recruitment process have enrolled in project services thus far.³¹ However, there is large variance across the three projects with recruitment data, EF Honduras, Bridges El Salvador, and TVET-SAY Nicaragua; with each enrolling 66, 28, and 89 percent of recruited beneficiaries, respectively. These findings demonstrate that in order to enroll large numbers of individuals, projects have to invest significant efforts in recruiting the right candidates. Moving forward, the six projects will continue recruitment activities to identify potential beneficiaries, some of which will incorporate

³⁰ The social risk assessment tool is also administered to TVET program beneficiaries for screening youth who may be in immediate need of referral to psychosocial services. Areas that are assessed include: family conditions, living conditions, economic situation and four self-esteem dimensions.

³¹ This measure only considers projects with FY2017 recruitment data. TVET-SAY Nicaragua does not collect recruitment data on non-scholarship recipients. EFS Nicaragua did not have consolidated data on recruitment available in their M&E system for FY2017 activities, but the project will have data for FY2018 activities.

changes based on lessons learned in FY2017. For example, EF Honduras will try to recruit and enroll larger groups of youth to compensate for the high dropout rates seen in the first three weeks of training. Bridges El Salvador will aim to be ready to enroll youth in their specific WFD training as soon as they pass the eligibility screening in order to more effectively enroll youth in their targeted training.

3. Enrollment in WFD training programs

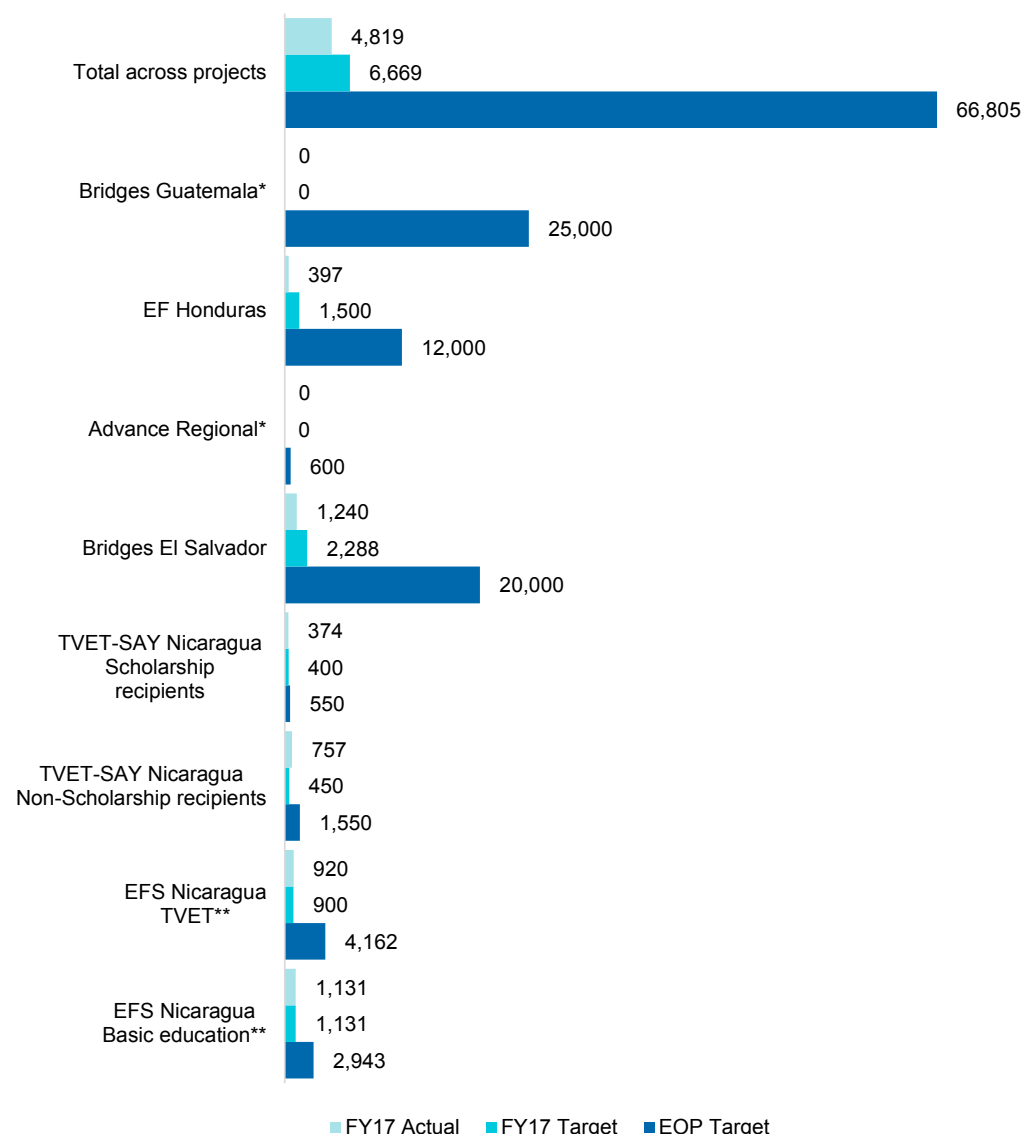
In this section, we present the FY2017 beneficiary-level accomplishments of the six WFD projects and include their FY2017 and end-of-project (EOP) targets as benchmarks. It is important to note that FY2017 accomplishments and targets appear far from EOP targets because, with the exception of EFS Nicaragua, projects have either not started working with beneficiaries or have been working with beneficiaries for two or less years. In future annual reports, we will compare cumulative project accomplishments against EOP targets. There are also projects that do not have a specific target for some indicators, and therefore we cannot report accomplishments against targets. The six projects include a combination of technical and soft or life skills training; however the length of time and the amount of time per week for which beneficiaries receive support varies significantly. These differences explain some of the variations in completion and employment targets seen across projects. For example projects with multi-year WFD training programs can report on the enrollment of a cohort of beneficiaries during one fiscal year and measure their completion and employment status two to three years later.

As shown in Figure IV.1, the end-of-project (EOP) enrollment targets vary across projects, ranging from 550 scholarship recipients for the TVET-SAY Nicaragua project to 25,000 enrollees in Bridges Guatemala's core skills curriculum. These differences are due to project budgets and their intended coverage, as well as to the type and intensity of WFD services offered. In FY2017, projects expected to enroll 6,669 beneficiaries, which is 10 percent of the EOP target of 66,805. Thus far, the six projects succeeded in enrolling 72 percent of the targeted number of FY2017 beneficiaries despite the substantial effort required to initiate project activities and target WFD training program content to the local labor market.

The actual number enrolled during FY2017 was 4,819 beneficiaries. This was lower than the targeted number (6,669) due to delays in the rollout of WFD training activities and difficulties enrolling enough at-risk youth. For example, EF Honduras' process for awarding WFD training grants to implementing partners took longer than expected. Additionally, EF Honduras' implementing partners also experienced difficulties with their initial recruitment efforts due to varied recruitment strategies. As a result of these challenges, EF Honduras did not begin working with beneficiaries until September 2017, and only enrolled 397 youth out of the 1,500 targeted. Based on these experiences, the project has simplified the FY2018 application process for implementing partners and has standardized recruitment strategies based on best practices. FY2017 was Bridges El Salvador's and TVET-SAY Nicaragua's first full year working with beneficiaries; they enrolled 1,240 and 374 youth respectively. An additional 757 youth without TVET-SAY scholarships (see TVET-SAY non-scholarship recipients in Figure IV.1) enrolled in WFD training programs strengthened by the project. EFS Nicaragua, the longest-running project, enrolled 920 youth in TVET programs (see EFS Nicaragua TVET in Figure IV.1) and provided primary and secondary scholarships to 1,131 youth (see EFS Nicaragua basic education in Figure

IV.1).³² The Bridges Guatemala and Advance Regional projects did not enroll any beneficiaries in FY2017 since they were still in the initial phase of project roll-out.

Figure IV.1. FY2017 enrollment numbers versus project targets



Notes: Source materials from World Vision, Banyan Global, FHI 360, DAI, Creative Associates, and FADCANIC. At the time of writing this report, we did not have confirmation on Advance Regional's targets for enrollment.

*Bridges Guatemala and Advance Regional will start working with beneficiaries in FY2018.

**EFS Nicaragua's EOP target includes FY2010 to FY2019 beneficiaries. In FY2017, there were 873 new beneficiaries (those who first enrolled in FY2017) and 47 continuing beneficiaries (those who first enrolled in a previous fiscal year but continue to be enrolled in FY2017) enrolled in TVET programs. FY2017 primary and secondary scholarship recipients (basic education) included 608 new and 523 continuing beneficiaries.

³² Some projects require that beneficiaries participate a minimum amount of time in the training program in order to be considered enrolled. The TVET-SAY and Regional Advance projects both require one full week of participation. Bridges El Salvador requires two days and EF Honduras 24 hours.

4. Tutoring, mentoring, and counseling for life skills

In addition to the soft and life skills taught during the WFD integrated trainings, several projects provided tutoring, mentoring, and counseling services. EFS Nicaragua offered after-school tutoring and homework clubs to basic education beneficiaries. Both Nicaragua projects offered mentoring and counseling to beneficiaries in FY2017. The Nicaragua TVET-SAY project offered group counseling to 208 scholarship beneficiaries participating in a WFD training program. The 16 youth who are part of TVET-SAY's Youth Advisory Council also served as mentors for beneficiaries. Nicaragua EFS offered psychosocial counseling to beneficiaries identified as being in need of additional psychosocial support. The EFS project also trained 141 youth mentors as part of its peer mentorship strategy for supporting life skills development. In Honduras, the EF project trained 10 community mentors to support the development of at-risk youth since the project believes that mentors living in the same communities as beneficiaries will be seen as being more credible and trustworthy.

5. On-the-job training, labor bridging, and internships

In FY2017, some projects offered beneficiaries enrolled in WFD training programs the opportunity to also participate in internships as well as labor bridging activities in the form of job-readiness sessions. The Bridges El Salvador and Nicaragua TVET-SAY training programs included internships with private sector companies. In FY2017, 16 out of 374 TVET-SAY scholarship recipients obtained an internship.³³ Bridges El Salvador also partnered with the Association of Human Talent Leaders to conduct six job orientation sessions (each one day in length) with 187 beneficiaries. Each session included stations focused on specific job-readiness themes such as mock interviews, personalized feedback, and coaching (DAI 2017a). Bridges Guatemala, EF Honduras, and Advance Regional will offer beneficiaries labor bridging services in FY2018.

6. Completion

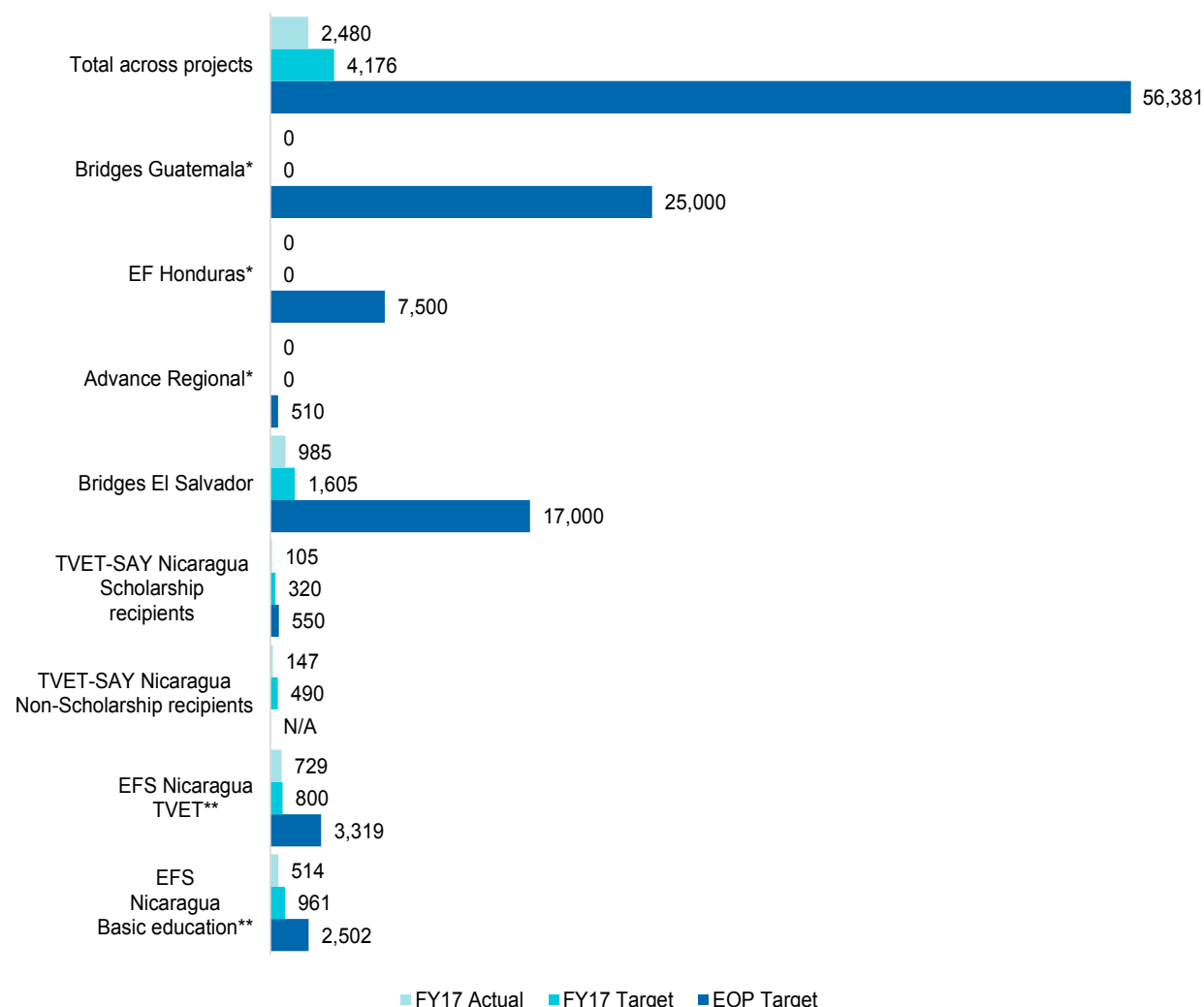
Program completion means that the beneficiary has met the completion requirements of the specific program. Although all projects except EFS Nicaragua use the USAID standard indicator "E.G.6-3: Number of individuals who complete USG-assisted workforce development programs" to report the number of completers³⁴, completion numbers are likely to vary across projects because the intensity of each training program varies. Expected completion rates may also differ across years because of the duration of some training programs. For example, some beneficiaries enrolled in FY2017 may not complete training until FY2020. Altogether, projects expect approximately 84 percent (or 56,381) of beneficiaries to complete integrated skills training programs by the time all projects are completed (see Figure IV.2). In other words, projects expect that approximately 16 percent of participants will not complete the program because they dropped out for various reasons (as discussed earlier). When interpreting this completion rate, it is important to note that program participants are all at-risk youth who are often faced with many financial, security, or personal obstacles to completion. In FY2017, the

³³ We do not yet have the total number of youth who obtained internships in FY2017 for Bridges El Salvador.

³⁴ This indicator previously measured the number of individuals certified through USAID-supported WFD programs. EFS Nicaragua reports completion using a custom indicator which reports data similar to the standard indicator.

target number of completers was 4,176 youth, which represents a small portion (only 7 percent) of the EOP target.

Figure IV.2. FY2017 completion numbers versus project targets



Notes: Source materials from World Vision, Banyan Global, FHI 360, DAI, Creative Associates, and FADCANIC. At the time of writing this report, we did not have confirmation on Advance Regional's targets for completion.

*Bridges Guatemala, EF Honduras and Advance Regional, do not expect to have any completion data until FY2018 or later, depending on the duration of WFD training.

**EFS Nicaragua's EOP target includes FY2010 to FY2019 beneficiaries. In FY2017, there were 702 new beneficiaries and 27 continuing beneficiaries who completed their trainings. FY2017 primary and secondary scholarship recipients (basic education) included 219 new and 295 continuing beneficiaries who graduated.

N/A = TVET-SAY Nicaragua does not have an EOP completion target for non-scholarship recipients.

Overall, project completion rates are in line with targets thus far. The completion rate across projects in FY2017 was 51 percent. This completion rate is not too far from the targeted 63 percent completion rate for the year. Projects expect approximately 86 percent (or 56,381) of beneficiaries to complete integrated skills training programs by the time all projects are

completed.³⁵ The EF Honduras project requires that beneficiaries complete a minimum number of hours for each of the integrated program's five components to be counted as having completed the EF training. To date, no beneficiaries have completed any of EF Honduras' five components, since the first cohort started WFD training near the end of FY2017 (later than initially planned) and the intended exposure period is approximately six months. Bridges El Salvador's FY2017 target was 1,605, but due to unexpected delays in rollout, the number of completers to date is only 985. In FY2017, the TVET-SAY project had 105 scholarship recipients and 147 non-scholarship recipients who completed their WFD training program. EFS Nicaragua had 514 basic education and 729 TVET program graduates.

7. Employed

A key measure of success for projects is new or better income-generating opportunities for at-risk or disadvantaged youth after program completion. However, it is too early in the implementation of these projects to draw conclusions about their ability to meet these targets, especially since three projects will not graduate any beneficiaries until FY2018 or later. All projects report whether beneficiaries obtain new or better employment using the standard USAID indicator: "E.G.6-1: Number of individuals with new or better employment following completion of USG-assisted workforce development programs." New employment is based on a change in status from not being employed to being employed. Better employment is based on the beneficiary's perception that the employment is better. Each project has its own criteria for defining whether an individual is employed. All projects except Bridges El Salvador consider informal employment in addition to formal employment and some have definitions of employment that also capture under-employment. Projects first collect information on this measure immediately after program completion and then follow up with beneficiaries within six months of completion.³⁶

End of project target employment rates vary significantly across projects as follows: 16 percent for Bridges Guatemala, 50 percent for EF Honduras, 60 percent for Advance Regional, 29 percent for Bridges El Salvador, 48 percent for TVET-SAY Nicaragua, and 28 percent for EFS Nicaragua.³⁷ This variation is in part explained by differences in the type and intensity of WFD services offered and also by different definitions of new and better employment. For instance, Bridges El Salvador's target is low since it only considers formal employment as being employed. Bridges Guatemala's has the lowest employment rate because the number expected to find employment is out of the total number who complete the core skills curriculum (25,000), which requires approximately six hours a week of participation in skills training for six months.

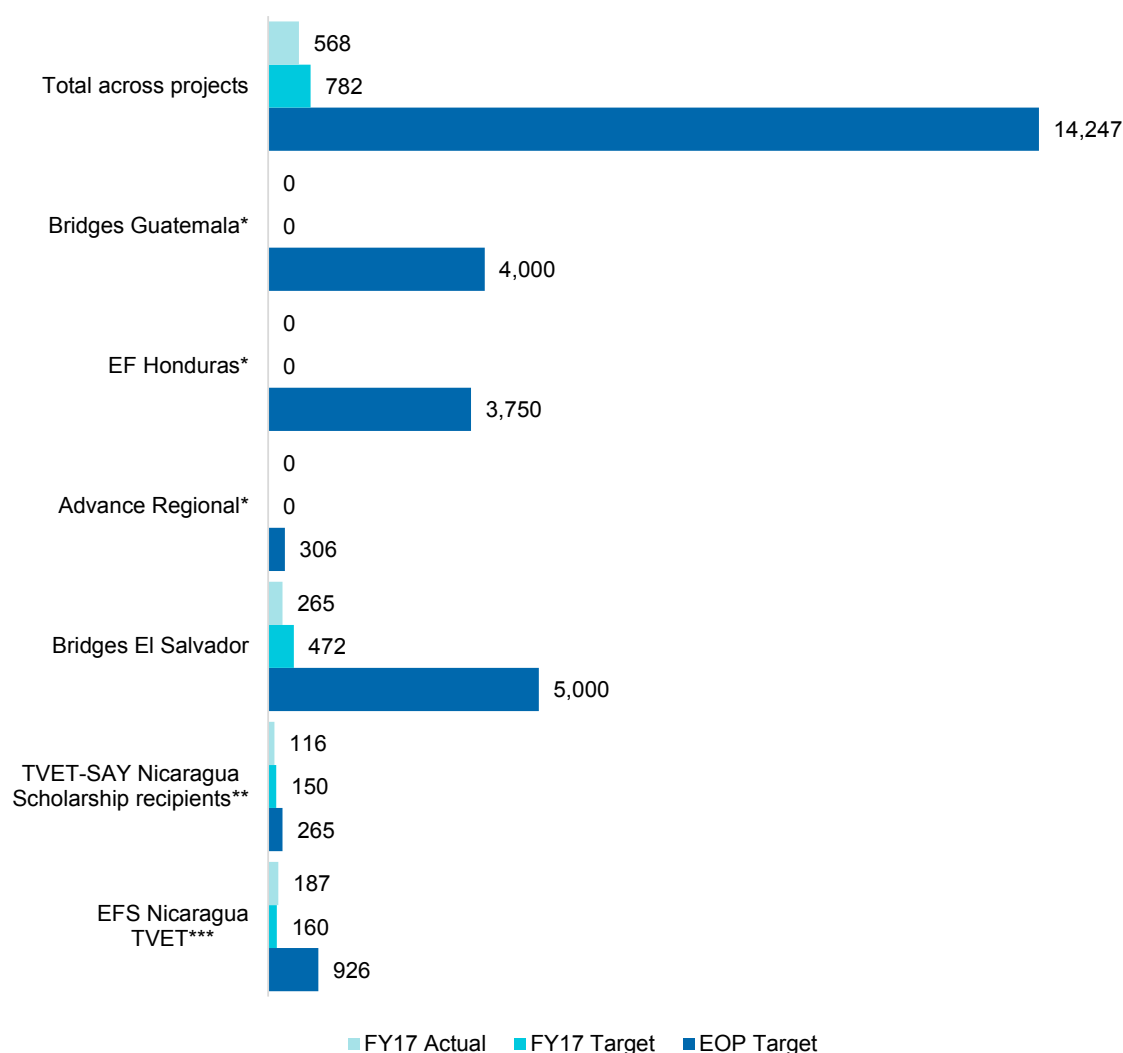
³⁵ The EOP completion rate calculation excludes TVET-SAY Nicaragua non-scholarship recipients since the project does not have an EOP target for them.

³⁶ Bridges El Salvador, EF Honduras, and EFS Nicaragua also follow up with participants within 12 months. TVET-SAY follow-up is within 3 to 6 months of completion. At follow-up, all projects offer unemployed completers additional assistance with finding job opportunities.

³⁷ The employment rate calculations exclude TVET-SAY Nicaragua non-scholarship recipients and EFS Nicaragua basic education beneficiaries since the projects do not track these beneficiaries after training completion. In this report, we estimate FY2017 employment rates as the number of completers who found new or better employment in FY2017 over the number of completers during the previous 12 months. For TVET-SAY and EFS in Nicaragua, the numerator includes some beneficiaries who completed training in FY2016.

Not all of these expected completers may go on to enroll in the technical courses offered by the project. Both Bridges projects also expect to enroll and complete much higher numbers of beneficiaries than the other projects. On the other hand, Advance Regional's 60 percent target employment rate is the highest amongst the six projects, largely since it is for university graduates.

The three projects with completers in FY2017 reported 568 employed youth, against a FY2017 target of 782, so 73 percent of the target (see Figure IV.3). It is not surprising that projects had few beneficiaries with new or better employment since most are still early in the implementation process and they also had fewer enrollees and completers than expected in FY2017. The percent of completers that have new or better employment is 31 percent, which is on par with (and slightly higher than) the targeted 29 percent. In El Salvador, 265 out of the 985 Bridges project completers found formal employment immediately after completing their training. Completers found employment as pharmacy cashiers, restaurant cooks, and serving in the tourism sector. Of the TVET-SAY Nicaragua scholarship beneficiaries who completed their training program, 105 found formal or informal employment and 11 beneficiaries found new employment but are also still enrolled in WFD training with the project. For the EFS Nicaragua project, 187 of their 729 TVET graduates found employment within six months.

Figure IV.3. FY2017 employment numbers versus project targets

Notes: Source materials from World Vision, Banyan Global, FHI 360, DAI, Creative Associates, and FADCANIC. At the time of writing this report, we did not have confirmation on Advance Regional's targets for employment.

*Bridges Guatemala, EF Honduras and Advance Regional, do not expect to have any employment data until FY2018 or later, depending on the duration of WFD training.

**TVET-SAY Nicaragua's data are for scholarship recipients, the project does not follow-up with non-scholarship recipients after program completion.

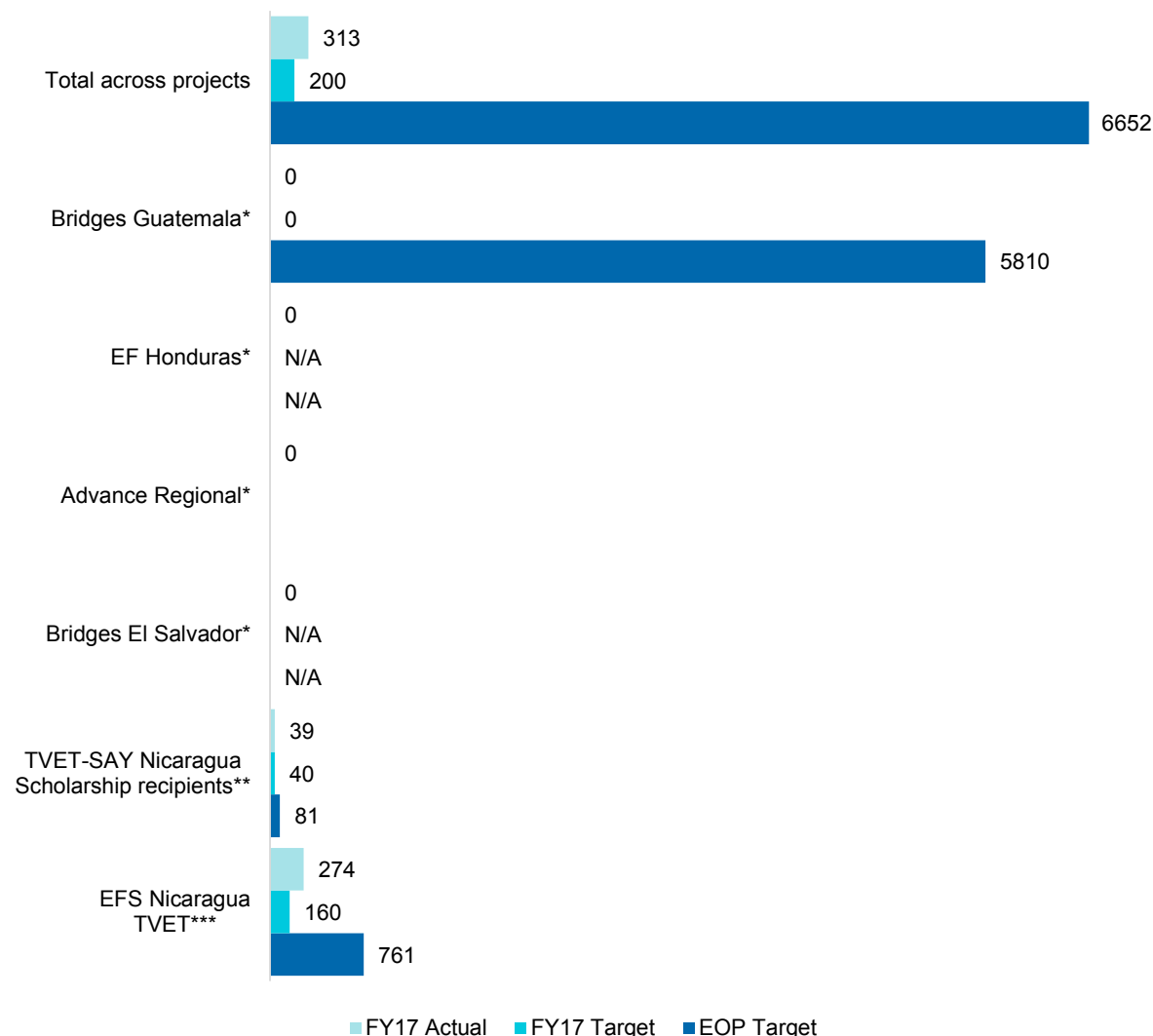
***EFS Nicaragua's EOP target includes FY2010 to FY2019 beneficiaries. The project does not collect employment data from primary and secondary scholarship recipients (basic education). In FY2017, there were 187 new TVET beneficiaries who found employment within six months.

8. Investing in employability through education

At the time of follow-up with program completers, projects also ask if WFD training completers are participating in other formal or informal education programs, since this would be a positive outcome—investing in employability—and would explain why completers may not be employed. As with employment, it is too early to draw conclusions about the projects' success in forming youth who continue their education. In FY2017, both Nicaragua projects collected

follow-up data on program completers. Their combined target for FY2017 was 200 youth enrolled in other education programs, and 313 youth actually enrolled in other education programs (see Figure IV.4). At six months, 274 of the 729 TVET graduates supported by EFS Nicaragua were enrolled in a formal or non-formal education program. Of the 105 TVET-SAY scholarship completers, 39 furthered their education or received other training within six months.

Figure IV.4. FY2017 education numbers versus project targets



Notes: Source materials from World Vision, Banyan Global, FHI 360, DAI, Creative Associates, FADCANIC.

At the time of writing this report, we did not have confirmation on Advance Regional's targets for education.

* Bridges Guatemala, EF Honduras, Advance Regional, and Bridges El Salvador do not expect to have any education data until FY2018 or later, depending on the duration of WFD training.

**TVET-SAY Nicaragua's data are for scholarship recipients, the project does not follow-up with non-scholarship recipients after program completion.

***EFS Nicaragua's EOP target includes FY2010 to FY2019 beneficiaries. The project does not collect education data from primary and secondary scholarship recipients (basic education). In FY2017, there were 262 new and 12 continuing TVET beneficiaries who continued their education within six months.

N/A = EF Honduras and Bridges El Salvador do not have a target for the number of youth enrolled in other education programs after completion.

If we combine the outcomes of employment and investing in employment by project, 46 percent of WFD training completers are involved in productive activities. By project, this can be broken down as:

- Bridges El Salvador with 27 percent of completers
- TVET-SAY Nicaragua with 100 percent of completers
- EFS Nicaragua with 63 percent of completers

9. Beneficiary findings disaggregated by sex and age group

There are some differences between males and females in WFD training program enrollment, completion, and subsequent employment or investment in employment. In Table IV.2, we present beneficiary findings disaggregated by sex. For enrollment in integrated skills trainings, the gender breakdown across projects is similar, with 2,495 males and 2,318 females enrolled in FY2017. At completion, there is a slight difference between male and female completers across projects, with 51 percent (1,271) of enrolled males completing training compared to 52 percent (1,209) of enrolled females completing. As mentioned earlier, completion rates vary across projects and years because of the variation in duration of training programs. There is a larger difference between those that found employment however. Thirty seven percent of male completers (350) found employment in FY2017, compared to 25 percent of female completers (218). However, 18 percent of male (172), and 16 percent of female (141) completers for TVET-SAY and EFS Nicaragua together enrolled in another formal or non-formal education program.

Table IV.2. FY2017 beneficiary achievements disaggregated by sex

	Bridges Guatemala	EF Honduras	Advance Regional	Bridges El Salvador	TVET-SAY Nicaragua Scholarship recipients	TVET-SAY Nicaragua Non- Scholarship recipients	EFS Nicaragua Basic education	EFS Nicaragua TVET	Total across projects
Enrollment									
Male		169		622	210	413	560	521	2495
Female		226		618	164	340	571	399	2318
Completion									
Male				503	54	45	276	393	1271
Female				482	51	102	238	336	1209
Employment									
Male				139	85			126	350
Female				126	31			61	218
Education									
Male					29			143	172
Female					10			131	141

Notes: Source materials from World Vision, Banyan Global, FHI 360, DAI, Creative Associates, and FADCANIC. Missing sex information for two EF Honduras beneficiaries. Shaded cells indicate not applicable.

Since WFD needs can vary by age group, we also present beneficiary-level findings disaggregated by USAID's standard age groups. Program enrollment is highest for youth in the

20 to 24 age range, whereas the completion and employment rate is highest among those ages 25 to 30. Table IV.3 includes beneficiary findings disaggregated by age group. Most of the beneficiaries enrolled by projects in FY2017 were ages 15 to 24. The 15 to 19 age group included 1,615 enrollees, and the 20 to 24 group included 1,880. Beneficiaries ages 25 to 30 had a completion rate at 72 percent and those ages 20 to 24 had a completion rate of 51 percent, compared to 48 percent for those ages 15 to 19. The age group with the most success in finding employment was also the 25 to 30 age group, with 43 percent of completers obtaining new or better employment, whereas 25 percent of completers in the 15 to 19 group had new or better employment. In Honduras, the EF project has decided to focus their recruitment strategies on older youth because they believe that they are more likely to find employment. In Nicaragua, more youth ages 15 to 19 invested in their future employability by continuing their education than found new or better employment, which is not surprising given that the private sector prefers to hire youth age 18 and above.

Table IV.3. FY2017 beneficiary achievements disaggregated by age group

	Bridges Guatemala	EF Honduras	Advance Regional	Bridges El Salvador	TVET-SAY Nicaragua Scholarship recipients	TVET-SAY Nicaragua Non- scholarship recipients	EFS Nicaragua Basic education	EFS Nicaragua TVET	Total across projects
Enrollment									
Ages 10–15							815		
Ages 15–19		179		387	130	205	292	422	1615
Ages 20–24		128		590	192	500	22	448	1880
Ages 25–30		90		263	51	52	2	50	508
Completion									
Ages 10–15							387		
Ages 15–19				287	38	16	121	316	778
Ages 20–24				475	34	64	6	371	950
Ages 25–30				223	33	67		42	365
Employment									
Ages 10–15									
Ages 15–19				63	34			66	163
Ages 20–24				141	44			91	276
Ages 25–30				61	38			30	129
Education									
Ages 10–15									
Ages 15–19					24			160	184
Ages 20–24					10			92	102
Ages 25–30					5			22	27

Notes: Source materials from World Vision, Banyan Global, FHI 360, DAI, Creative Associates, and FADCANIC. We present findings disaggregated by USAID standard age groups, however some projects cover different ages. For EF Honduras and Bridges El Salvador, the 15 to 19 age group only includes beneficiaries ages 16 to 19. For TVET-SAY Nicaragua, the 15 to 19 age group includes 4 completers that are age 14 and the ages 25 to 29 group includes 4 completers that are age 30. TVET-SAY Nicaragua is missing enrollment data for one beneficiary. Shaded cells indicate not applicable.

B. Understanding and engaging with the labor market

Developing and training youth in areas of interest to employers, growth industries, and competitive sectors is imperative to the success of WFD programs. To better tailor training interventions to the demands of the labor market (including both the public and private sectors), many projects conducted assessments of local labor markets during their first years of implementation. These LMAs provided additional information on key sectors in each country and skills demanded by possible employers, as well as employer perceptions of gaps in current training programs. In addition to generating valuable information, another outcome of these assessments was the development of links and partnerships with the private sector. These links could then materialize into possible internship or employment opportunities for youth, or additional sources of funds for projects. For some projects, such as Bridges El Salvador, TVET-SAY Nicaragua, and Bridges Guatemala, engagement with the private sector allowed projects to launch activities aimed at influencing internal youth hiring practices. In Table IV.4, we show which project have activities related to the main categories of interest in this focus area.

Table IV.4. Private sector engagement activities, by project

Type of private sector engagement	Bridges Guatemala	EF Honduras	Advance Regional	Bridges El Salvador	TVET-SAY Nicaragua	EFS Nicaragua
Understanding labor market needs (LMA or other reports)	X	X	X	X	X	X
Influencing organizational hiring practices	X		X	X	X	
Leveraging funds for project implementation	X	X	X	X	X	X

Notes: Source materials from World Vision, Banyan Global, FHI 360, DAI, Creative Associates, and FADCANIC.

X Indicates the project is engaging in the activity.

Understanding labor market needs. LMAs or other assessments of the private sector demand for labor have been used across USAID projects, including the WFD projects, to generate evidence to tailor the program to the local conditions. Typically conducted within the first year of project implementation, LMAs provide projects with important local economic, sector, and labor information.

- All projects are studying local labor market needs to inform their implementation. As of the end of FY17, Advance Regional, Bridges El Salvador, TVET-SAY Nicaragua, and EFS Nicaragua have completed this process. EF Honduras will complete its LMA in FY2018. Bridges Guatemala is using the findings from Advance Regional's LMA to develop its own market study of employers. In addition, Advance Regional developed methodological guides so that tertiary education institutions can conduct their own LMAs to better target their educational programs,
- LMAs have identified specific growth sectors in each country and specific areas of training needs to help beneficiaries gain skills that are sought by employers, particularly soft skills and technical skills specific to the sectors. Table IV.5 summarizes the sectors each project prioritized as a result of their LMA. See Appendix C for additional information on methodology and findings for each LMA.

Table IV.5. Sectors identified for WFD training based on results of LMA^a

Advance Regional: Guatemala	Advance Regional: Honduras	Advance Regional: Jamaica	Bridges El Salvador	TVET-SAY Nicaragua	EFS Nicaragua
Textiles and apparel, processed food and non-alcoholic beverages, and tourism	Coffee, textiles, tourism, and health	Tourism, agribusiness, creative industries	Tourism Agroindustry Manufacturing Information technology	Cocoa, fisheries, banana/plantains, livestock, tourism	Agroforestry, tourism, renewable energy, textiles/clothing manufacture, traditional trades/services

Notes: Source materials from World Vision, Banyan Global, FHI 360, DAI, Creative Associates, and FADCANIC.

^a EF Honduras and Bridges Guatemala had not finalized their LMA as of the writing of this report, so sectors have not been finalized.

Influencing organizational hiring practices. As part of their planned programmatic designs, Bridges El Salvador, TVET-SAY Nicaragua, and Bridges Guatemala embarked on a variety of activities to promote and catalyze youth hiring. The other projects covered by this report do not currently have plans to engage in such activities.

- Bridges El Salvador and TVET-SAY Nicaragua elicited the private sector's help to engage in policy reform and influence new national policies around youth employment and technical vocational training
- Bridges El Salvador and TVET-SAY Nicaragua worked with individual firms to modify internal human resources practices, such as certifying employees with specific technical skills and incorporating inclusive hiring practices that would facilitate youth recruitment and employment. In particular, TVET-SAY led communication and dissemination campaigns to improve the perception of technical vocational education in Nicaragua. The advocacy and communication campaigns were designed based on a report TVET-SAY developed on public perceptions of technical education.
- Bridges Guatemala began to work with firms to adjust the work environment to be more amenable to youth in specific sectors that could employ them (forestry, coffee, manufacturing, finance, and construction).

Public or private sector funds contributed for project implementation. Cooperation with the private sector underpins all six of the WFD learning agenda projects. In addition to providing valuable qualitative and quantitative data that inform program design, and offering hands-on experience to youth via internships, the private sector and other collaborators also provide cash or in-kind contributions to the projects. Projects have begun obtaining funds by disseminating the potential benefits of the program to the private and public sectors and seeking partnerships. These partnerships are then confirmed through specific Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with firms and associations that detail the contribution anticipated by each party signing the MOU. Table IV.6 summarizes the funds contributed³⁸ to each of the projects in FY2017 against their targets, and provides the total amount contributed to some projects since they launched activities.

³⁸ Note: "contribution" refers to both leveraged funds and cost-share

Table IV.6. Monetary and in-kind contributions received by projects against targets

Timeframe	Bridges Guatemala	EF Honduras	Advance Regional	Bridges El Salvador	TVET-SAY Nicaragua	EFS Nicaragua
FY2017	\$0	TBD	TBD	\$1,042,207	\$428,104	\$139,810
Inception to date (ITD)	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$1,106,950	\$471,497	\$801,300
LOP target ^a	TBD	TBD	TBD	\$5,000,000	\$835,500	\$1,042,258

Notes: Source materials from World Vision, Banyan Global, DAI, FHI360, Creative Associates, and FADCANIC.

^a Bridges Guatemala and Advance Regional currently do not have a funds-leveraged indicator. Bridges Guatemala anticipates adding an indicator in FY2018. EF Honduras added a funds-leveraged indicator late in FY2017 and anticipates setting a target in FY2018.

ITD = inception to date; LOP = life of project; TBD = to be determined.

All three projects reporting funds leveraged received a variety of cash and in-kind contributions from both public and private sector entities. Of the \$1 million dollars that Bridges El Salvador leveraged in FY2017, \$918,320 was leveraged directly from the private sector. TVET-SAY Nicaragua received just under \$15,000 in cash contributions from the private sector, with the remaining support provided in-kind with a value of \$413,000. EFS Nicaragua also received a significant share (96%) of their contributions in-kind. Of the \$134,000 in in-kind contributions received, the private sector and other donors each contributed approximately \$66,000.

C. Organizational strengthening

The WFD projects all include organizational strengthening activities for different types of institutions/organizations. Puentes El Salvador works to improve national TVET policies. EF Honduras and TVET SAY Nicaragua are strengthening national TVET institutions (such as INFOP and *Red Nicaragüense para la Educación Técnica* (RENET)), while Advance Regional is working to improve tertiary education institutions. Finally, all except Advance Regional are working to improve local organizations offering technical or soft skills training to youth. Projects first conduct assessments of the capacity of local organizations, which they then use to update local programs and strengthen WFD service providers. In Table IV.7, we show the different activities being undertaken by each project with the aim of strengthening WFD organizational capacities. Appendix C provides additional details on OCA methodology and findings, as well as a summary of the progress to date around strengthening programs and service providers.

Table IV.7. Organizational strengthening activities, by project

Type of organizational strengthening activity	Bridges Guatemala	EF Honduras	Advance Regional	Bridges EI Salvador	TVET-SAY Nicaragua	EFS Nicaragua
Conducting organizational capacity assessments to determine support	X	X	X	X	X	*
Revising, updating, or creating new programs	X	X	X	X	X ^a	X ^a
Strengthening WFD training providers	X	X	X	X	X ^b	

Note: Source materials from World Vision, Banyan Global, DAI, FHI360, Creative Associates, and FADCANIC.

^a TVET-SAY Nicaragua and EFS Nicaragua seek inputs to their programming through consultations with stakeholders, but they do not formally track changes to their programs.

^b Although they are working with local WFD service providers TVET-SAY does not have an indicator tracking the number of providers strengthened. However, because TVET-SAY developed individual baseline and midline OCA-T, they will be able to report on progress.

X Indicates the project is engaging in the activity.

* EFS Nicaragua assessed organizational capacities at onset of the projects, but do not continue such assessment throughout the life of the project to track progress.

Organizational capacity assessments (OCA). During project initiation, all six projects conducted or (in the case of Bridges Guatemala and Advance Regional) plan to conduct analyses to verify the capacity and capability of WFD service providers in order to identify the organizational strengthening interventions needed for each provider. For the most part, these analyses relied on a variation of the standard USAID OCA methodology (USAID 2016), which incorporates a structured tool used by project implementers to facilitate self-assessments of local organizations' capacity. These assessments are typically followed by action planning for capacity improvements. Projects then engage in organizational strengthening activities such as development of new internal policies, updated curricula, or training of staff, in response to assessment findings.

Revising, updating, or creating new WFD programs. Based on the analyses conducted in the OCA, three projects thus far have improved existing programs within institutions by either developing new curricula or updating programs to better reflect labor market demand. Table IV.8 summarizes the progress and goals of each of the WFD projects in revising or developing new program categories.

Strengthening service providers. WFD projects have provided a variety of organizational strengthening support activities to local organizations, including developing capacity-building plans, training service providers in delivery of WFD training, or facilitating site visits by local organizations to other national WFD centers for information exchanges. Thus far, 19 of 44 service providers that are collaborating with the WFD projects have received some form of strengthening across the six projects. Progress and goals of each of the WFD projects to strengthen providers are shown in Table IV.8.

Table IV.8. New, revised or accredited programs and providers strengthened, by project

Progress to date (FY2017 numbers compared to targets)	Bridges Guatemala	EF Honduras	Advance Regional	Bridges El Salvador	TVET-SAY Nicaragua	EFS Nicaragua
Number of new, revised, or accredited programs ^a (FY2017)	0	0	0	18	9	N/A
Target number of new, revised, or accredited programs	18	TBD	15	12	16	N/A
Numbers of providers strengthened ^b (FY2017)	0	0	5	5	9	N/A
Target number of providers strengthened	6	1	9	20	8	N/A

Notes: Source materials from World Vision, Banyan Global, FHI 360, DAI, Creative Associates, and FADCANIC.

^a This indicator varies by project. For Bridges Guatemala, “number of technical courses developed.” For EF Honduras, “number of new or revised training curricula (with market relevance) developed with USG support.” For Advance Regional, “number of USG-supported tertiary programs with curricula revised with private and/or public-sector employers’ input or on the basis of market research.” For Bridges El Salvador, “number of new industry-recognized certifications and/or accreditations developed.”

^b This indicator varies by project. For Bridges Guatemala, it corresponds to “number of education service providers trained by Puentes Project.” For EF Honduras, the indicator is “INFOP has implemented and is using a graduate tracking system to inform institutional decision making”. For Advance Regional, “this indicator corresponds to number of host-country tertiary institutions receiving capacity development support with USG assistance.” For Bridges El Salvador, this indicator maps to “Workforce development service providers strengthened by USG effort.” TVET-SAY and EFS Nicaragua do not have corresponding indicators in their MEL plans.

N/A = indicator not available.

V. SUMMARY AND NEXT STEPS

Each of the six projects on which this report focuses is in progress and will end between 2019 and 2022. The projects have completed the majority of the initial activities to contextualize the program activities, including assessing and beginning to work with the labor market and finalizing WFD training design based on local conditions. Three of the six projects have begun training and graduating beneficiaries from the WFD training programs.

A. Next steps for the learning focus areas

Equipped with information from the local assessments as well as with initial experience gleaned from the beginning of the training programs, many of the WFD projects will focus FY2018 on rolling out their integrated training programs and training significantly greater numbers of youth than in FY2017.

Youth training and support services. In FY2018, all projects will be working with beneficiaries. The Bridges Guatemala and Advance Regional will begin training their first groups of beneficiaries and the other four projects will continue their work with beneficiaries. The EF Honduras and Bridges El Salvador projects will also expand to other targeted geographic areas and will begin to offer additional WFD support services. The EF Honduras project will start to work with youth at tertiary risk and will begin implementing a labor bridging strategy to help beneficiaries find employment. The Bridges El Salvador will implement training and wrap-around services to support youth entrepreneurs. In Nicaragua, the TVET-SAY and EFS projects will continue to recruit and offer WFD services to their targeted at-risk beneficiaries. Given that projects have had success in reaching and beginning to train beneficiaries, there is reason to expect that they will reach their targets by the end of projects despite not fully reaching targets in FY2017. More projects will be at a stage in which we can reflect on their success at forming youth who then either find employment or continue their education or training.

Understanding and engaging with the private sector. In FY2018, projects will complete LMAs and will continue to work with the private sector to facilitate linkages and partnerships. Bridges Guatemala will build on Advance Regional's Guatemala LMA through a market study of employers in FY2018 and EF Honduras will finalize theirs. Once finalized, the LMAs will be disseminated to local companies in their respective countries via key stakeholder meetings and seminars. EF Honduras will also continue to roll out their private sector engagement strategy, including hosting a WFD conference to convene key private sector players. Bridges El Salvador will continue working with private sector actors to facilitate youth employment. They will also continue to work with key associations and businesses to identify training opportunities for youth. TVET-SAY Nicaragua will continue to partner with local private sector actors, as well as to foster microenterprise development. They will also update their FY2017 LMA with information collected in FY2018. Advance Regional will finalize their cost-sharing strategy in FY2018 and continue to use the findings of the LMA to adapt tertiary training programs to private sector needs. Finally, as EFS Nicaragua implementation enters its last full year, the team will continue to seek long-term partnerships with the private sector as well as employment opportunities for youth.

Organizational strengthening. FY2018 will be the first full year of implementation for Bridges Guatemala and will see many activities ramp up. Bridges Guatemala will launch their organizational assessment of 25 educational institutions. They will also roll out the completed *Diplomado Emprender con Éxito* curriculum. EF Honduras will continue to strengthen INFOP, with planned site visits to WFD Centers in Colombia by key INFOP leaders and trainers. In addition, in FY2018, EF Honduras will identify and launch their second cohort of training for WFD administrators, managers, and trainers. INFOP's progress will also be measured using the EF Honduras-developed organizational capacity index. Through this index, we will be able to report INFOP's progress since the involvement of EF Honduras along four dimensions. Advance Regional will finalize the ICAs for all their academic institutions in FY2018. Equipped with insight on the capacity of each organization, Advance Regional will proceed with developing a research agenda aligned with the interest of the programs, tailoring professional development programs to the needs of educators, and leading a study tour for faculty and staff from partner institutions. Bridges El Salvador will conduct follow-up assessments of their training partners, analyze the results, and develop improvement plans to continue to strengthen local WFD providers. TVET SAY will continue to strengthen local organizations, by promoting the creation of career centers within the organizations. TVET SAY will also continue to work to strengthen RENET by expanding its membership to organizations in the Caribbean Coast.

B. Next steps for the WFD Learning Agenda

Mathematica produced this first annual Central America WFD report to present the FY2017 progress and achievements of six WFD projects funded by USAID. The report presents early findings for the six projects across the following four focus areas: (1) beneficiary participation, (2) beneficiary employment or education after completing the project, (3) engagement with the private sector and other actors in the labor market, and (4) WFD organizational capacity strengthening. Since these projects account for an important portion of Congress' investments in Central America through the CEN Strategy, this report will facilitate USAID's reporting to Congress on the CEN Strategy's achievements.

From 2018 to 2020, Mathematica will continue with the Community of Practice in its work for the WFD Learning Agenda. In Figure V.1, we present a timeline for WFD Learning Agenda activities. Mathematica will share and discuss FY2017 annual report findings with the six WFD projects during an annual workshop, which will take place in spring 2018. From FY2018 to FY2020, Mathematica will continue to produce annual reports on the progress and achievements of the six WFD projects. After the release of each report, Mathematica will facilitate an annual workshop with the six WFD projects. In addition, we will also contribute to additional discussions about learning for the Community of Practice.

Figure V.1. WFD Learning Agenda timeline

Calendar year	2018				2019				2020				2021				2022			
Quarter	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
WFD projects																				
Bridges Guatemala																				
EF Honduras																				
Advance Regional																				
Bridges El Salvador																				
TVET-SAY Nicaragua																				
EFS Nicaragua																				
WFD Learning Agenda																				
Annual Central America WFD report																				
Annual Community of Practice workshop																				
Additional communications within the Community of Practice																				

Notes: Developed by authors based on discussions with USAID and project documents. Shaded cells indicate when projects will continue working.

Blue diamonds indicate the timing of Learning Agenda deliverables.

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APPENDIX A

CENTRAL AMERICA CONTEXT

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In Appendix A we describe the socio-economic context of the Central American countries where the six WFD projects covered in this report are working—Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, and Nicaragua. For each country, we cover the following socio-economic indicators: the human development index, GDP growth, poverty rate, educational attainment, homicide rates, unemployment rates, and emigration numbers. In addition, we provide an overview of the activities that are currently being implemented in these countries by national governments and other international actors to address existing socio-economic challenges (see also Table II.1).

A. Socio-economic context of WFD project countries

El Salvador. El Salvador has a human development index (HDI) of 0.680 and is considered a “medium human development” country, ranking 117th in the world out of 188 countries. El Salvador has historically enjoyed healthy levels of growth, but in recent years it has been the Central American economy with the slowest growth. Between 1990 and 2000, El Salvador averaged an economic growth rate of 4.6 percent (World Bank 2017b), but growth averaged less than 2 percent from 2010 to 2015 and reached 2.4 percent in 2016 (World Bank 2017b). The country’s poverty levels remain high; in 2015, 35 percent of households were living below the national poverty line. In education, youth ages 15 to 24 completed an average of 9.1 years of schooling. The lower secondary school completion rate was 88 percent in 2015 and the upper secondary school completion rate was just 27 percent in 2014 for adults ages 25 and older. Out of 192 countries, El Salvador has the highest intentional homicide rate (unlawful death purposefully inflicted on a person by another person), at 109 per 100,000 inhabitants in 2015. Overall unemployment is at 5.9 percent and youth unemployment is 14 percent. In 2015, El Salvador had 1,436,000 emigrants, representing 23 percent of its population (slightly higher than the 2010 percentage).

Guatemala. Guatemala is a “medium human development” country with an HDI of 0.640 and ranks 125th in the world out of 188 countries. The country is the largest economy in Central America and has experienced one of the strongest economic performances in the region, with 4.1 percent economic growth in 2015 and 3 percent growth in 2016 (World Bank 2017c). In spite of this, the country has some of the highest levels of inequality in the region. In 2014, 59 percent of households were living below the national poverty line; over half of these poor households were from indigenous areas (World Bank 2017c). Educational attainment for youth averaged only 6 years in 2014. The completion rate was 63 percent in lower secondary school and 27 percent in upper secondary for adults ages 25 and older in 2014. Guatemala also faces significant crime and violence levels, with 31 intentional homicides per 100,000 inhabitants in 2014 (ranking 10th globally). Overall unemployment in the country stood at 2.4 percent in 2015, and youth unemployment was at 5.6 percent in 2017. Guatemala’s emigrant population in 2015 was 1,018,000, which is approximately 6 percent of its population (the same percentage as the previous measure in 2010).

Honduras. Honduras has an HDI of 0.625 and is also considered a “medium human development” country, with a world rank of 130 out of 188 countries. In 2016, Honduras’ economy grew by 3.6 percent and is expected to continue to grow at the same rate in 2017 (World Bank 2017d). Despite this favorable growth, poverty levels remain a major challenge in the country, with 66 percent of households living in poverty in 2016. Another challenge is educational attainment, which in 2013 averaged 8.1 years for youth ages 15 to 24. Secondary

completion also remains low, at 53 percent for lower secondary and 23 percent for upper secondary among adults ages 25 and older in 2014. The country has one of the highest homicide rates in the world, with 64 intentional homicides per 100,000 inhabitants in 2015 (ranking 3rd globally). Overall unemployment was 7.4 percent in 2015, and youth unemployment was 10.9 percent in 2017. In 2015, Honduras had 649,000 emigrants, representing 7 percent of its population (the same percentage as in 2010).

Nicaragua. Nicaragua has an HDI of 0.645 and is considered a “medium human development” country, with a world rank of 124 of 188 countries. It is the second fastest-growing economy in Central America, with 4.7 percent growth in 2016 (World Bank 2017e). Although the country has made progress in decreasing poverty levels, close to 30 percent of the population lived in poverty. Nicaragua’s RACCN and RACCS are its poorest regions, with more than half of their populations living in extreme poverty (National Development Information Institute 2014). In 2009, Nicaraguan youth averaged 7.5 years of schooling. The lower secondary school completion rate was 90 percent in 2015. When compared to other Central American countries, Nicaragua has a lower homicide rate, with 12 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants in 2012 (ranking 31st globally). However, homicides rates at the sub-national level vary significantly. For example, the RACCS and RACCN had 28 and 20 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants respectively (OSAC 2018). Since 2015, the country’s unemployment rate has remained below 6 percent, but Nicaragua had a youth unemployment rate of 10.4 percent in 2017. In 2015, Nicaragua had 639,000 emigrants, 11 percent of its population (a percentage similar to the one in 2010).

B. Development activities in Central America

To address the socio-economic challenges faced by these countries, national governments and other international actors are currently financing a wide range of activities. These activities include interventions intended to stimulate economic sectors, develop human capital, improve security, and strengthen government institutions.

1. National governments

Each of the countries covered by the six WFD projects has a national or multilateral development plan that began between 2012 through 2015 and guides the actions taken within the country to facilitate economic development. All plans in the region include activities to stimulate economic opportunity, develop human capital, and improve security and governance. In 2014, the governments of the Northern Triangle countries (El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras) agreed on the guidelines of a regional plan called the Plan of the Alliance for Prosperity in the Northern Triangle that includes specific guidelines for undertaking joint and simultaneous measures in the medium term to improve each country’s development conditions. Northern Triangle governments are teaming with the private sector and the international community to support the plan’s financing and execution. The plan’s strategic actions have the following aims: (1) stimulate the productive sector to create economic opportunities, (2) develop opportunities for the people of each country, (3) improve public safety and enhance access to the legal system, and (4) strengthen institutions to increase people’s trust in the state. In Nicaragua, the government outlined its development priorities in the 2012–2016 National Plan for Human

Development (*Plan Nacional de Desarrollo Humano*, or PNDH).³⁹ The strategic plan consists of 12 guidelines for the productive and social transformation of the country, including efforts to encourage economic sector productivity, increase investments, and provide assistance to at-risk youth.

2. Multilateral and other non-U.S. international donors

Numerous international actors are financing development projects in the region that cover a breadth of activities focused on human capital development, security, infrastructure improvements, private sector growth, and climate change. The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) represents the main source of multilateral financing in the LAC region and has a partnership with each country to support key areas of development, covering social inclusion, human capital investments, public finance strengthening, private sector productivity, and infrastructure improvements. The World Bank also has a Country Partnership Framework (CPF) with each country. In the region, it focuses on economic strengthening, improving infrastructure, and investing in human capital. Additionally, several European actors are financing development efforts in the region. For example, the European Union's 2014–2015 Regional Programme for Latin America includes over one billion USD in assistance, with a focus in Central America on security and the rule of law, climate change and disaster management, and regional economic integration.⁴⁰ Other key European actors in the LAC region include the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation and Development, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, and the Luxembourg Development Cooperation, with varying levels of investment.

³⁹ The government of Nicaragua is in the process of finalizing a new PNDH covering development priorities through 2021.

⁴⁰ The Programme consists of two components. The first is the Continental Programme, which focuses on security, good governance, inclusive and sustainable human development, environmental sustainability and climate change, and higher education in Central America, Mexico, Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, and Venezuela. The second component is the Sub-Regional Programme for Central America, which focuses on security and rule of law, climate change and disaster management, and regional economic integration.

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APPENDIX B

DESCRIPTION OF YOUTH TRAINING AND SUPPORT SERVICES

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The six projects covered in this report follow an integrated approach to Workforce Development (WFD). Each project is implementing a package of interventions consisting of a variety of activities, many of which are similar across projects. In this report, we group the different types of beneficiary-level activities implemented by projects into activity categories (see Table B.1). We use these activity categories to report on the number of beneficiaries that receive different types of activities across projects.

1. **Eligibility screening.** This activity category relates to the beneficiary recruitment activities implemented by projects. It includes any activities involving the application of tools, psychometric tests, or interviews to assess eligibility to participate in the program or activity.
2. **Training: Classroom time**
 - a. **Technical or vocational skills training.** This category includes any classroom activities teaching a technical and/or vocational skills curriculum. The technical or vocational skills training offered by projects may take the form of a classroom-based program, component, or module.
 - b. **Soft or life skills training.** This category relates to activities teaching beneficiaries soft or life skills. These skills are taught in a classroom-like setting or through cognitive behavioral therapy interventions.
 - c. **Integrated skills.** The activities included in this category are classroom-based trainings with a curriculum that integrates the teaching of technical or vocational skills with soft or life skills. The integrated curriculum may be for a program, component, and/or module.
3. **Other support services**
 - a. **Mentoring and counseling for life skills.** This activity category covers any mentorship and counseling services offered to beneficiaries. Some projects use peer mentors, whereas others use community mentors. The counseling services offered by projects may be in individual or group sessions.
 - b. **On-the-job training, labor bridging, and internships.** This activity category relates to employment-bridging activities that give WFD program participants the opportunity to gain on-the-job skills and help them obtain employment. Relevant project activities include apprenticeships, internships, and job shadowing.
 - c. **Financial and in-kind support.** This activity category focuses on support in the form of scholarships or vouchers offered by projects to beneficiaries to help them participate in WFD project activities or return to school. Seed capital or conditional cash transfers for entrepreneur beneficiaries are also part of this category.

Table B.1. Mapping of project activities to beneficiary activity categories, by project

WFD activity categories	Bridges Guatemala	EF Honduras	Advance Regional	Bridges El Salvador	TVET-SAY Nicaragua	EFS Nicaragua
Eligibility screening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Process to be determined 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Violence Involved Persons Risk Assessment (VIP-RA) to determine program services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Scholarship eligibility of program enrollees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Psychometric test or interview to assess eligibility to participate in the program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Form A-1 of Comprehensive Positive Assessment Tool (COMPAS-T), interview, and remedial course grade to assess eligibility to participate in the program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Scholarship eligibility of program enrollees
Technical/vocational skills training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Entrepreneurship vocational module ● Agriculture vocational module ● Health worker vocational module ● Technical online module 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Vocational/technical skills component 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Not applicable; implemented together with soft and life skills so categorized under integrated training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Technical skills training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Not applicable; implemented together with soft and life skills so categorized under integrated training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Not applicable; implemented together with soft and life skills so categorized under integrated training
Soft and life skills training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Core skills curriculum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Life skills training component ● Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) component 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Labor bridging soft skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Life skills training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Not applicable; implemented together with technical and vocational training so categorized under integrated training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Not applicable; implemented together with technical and vocational training so categorized under integrated training
Integrated skills (technical, soft, and life) training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Not applicable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Induction (participate min. of 24 hours) Basic labor competencies component ● Capstone course component 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Tertiary technical education (technical, soft, and life) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Technical and life skills training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Career tracks (currently have 13 different ones) with innovative life skills training ● Entrepreneurship training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Technical and vocational training at Wawashang and INATEC centers ● Short-term technical and vocational training (apprentice level) ● Integrated scholarship package ● (financial support, life skills, after-school tutoring and homework clubs, and peer mentoring) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Elementary – Secondary – Accelerated primary
Mentoring and counseling for life skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Not applicable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Individual Integrated Development Plan (IIDP) Community mentors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Not applicable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Mentoring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Collective counseling on preventing the most frequent forms of violence ● Individual psycho-social counseling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● EFS life skills education program <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – After-school tutoring and homework clubs (formal education) – Peer mentoring (formal education) – Psycho-social counseling
On-the-job training, labor bridging, and internships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Internships and apprenticeships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Bridging strategy (internships and job shadowing) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Labor-bridging mentorship ● Internships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Internships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Roundtables with private sector ● Internships and apprenticeships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Internships
Financial and in-kind support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Vocational training vouchers ● Vouchers to return to school ● Vouchers for internships ● Conditional cash transfers to pursue business plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Not applicable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Local scholarship program ● U.S. scholarship program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Financial support to participate in WFD training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Grants/scholarships for vocational technical training ● Entrepreneur seed capital 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Elementary scholarships ● Secondary scholarships ● Accelerated primary scholarships ● Scholarships as part of Wawashang and INATEC technical and vocational training ● EFS youth entrepreneurial seed funds (for technical/ vocational completers only)

Note: Developed by authors based on source materials from World Vision, Banyan Global, FHI 360, DAI, Creative Associates, and FADCANIC.

APPENDIX C

UNDERSTANDING LABOR MARKET NEEDS

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In this appendix, we provide additional information about the LMAs performed by each project, including assessment details and findings.

A summary of the LMAs conducted thus far is included in Table C.1. Four study projects have already conducted LMAs to better understand the skills sought by employers and the sectors that offer the most growth potential, and two study projects will do so in FY2018. As of FY2017, through various LMA exercises, four WFD projects had surveyed or interviewed over 600 firms to obtain key observations on recruitment and employment trends and preferences. Advance Regional has conducted a distinct LMA in each of their focus countries—Honduras, Jamaica, and Guatemala. EFS Nicaragua completed a study on the local labor market in FY2014 that focused on identifying possible partnerships with the private sector. In FY2016, TVET-SAY Nicaragua conducted a Labor Demand and Entrepreneurship Study that was similar in nature to other LMAs; they updated it in FY2017 and plan to update it again in FY2018. The EF Honduras project started plans for an LMA in FY2017 and anticipates finalizing it in FY2018. The Bridges El Salvador project also completed their LMA in FY2017. The Bridges Guatemala project is planning to finalize a version of their LMA in FY2018; in the meantime, they are using the findings of the LMA conducted by the Advance Regional project in Guatemala.

The methodologies for the LMAs varied between projects, but in general they included desk reviews, quantitative analysis of economic data on different industries and sectors, surveys of firms, and key informant interviews (KII) with employers across a variety of sectors. Employers were asked about skills demanded and types of employment opportunities that exist in each sector. Many of these LMAs also included sector assessments or value chain analyses to better understand opportunities within specific sectors.

Once completed, the LMAs provided information on companies' perspectives on the type of skills they look for in the labor market. In the cases of Bridges El Salvador, EFS Nicaragua, and TVET-SAY Nicaragua, the LMAs allowed the projects to quantify the number of jobs that could be available to youth in the coming years. This information allowed projects to further refine their training programs to increase the chances of employment after participation in the program. Additional benefits of LMAs included serving as stepping-stones to develop or expand possible connections between projects and individual companies or business associations. These links could then be used by the projects to seek possible internship opportunities for program beneficiaries, provide key inputs to curricula improvement, or secure additional sources of cash or in-kind services. Table C.2 summarizes the type of assessment, the date it was completed, and the geographic scope and methodology used for each of the assessments of the WFD projects, as well as some details on findings from each LMA.

Table C.1. Overview of labor market assessments across WFD projects

	Bridges Guatemala	EF Honduras	Advance Regional	Bridges El Salvador	TVET-SAY Nicaragua	EFS Nicaragua
Name of assessment	TBD	Labor Market Assessment	LMAs in three countries: Jamaica, Guatemala, Honduras	Labor Market Assessment	Labor Demand and Entrepreneurship Study	Public-Private Partnership Strategy
(Anticipated) completion date	FY2018	Started in FY2017, finalized in FY2018	FY2017	FY2017, with updates in FY19	FY2016, with updates in FY2017 and FY2018	FY2015
Geographic scope	TBD	Five municipalities	Focus on Western Highlands in Guatemala; national in Jamaica and Honduras.	Only in municipalities of interest to the project given set criteria	Caribbean Coast	Caribbean Coast
Methodology	N/A	(TBD) with desktop review, KII with government and private sector, survey of 300 firms	Desktop and quantitative analysis of data, sector selection, subsector analysis, and KII with representatives of organizations in subsectors (29 companies in Guatemala, 47 in Honduras, 41 in Jamaica)	Desktop review, stakeholder interviews, enterprise survey of 206 companies, focus groups with microenterprises	KII, existing national survey, enterprise survey of firms along Caribbean Coast. The survey included information across 6 competency areas from 40 companies in the Caribbean Coast ^a	Desktop review, KII, and rapid survey of approximately 40 stakeholders (businesses and some local non-governmental organizations)

Notes: Developed by authors based on source materials from World Vision, Banyan Global, FHI 360, DAI, Creative Associates, and FADCANIC.

^a The competency areas include (1) existing cognitive, technical, and social-emotional skills of importance to the firm; (2) current demand for skills; (3) future demand for skills (aligned with expansion or innovation plans for the next five years); (4) types of positions the company has demanded in the last three years and those that it will demand in the next five years; (5) number of new employees carrying out technical jobs that will be demanded annually for the next five years; and (6) demand for interns and possible employment.

N/A = Not applicable.

Table C.2. Summary of LMA findings across WFD projects through FY2017

	Advance Regional: Guatemala LMA	Advance Regional: Honduras LMA	Advance Regional: Jamaica LMA	Bridges El Salvador	TVET-SAY Nicaragua	EFS Nicaragua
Sectors under review	Textiles and apparel, processed food and non-alcoholic beverages, and tourism	Coffee, textiles, tourism, and health	Tourism, agribusiness, creative industries	Tourism Agroindustry Manufacturing Information technology	Cocoa, fisheries, banana/plantains, livestock	Agroforestry, tourism, renewable energy, textiles/clothing manufacture, traditional trades/services
Key constraints/limitations identified by employers	Specific technical skills missing for key growth sectors as well as specific tertiary education programs. In textiles and apparel, training and education opportunities do not satisfy demand.	Specific technical skills missing for key growth sectors (high quality coffee), soft skills (especially for tourism)	Specific technical skills missing for key growth sectors (i.e., ecotourism and health tourism)	Deficiencies in basic skills, such as oral and written communication and numeracy Weaknesses in communication and soft skills Mobility constraints due to violent neighborhoods. Limited specialized skills around environmental management, agricultural processes, and quality control in the agroprocessing sector.	Socio-emotional skills, specialized technical	Limited employment opportunities. Technical skills are needed, but overall impression that entrepreneurship along the Caribbean Coast would lead to better opportunities for youth.
Skills demanded by employers	Soft skills, innovation and creativity (for textiles), business and sales skills	Soft skills (strong work ethic). In the tourism sector, technical skills demanded varied, with multiple employers preferring youth that can be trained in-house.	More practical education and hands-on experience; more specialized training	Hard and soft skills, interpersonal skills (honesty, creativity, teamwork, communication, reliability, and responsibility). For service sector, how youth look and relationship to gangs is important. The plastics industry seeks very specialized technical skills.	Hard and soft skills, depending on type of employment	N/A

Note: Based on source materials from FHI360 2017b, 2017c, 2017d; DAI 2017b; Creative Associates 2017; FADCANIC 2014a, 2014b; Fundación Nicaragüense para el Desarrollo Económico y Social 2016.

N/A = Not applicable.

Below is a summary of the main observations and findings from the various LMAs conducted by the projects thus far.

In Honduras, EF will be finalizing their LMA in FY2018, drawing on the LMA produced by the Advance Regional project in Honduras. The assessment will focus on identifying high-growth sectors (agribusiness, information technology, manufacturing, textiles and tourism) and employment opportunities for at-risk youth; it will provide data on the number of jobs that could be created, identify constraints to hiring youth, and provide any recommendations to the current EF training curriculum. While the LMA was being carried out, the project held 14 meetings with private sector representatives to validate some of their market-driven training programs. These preliminary findings helped the EF project focus their first round of vocational training grants on the tourism, manufacturing, services, construction, and IT sectors.

The **Advance Regional** project conducted separate LMAs in Honduras, Guatemala, and Jamaica. The studies explored the labor market in each country as well as the growth trends in some key sectors. Because the Advance Regional project is focused on tertiary education, their LMAs explored the demand for technical education graduates and the supply of qualified workers in selected growth subsectors. A summary of the LMAs for each country follows.

In **Guatemala**, the LMA provided a more nuanced understanding of the employment opportunities in the vegetable and legumes, textiles and apparel, processed food and non-alcoholic beverage, and tourism subsectors. In the agriculture sector, the general perceptions were that university students are an asset to companies in the sector and often also have the appropriate soft skills (positivity, self-motivation, and the ability to work well in groups). In the textiles industry, the LMA found that training opportunities in Guatemala did not satisfy the needs of formal and informal businesses in the sector. Employers in the processed food and beverage industry reported seeking more trained technicians to respond to the spike in demand for health foods. Table C.3 summarizes some of the tertiary training needs identified by each subsector. The LMA also found that sales and marketing specialists with experience in web and graphic design are in demand in the tourism industry (FHI360 2017c).

Table C.3. Guatemala training needs by focus sector as identified in the LMA

Sector	Training needs identified
Vegetable and legumes	Food processing, logistics and transportation, marketing and sales.
Textiles	Design, marketing, machine maintenance.
Food and beverage	Sales and marketing, logistics and transportation, industrial mechanics.
Tourism	Hospitality and tourism management, logistics and transportation, business and administration.

Note: Source materials from FHI 360c.

In **Honduras**, the LMA focused on the coffee, textiles, tourism, and health sectors. The Honduras LMA determined that, in general, employers indicated that Honduras' secondary education system does not adequately prepare job seekers for the workplace. Employers also stated that soft skills such as a desire to learn, clear communication skills, and creativity were critical to employment. As with the example in Guatemala, the LMA mapped the sectors to local institutions offering training and education that could be relevant to employers in their sector.

The Honduras LMA found that additional training was needed in each of the four focus sectors. Table C.4 depicts the training needs identified for each of the focus subsectors (FHI 360 2017b).

Table C.4. Honduras training needs by focus sector as identified in the LMA

Sector	Training needs identified
Coffee sector	Coffee cultivation (with an emphasis on quality and organic production practices), processing (mostly coffee tasters), and agribusiness
Tourism sector	Upgrading of cultural attractions and commercial airline services
Textile industry	Production management and high-end specialties such as embroidery, electromechanics, apparel design, and industrial design
Health sector	Pharmacy assistance, biomedicine, health IT, and other primary care support tasks

Note: Source materials from FHI 360 2017d.

In **Jamaica**, the LMA focused on several promising sectors: tourism, agroprocessing/agribusiness, and the creative industries (music and entertainment). For each of the sectors selected, the team explored what key positions within each of the chains in the sector could be available to youth. In parallel, they overlaid the positions with potential degree programs. This exercise allowed the project to identify technical programs that could be strengthened and, therefore, potentially receive support. A summary of the findings is in Table C.5

Table C.5. Jamaica training needs by focus sector as identified in the LMA

Sector	Training needs identified
Tourism sector	Specialized skills in health and ecotourism
Agribusiness sector	More practical skills training in agriculture and agribusiness
Creative industry	Infrastructure and instructor capacity lacking to fully train people in this industry Additional training in entrepreneurship, since there are many freelancers in this industry

Note: Source materials from FHI 360 2017b.

The information was gathered through the LMAs, as well as through additional institutional landscape analyses set up the Advance Regional project to identify their priority areas of intervention by country. By FY2017, Advance had identified three institutions and degree programs in each country to receive services for the duration of the contract (see Appendix E for further information about the project). By the end of FY2017, Advance signed memoranda of understanding with five institutions, with four more projected to be finalized in early 2018. These partnerships set the framework for Advance to start strengthening organizations that will train tertiary education institutions serving youth.

Bridges El Salvador found that many of the business associations representing employers expressed concern about entry-level applicants' skills in numeracy and literacy, reflecting poorly on the general quality of education in El Salvador. In addition, Salvadoran youth seem to lack skills-based competencies that respond to industry demands. Associations expressed an interest in having youth gain more technical knowledge and practical skills to prepare them for future opportunities. In the service industry, though, employers emphasized the need for soft skills; the perception is that youth with strong soft skills will be easier to train than those without soft skills. Because Bridges works with municipalities with high levels of violence, the LMAs also provided information on how violence or the perception of violence affected youth. Employers reported

concerns about youth mobility in gang-affected areas, which compromises young people's ability to regularly report to work. In addition, employers reported making assumptions about candidates' fit for a job based on where they lived. Applicants coming from more violent neighborhoods were perceived as being more violent, based purely on their location of residence. Violence, insecurity, and extortion payments were factors that affected micro-enterprises and entrepreneurs. With limited funds in the start-up phase, many small business owners stated that it was hard to expand their businesses when they needed funds to cover security costs and extortion payments (DAI 2017b).

Bridges El Salvador also explored youth employment opportunities in value chains they believed exhibited growth characteristics, based on economic and trade data and the experiences of other USAID projects in the LMA. Starting from an original list of 17 possible sectors, Bridges narrowed the focus sectors to the following five: tourism, agroindustry, manufacturing information technology, and renewable energy⁴¹. The sugar, dairy, bakery, pharmaceutical, and plastics industries are tradable goods industries, create jobs, and contribute to the Salvadoran economy. The LMA for El Salvador included value chain analyses identifying possible entry opportunities for youth in sales, marketing, and distribution in these sectors. The information from this assessment equipped Bridges with key information to help service providers modify some of their trainings to be more responsive to labor market demand and private sector workforce needs.

In addition, with the launch of a Salvadoran rum, there could be possible opportunities for youth in product marketing and distribution. In the dairy value chain, Doña Laura company exhibited growth characteristics that could benefit youth. The company has plans to employ 100 people in plant operations, distribution, and supermarket representation. The pharmaceutical industry has exhibited growth in El Salvador that could result in employment opportunities for sales representatives. Sales representatives with a variety of skills are also in demand for the baked goods industry, where many high-end bakery/coffee shops have recently emerged. The plastics industry could hire a large proportion of youth. Specialized technical programs have been designed in El Salvador to prepare for the growth of this industry. To disseminate the findings from the LMA, Bridges El Salvador held a forum with 374 representatives of government, private sector, academia, donors and civil society in July 2017. Bridges also has begun planning for a follow-up LMA to take place in the third year of the project, to ensure that program activities respond to current market trends and needs.

In Nicaragua, EFS and TVET-SAY conducted separate assessments of the labor market on the Caribbean Coast. EFS' assessment of the labor market in 2014 contained a summary of the capabilities required by it in RACCN and RACCS (FADCANIC 2014b). The assessment revealed that the private sector along the Caribbean Coast is characterized by family-owned micro-enterprises with limited growth and employment potential. The most promising employment opportunities found at the time included seafood processing in Corn Island, an agribusiness in Kukra Hill, and some larger businesses in Bluefields. The information on skills demanded by employers helped EFS adapt their courses to private sector demand. For example, because of the growth of the seafood processing industry in the Corn Islands, EFS trained youth

⁴¹ Brides El Salvador will start working in the renewable energy sector during FY2018.

in small-boat engine repair. Continued training in soft skills as well as entrepreneurship was also an important finding since these skills could help youth develop their own micro-enterprises given the limited employment opportunities.

TVET-SAY Nicaragua conducted an analysis of private sector demand for employment in 2016 and updated it in 2017. The report focused on companies along the Caribbean Coast of Nicaragua, but also drew on a national report produced by *Fundación Nicaragüense para el Desarrollo Económico y Social* (FUNIDES). The report on the Caribbean Coast focused on specific sectors including cocoa, livestock, banana/plantains, and fisheries. TVET-SAY's LMA included the following findings in the Caribbean Coast: over half of the firms surveyed by TVET-SAY responded that they had difficulty recruiting youth because they lacked sufficient skills, especially socio-emotional skills: a skills gap exists between skilled labor and employment prospects that the project could bridge, especially around life skills training. TVET-SAY updated their assessment the following year with a survey of 30 firms. Some of the findings of the updated report included a willingness by the private sector to provide hands-on training to new/young employees, but firms continue to seek soft skills, notably honesty, responsibility, timeliness, and teamwork.

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APPENDIX D

ORGANIZATIONAL STRENGTHENING

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The organizations each project plans to strengthen vary in type. Bridges El Salvador hopes to strengthen 20 different TVET centers, EF Honduras is focusing its efforts on leaving behind a strengthened INFOP by strengthening 20–30 INFOP leaders and 50 INFOP trainers, and EFS Nicaragua’s organizational strengthening activities are self-focused (as the only local organization priming workforce development projects). The Bridges Guatemala project aims to train 25 education service providers. TVET-SAY Nicaragua is strengthening the capacity of eight TVET service providers while also leaving behind the institutional framework of the national TVET network by supporting the legal framework of the RENET. The Advance Regional project is unique in that it is strengthening tertiary institutions in each of the countries.

The projects engage in organizational capacity assessments (OCAs) to identify the dimensions institutions or service providers need to strengthen, and use the information to determine specific activities to strengthen WFD programs and providers.

A. Organizational capacity assessments

Table D.1 provides a summary of the types of organizational assessments and corresponding dimensions used by the projects in different institutions. The Advance Regional project organizational assessment differs from the other projects because it is using a multistep process to complete the assessment (it will be completed in FY2018). First, the project completed an institutional landscape analysis in each country to assess the state of tertiary education institutions and used it together with the results of the LMA to develop a shortlist of institutions with which to work. The Advance Regional project aims to conduct institutional capacity assessments (ICAs) of the target institutions on the shortlist that are similar to OCAs.

Table D.1. Organizational strengthening assessments, by project

OCA characteristics	Bridges El Salvador	Bridges Guatemala	EF Honduras	TVET-SAY Nicaragua	EFS Nicaragua	Advance Regional
Name of organizational assessment conducted	Workforce Development Service Provider Assessment	TBD (some form of OCA but not defined)	Strengthening INFOP in Directing Talent towards demand.	Capacity Building Assessment OCAT	Appreciative Review of Capacity	Institutional Landscape Analysis (ILA) leading to a deep-dive Institutional Capacity Assessment
Date the assessment was completed	2016		October 2016	2016	2015	2017 (Jamaica), Guatemala and Honduras pending finalization in 2018
Planned follow-up?	Yes, yearly		Yes	Yes, yearly	No	Not as part of the ILA, TBD as part of ICA
Number of organizations assessment was applied to	20	Planned for 6	1, INFOP	8	1, FADCANIC (conducted by another organizations)	The ILA explored the general tertiary education sector. ICAs are planned for 9 organizations based on the findings of the ILA.
Dimensions observed	Philosophy and objectives Organization and administration Training programs Library and learning resources Management of administrative staff and teaching faculty Finance Overall institutional Infrastructure Workshops, equipment and materials Student services		Leadership and coordination Demand-oriented training Curriculum and teaching aids Teacher training Monitoring, evaluation, and learning	Governance Management Human resource management Financial management Organizational management Technical management Program management Project performance management Workforce development management Communications	Governance Strategic planning Human talent External relations Project/service management Resource development Finance and administration	

Note: Source materials from World Vision, Banyan Global, FHI 360, DAI, Creative Associates, and FADCANIC.

Some of the main findings from the OCAs conducted thus far for each project include the following.

In **Honduras**, the **EF** project conducted an in-depth analysis of INFOP to identify areas of improvement to ensure INFOP was providing services that correspond to private sector demands. The assessment gave the project in-depth understanding of INFOP's capacity and role in continuing to train Honduran youth. The findings from the assessment of INFOP included that, overall, INFOP is a respected institution with vast reach within Honduras. However, there is a general perception that INFOP's graduates would be better off if they received additional soft skills training. In addition, the assessment indicated that INFOP management could benefit from additional training, including participating in field missions to other Latin American vocational training institutions, such as the national WFD service in Colombia -*Servicio Nacional de Aprendizaje*- (SENA). As an outcome of this assessment, the project created a set of indicators and an associated index to track progress around four key outcomes related to INFOP's ability to provide demand-oriented training. The outcomes included in the EF-developed index included leadership and coordination, demand-oriented curricula, instructor training, and follow-up services (Banyan 2016b).

In **El Salvador**, the **Bridges** team led a service provider assessment of 20 WFD providers using their TVET-CAT tool. The results of the assessment included a series of suggested interventions that Bridges could support depending on the individual needs of each organization. The findings from the baseline TVET-CAT indicated that some areas of possible intervention across the service providers include reworking training programs to better meet the needs of the private sector as well as the needs of future employees, strengthening and upgrading library and learning centers where youth can access learning resources, designing and implementing recruitment and hiring procedures that comply with labor laws, training service providers so they can identify sources of funding to keep infrastructure and content updated, and developing a student services roster that could allow for better follow-up communication with students (DAI 2017c). These findings shaped the project's work to improve the capacity of training centers and the quality and relevance of training available to at-risk youth. In FY2018, Bridges will use the TVET-CAT on a new group of service providers and develop plans based on the results of the assessments.

The **Advance Regional** project conducted institutional landscape analyses (ILA) in their three countries of operation (Honduras, Guatemala, and Jamaica) in their first year and a half. The ILA of local tertiary technical providers gave the project information on curriculum, faculty and staff, labor market bridging, and any additional services (scholarships or other support). The ILA also shed light on the availability of other support services, such as institutions' admissions, financial aid (scholarships), and labor market bridging support activities. Based on the results of the ILA, the project prioritized institutions to work with (three in each country, as shown in Table D.2) and began individual deep-dive institutional capacity assessments. These ICAs, to be finalized in FY2018, will focus on understanding capacity constraints around curriculum development, staff and faculty development, labor market bridging, recruitment, and scholarships, thereby prioritizing future Advance interventions.

Table D.2. Institutions and degree programs participating in Advance Regional

Country	Institution	Degree program
Honduras	Universidad Cristiana Evangélica Nuevo Milenio	Clinical laboratory
	Centro Universitario Tecnológico	Web design
	Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Honduras	Business administration for coffee growers Food and drink
Guatemala	Universidad Panamericana (UPANA)	Business administration Marketing and sales
	Universidad Rafael Landivar (URL)	Hotel administration and gastronomy
	Universidad San Carlos	Fruit and vegetable farming
Jamaica	Council of Community Colleges of Jamaica	Agriculture Wellness tourism
	Vocational Training Development Institute	Creative industries
	University of Technology	Design and technology

Note: Source materials from FHI 360.

Nicaragua TVET-SAY is strengthening the capacity of eight organizations—six WFD providers and two universities—according to nine different categories. Equipped with OCA scores for each organization, TVET-SAY staff crafted individualized action plans for each TVET center. The baseline OCA also generated valuable information on enrollment, retention and course offerings that the project could share with partners and the private sector. Although TVET-SAY does not have indicators tracking the number of organizations with improved capacity or the number of programs strengthened, they track progress through individualized OCA scores. Based on the individualized plans and the work carried out throughout 2017, on average, TVET-SAY was able to raise the OCA score from 2.7/4 to 3.15/4 in the span of a year for five of the eight organizations (three organizations decided not to participate in the organizational strengthening interventions (Creative Associates 2017). A summary of some of the interventions TVET-SAY implemented to increase organizations' OCA scores is included in the next section.

In addition to the support provided to TVET centers and service providers, TVET SAY also spent considerable efforts to create sustainable structures to promote technical and vocational education in Nicaragua. Notably, TVEY-SAY was instrumental in the creation of a national technical education network called RENET. The project promoted a communication campaign to help promote RENET's mission. As a result, many institutions recognize RENET's role in training Nicaragua's future workforce and requested to be part of its efforts. Currently RENET includes as part of its network members from private sector chambers, private TVET centers, as well as NGOs. This presents a unique opportunity in Nicaragua since RENET is able to convene TVET centers and private sector representatives to develop improved TVET services and employment opportunities. TVET-SAY also provided training to 45 RENET members.

As previously stated, the **EFS Nicaragua** project's organizational strengthening component has been focused on strengthening FADCANIC, the local implementer of EFS. In the mid-2000s, American Institutes of Research conducted a baseline OCA of FADCANIC. Based on those findings, FADCANIC started to receive training in youth engagement, M&E, and strategic

planning. In 2014 the *Programa de Gobernabilidad Local*, led a follow up organizational self-assessment (Global Communities 2014). Based on the results of the self-assessment, FADCANIC developed an organizational improvement plan that was used to prioritize their own organizational strengthening activities. FADCANIC organizational training activities are focused on improving strategic plans and internal policies, developing human resources, and improving ICT systems and office infrastructure. Since this assessment was completed, no formal follow-up assessments have taken place. In addition to self-strengthening activities, EFS also strengthens FADCANIC's Center for Agroforestry and Environmental Education (CETAA) through teacher training, institutionalization of the life skills, counseling, tutoring and peer mentoring programs, and support for the introduction of virtual learning programs.

Bridges Guatemala plans to conduct an assessment of 25 organizations in FY2018 using an adaptation of the OCA methodology and is currently finalizing its plan.

B. Strengthening WFD programming and service providers

Organizational and program strengthening activities conducted through the end of FY2017 are summarized below. Because EFS Nicaragua's organizational capacity-building activities are self-directed, we did not include them in the descriptions below.

Bridges Guatemala will strengthen the capacity of TVET education centers as well as municipalities, but has not formally started these activities. The project aims to strengthen 25 service providers who will ultimately help deliver the project's *Diplomado Emprender con Éxito* curriculum. In addition, the project is partnering with local municipalities that will house Municipal Youth Centers. These Youth Centers will serve as safe places for youth to take courses and get additional WFD support such as mentoring, internship support, and access to science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics activities (World Vision 2017c).

EF Honduras differs from the Bridges Guatemala program in that the primary recipient of organizational strengthening support is INFOP. As part of the goal to strengthen the management of INFOP, the project created a Leaders for Workforce Development Change program in which 27 trainers, government, or private sector officials are being trained through a series of workshops and exchanges. Future organizational strengthening support activities that the project will organize include regular forums between INFOP and the private sector, training INFOP managers and technical trainers on how to adapt courses to private sector needs, and supporting exchanges between INFOP and training or vocational centers in Latin America or the United States among other activities (Banyan Global 2017b).

In addition to the services the project provides INFOP, EF Honduras also works with local organizations that provide distinct functions: facilitation services, implementation support, and specialized technical training. Together, these organizations provide the services that youth receive through EF Honduras. The facilitation organizations are responsible for recruiting and registering youth. The implementing organizations work with youth during their 10-week training program and provide three different types of training—soft skills, basic labor competencies, and CBT. Once youth complete the 10-week program, they are referred to the technical organizations to receive specialized training (including construction, sales, web design, and bar tending, among others). To ensure that these organizations can operate under USAID funding, EF Honduras provides specialized training in reporting, communications, and financial

management. By FY2017, EF Honduras had trained two facilitation organizations and four implementing organizations. The authors are not aware of future capacity building that might be planned for the local organizations, since the work with these organization is not tracked through project indicators (and is therefore not included in Table IV.3).

The **Advance Regional** project began a variety of institutional strengthening support activities, such as workshops to improve curricula, with a focus on work-based learning opportunities, local entrepreneurship, and teacher externships. In Guatemala, Universidad Panamericana and Universidad Rafael Landivar used inputs from the Advance LMA to update the curricula of two of their degree programs, Marketing and Sales, and Hotel Administration and Gastronomy. In Jamaica, Advance worked with the Council of Community Colleges of Jamaica (CCCJ) to create a curriculum task force to begin making changes to some programs based on the results of the LMA (FHI360 2017b). The bulk of the activity to strengthen institutions and programs for the Advance project will take place once the ICAs have been completed.

Bridges El Salvador developed customized Technical Assistance Plans for selected WFD providers that participated in the TVET-CAT exercise. The Technical Assistance plans included improvements in administrative and management systems, organizational structure and culture, technical and program functional equipment, and facility upgrades, all in response to the findings from the organizational capacity assessment. Bridges strengthened a total of 13 service providers. They also developed 18 certified and/or accredited programs. These programs improved training curricular and responded to the needs of the sectors; they were accredited or serviced by an industry association, INSAFORP (*Instituto Salvadoreño de Formación Profesional*- the national WFD institution), or the Ministry of Education. Bridges El Salvador also held six training-of-trainers workshops with multidisciplinary teams. With over 264 people participating from different training centers, these trainings brought together a mix of people, including administrative staff, coordinators, psychologists, social workers, placement managers, and instructors, all from training centers that are conducting courses for targeted youth (DAI 2017a, 2017d).

For the Nicaragua TVET providers, **TVET-SAY** provided technical assistance to service providers in response to the findings of the OCA. Much of the assistance included developing gender policies, financial sustainability strategies, a soft skills curricula analysis, a review of entrepreneurship curricula, updated strategic operational plans, and monitoring and evaluation plans. In addition, TVET-SAY invested in strengthening the capacity of managers of TVET centers. The project launched the TVET diploma program, the *Diplomado Virtual “Gestión estratégica, emprendimiento juvenil y técnicas de aprendizaje para centros de educación técnica y vocacional”*, financed by USAID and offered through a partnership with the Universidad Americana (UAM) located in Managua. Seventy-seven representatives from thirty TVET centers, universities, civil society organizations, private sector chambers, and private companies participated in this six-module program. So far, participants have completed the first module that focuses on change management and strategic management in technological and vocational centers, Developing a Curriculum (DACUM) methodology and human talent management; financial sustainability of TVETs; and brand, image, and planning for institutional communications. In September 2017, participants started module 2; they will complete the remaining modules by the end of FY2018. Because organizational strengthening and change can

result in aggravated stress to service provider staff, the project complemented their interventions with Lego Serious Play techniques aimed at development team building and a positive work environment (Creative Associates 2017).

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