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# USAID Bridges to Employment

**Task Order No. AID-519-TO-15-00001**

**Under Youth Power IDIQ Contract No. AID-OAA-I-15-00014**

## **PROJECT ACTION MEMO REQUEST #469**

To: Yolanda Martínez, Contracting Officer's Representative (COR), USAID/El Salvador  
From: Caterina Valero, Chief of Party (COP), USAID Bridges to Employment

Cc: Jay Gutzwiller, Director, Project Delivery Team, DAI Global LLC  
Stacy Belney, Project Manager, DAI Global LLC

Date: October 31, 2018

Subject: Semi-Annual Report (April 1, 2018 – September 30, 2018)

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Dear Yolanda,

Pursuant to the subject contract, please find attached DAI's Semi-Annual Report for the period of April 1, 2018 – September 30, 2018.

We respectfully request your technical review and approval of the deliverable.

Kind regards,

Caterina Valero  
Chief of Party (COP)  
USAID Bridges to Employment

Attachments:

- I. Semi-Annual Report (April 1, 2018 – September 30, 2018)



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USAID BRIDGES TO EMPLOYMENT  
**SEMI-ANNUAL  
REPORT**

**April - September 2018**

CONTRACT NO. AID-519-TO-15-00001,  
under Youth Power IDIQ

Contract AID-OAA-I-15-00014

# USAID BRIDGES TO EMPLOYMENT

## SEMI-ANNUAL REPORT

April 1, 2018 – September 30, 2018

**Project Title:** USAID Bridges to Employment

**Sponsoring USAID Office:** USAID/El Salvador

**Contract Number:** AID-519-TO-15-00001,  
under Youth Power IDIQ Contract AID-OAA-I-15-00014

**COR:** Yolanda Martínez

**Contractor:** DAI

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# ACRONYMS

AGAPE	<i>Asociación Ágape de El Salvador (Agape Association of El Salvador)</i>
ALTHES	<i>Asociación de Líderes del Talento Humano (Association of Human Talent Leaders)</i>
APAC	<i>Academia Panamericana de Arte Culinario (Pan-American Culinary Academy)</i>
ASAPROSAR	<i>Asociación Salvadoreña Pro-Salud Rural (Salvadoran Association of Rural Health)</i>
ASIPLASTIC	<i>Asociación de la Industria del Plástico de El Salvador (Plastic Industry Association)</i>
ASI	<i>Asociación Salvadoreña de Industriales (Salvadoran Manufacturing Association)</i>
CAIM	<i>Centro de Asistencia Integral para Migrantes (Integral Attention Center for Migrants)</i>
CAMTEX	<i>Cámara de la Industria Textil, Confección y Zonas Francas de El Salvador</i>
CAMTIC	<i>Cámara Costarricense de TIC</i>
CAPUCOM	<i>Capacitación Profesional en Computación (Professional Training in Computing)</i>
CasaTIC	<i>Cámara Salvadoreña de Tecnologías de Información (Salvadoran Information Technology Chamber)</i>
CASS	Central American Software Services
CBP	Customs & Border Protection
CONAIPD	<i>Consejo Nacional de Atención Integral a la Persona con Discapacidad (National Counsel for Integrated Care of the Disabled)</i>
CONAMYPE	<i>Comisión Nacional de la Micro y Pequeña Empresa (National Commission of Micro and Small Business)</i>
CONEXION	<i>Asociación Conexión al Desarrollo de El Salvador (Connection to Development Association of El Salvador)</i>
COP	Chief of Party
COR	Contracting Officer's Representative
CRM	Customer Relationship Management
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
DAI	Development Alternatives, Inc.
DISAL	<i>Distribuidora Salvadoreña, S.A. de C.V.</i>
EEOC	U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
EMMP	Environmental Mitigation & Monitoring Plan

ESFE-AGAPE	<i>Escuela Superior Franciscana Especializada/ AGAPE (AGAPE Specialized Franciscan High School)</i>
FEPADE	<i>Fundación Empresarial para el Desarrollo (Entrepreneurial Foundation for Development)</i>
FGK	<i>Fundación Gloria de Kriete</i>
FIECA	<i>La Fundación Innovaciones Educativas Centroamericanas (Central American Innovative Education Foundation)</i>
FUNDEMAS	<i>Fundación Empresarial para la Acción Social (Business Foundation for Social Action)</i>
FUNDEPLAST	<i>Fundación de la Industria del Plástico (Salvadoran Plastic Industry Foundation)</i>
FUNPRES	<i>Fundación Pro Educación de El Salvador (Salvadoran Education Foundation)</i>
FUNTER	<i>Asociación Teletón Pro Rehabilitación (Telethon Pro-Rehabilitation Association)</i>
FUSADES	<i>Fundación Salvadoreña para el Desarrollo Económico y Social (Salvadoran Foundation for Economic and Social Development)</i>
FUSAL	<i>Fundación Salvadoreña para la Salud y Desarrollo Humano (Salvadoran Health &amp; Human Development Foundation)</i>
FUSALMO	<i>Fundación Salvador del Mundo (Salvador del Mundo Foundation)</i>
FyA	<i>Asociación Fe y Alegría</i>
GEC	Grants Evaluation Committee
GOES	Government of El Salvador
HR	Human Resources
iiEE	Corporate Equity & Inclusion Index
INJUVE	<i>Instituto Nacional de la Juventud (National Youth Institute)</i>
INSAFORP	<i>Instituto Salvadoreño de Formación Profesional (Salvadoran Institute of Professional Development)</i>
ISRI	<i>Instituto Salvadoreño de Rehabilitación Integral</i>
ISSS	<i>Instituto Salvadoreño del Seguro Social</i>
IT	Information Technology
LESSA	Salvadorean Sign Language
LGBTI	Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender and Intersex
M&E	Monitoring & Evaluation
MINED	<i>Ministerio de Educación (Ministry of Education)</i>
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MTPS	<i>Ministerio de Trabajo y Previsión Social (Ministry of Labor)</i>

MyV	<i>Metas y Visión</i>
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OCA	Organizational Capacity Assessment
OEF	<i>Asociación para la Organización y Educación Empresarial Femenina de El Salvador</i> (Association for the Organization and Education of Women Entrepreneurs of El Salvador)
PYD	Positive Youth Development
RFA	Request for Applications
RUP	<i>Registro Único de Participantes</i> (Unique Participant Registration)
SDC	Software Development Center
SETEPLAN	<i>Secretaría Técnica y de Planificación de la Presidencia</i> (Technical and Planning Secretariat of the Presidency)
SSPAS	<i>Corporación de la Pasión – Servicio Social Pasionista</i> (Passion Corporation - Passionate Social Service)
ToT	Training of Trainers
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education
TVET CAT	Technical and Vocational Education and Training Capacity Assessment Tool
UEES	<i>Universidad Evangélica de El Salvador</i>
UNIVO	<i>Universidad de Oriente</i> (University of the East)
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USAM	<i>Universidad Salvadoreña Alberto Masferrer</i> (Alberto Masferrer University)
WHO	World Health Organization



BRIDGES YOUTH PARTICIPATING IN COMPUTER PROGRAMMING COURSE AT THE FUNDACION GLORIA DE KRIETE (FGK) SOFTWARE DEVELOPMENT CENTER IN SONZACATE. USAID BRIDGES TO EMPLOYMENT COMMUNICATIONS TEAM, DAI GLOBAL LLC.

## INTRODUCTION

The Bridges to Employment Project (referred to in this report as “Bridges”) is a five-year, United States Agency for International Development (USAID)-funded activity implemented by DAI Global, LLC (DAI) and its subcontractors Plan International, Inc. and JBS International. The goal of Bridges is to increase and improve employment within targeted high-growth sectors of vulnerable youth living in selected high-crime rate municipalities. The Bridges team supports USAID/El Salvador to link vulnerable youth – including young women and marginalized populations such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, and intersexual (LGBTI) youth and youth with disabilities – to basic social resources of work, knowledge, security, and social capital in order to foster social inclusion through employment opportunities. By identifying and building on existing knowledge and networks, Bridges collaborates with businesses, civil society organizations (CSOs), and training centers to optimize their performance, link them to one another, and facilitate pathways toward employment for vulnerable youth.

Bridges supports improvements to El Salvador’s workforce development system so that it works for all stakeholders – in particular vulnerable youth – by strengthening the connections and capacity of the systems at macro and institutional levels. Bridges’ guiding vision positions Salvadoran youth as valued, sought-after members of the national workforce, capable of critically evaluating their training and employment options and proactively pursuing job opportunities in growth sectors that are receptive to skilled recruits. To achieve this, Bridges employs an inclusive system approach that links government, service providers, training providers, and the private sector; supports them to participate in the system; and comprehensively engages youth. A systems approach allows project staff and stakeholders to arrive at a common understanding of how the system should function and agree on where sustainable change must be made.

The Bridges development hypothesis is that when vulnerable youth have access to a high-quality, holistic, and market-relevant package of services and support that utilize and maximize their strengths, they are



more likely to improve their employability, income and/or employment situation. Over the long term, USAID's coordinated investments in high-risk areas will address the underlying factors driving migration from the targeted municipalities by contributing to more stable and safe communities that offer access to productive economic opportunities. The inclusive systems approach engages the Government of El Salvador (GOES), the private sector, training service providers, and youth as active partners in improving the system from within to increase youth employment.

The present report details the main accomplishments and activities during the period of April-September 2018. Section A details the major technical accomplishments with separate sub-sections for each project objective. Section B highlights accomplishments from crosscutting activities, including communications and monitoring and evaluation (M&E). Section C describes the finance, administration, management and operations. Section D contains the report annexes.



YOUTH PARTICIPATING IN THE 2018 CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND INNOVATION WEEK, CO-HOSTED BY BRIDGES AND FUNDEMAS. USAID BRIDGES TO EMPLOYMENT COMMUNICATIONS TEAM, DAI GLOBAL LLC.

## A. MAJOR TECHNICAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS BY OBJECTIVE

Many young people in El Salvador face impossible choices for livelihoods among gang coercion, underemployment, and expensive, dangerous migration. Bridges is working to equip vulnerable youth from the country's 15 highest-crime communities with the skills they need to get their start in one of the country's high-growth economic sectors. Between April and September 2018, Bridges collaborated with business, government, and CSO stakeholders to improve the enabling environment for youth employment, working to improve the quality and relevance of training services provided to youth, in order to improve the job readiness and employment of vulnerable youth. The section below provides a summary of the major activities and achievements by project objective.

### OBJECTIVE I:

Increased stakeholder engagement to improve the enabling environment for workforce development and employment<sup>1</sup>

Bridges is working to increase the long-term effectiveness of El Salvador's youth workforce development system, collaborating with training centers, government agencies, private sector employers, and other key stakeholders to create an environment in which youth can thrive.

<sup>1</sup> For all official purposes indicator titles used in this document, which differ from those reflected in the Task Order, are all subject to the formalization of the TO modification.

## Main activities and achievements

- Convened three meetings of the Stakeholder Advisory Group
- Supported the *Instituto Nacional de la Juventud* (INJUVE) in finalizing its new institutional policy for assisting youth with disabilities
- Provided ongoing support to companies to strengthen inclusiveness in their policies and practices
- Completed the first draft of the Fair Programming Seal standards and submitted for validation with key stakeholders
- Continued building the institutional capacity of CSOs
- Focused outreach to large companies with significant hiring needs
- Explored collaboration with the textile industry

## Engaging key stakeholders

Bridges is collaborating with a range of stakeholders to improve the effectiveness of the country's youth workforce development – so it works for youth.

**MEETINGS OF THE STAKEHOLDER ADVISORY GROUP:** Bridges relies on stakeholders, through its Stakeholder Advisory Group, to ensure the relevance and sustainability of the project's interventions through the active participation of stakeholders in the planning and implementation of activities. Members of the Stakeholder Advisory Group, which include training centers, youth organizations, private sector companies, and Salvadoran government agencies work together to discuss challenges in the workforce development system and identify ways to address them. The focus of the three Stakeholder Advisory Group meetings held during this reporting period was on developing shared strategies to improve the job placement of vulnerable youth.



MEMBERS OF STAKEHOLDER ADVISORY GROUP DISCUSSING THE CERTIFICATION PROCESS FOR EMPLOYEES WITH DISABILITIES. USAID BRIDGES TO EMPLOYMENT, DAI GLOBAL LLC. MAY 4, 2018.

In the May 4 meeting of the Stakeholder Advisory Group, representatives of the following organizations met to discuss challenges and opportunities in the accreditation and work certification process for youth with disabilities: *Instituto Salvadoreño de Rehabilitación Integral* (ISRI), *Ministerio de Trabajo y Previsión Social* (MTPS), INJUVE, Lafarge HOLCIM, The Office Gurus, TELUS International, Whitefox Consulting, *Asociación Teletón Pro Rehabilitación* (FUNTER), *Red de Sobrevivientes y Personas con Discapacidad*, *Universo*

*Emprendedor*, as well as three youth with disabilities. Participants shared their perspectives on the process of job placement and hiring of youth with disabilities, identifying the following key challenges:

- lack of access to clear information about the certification process, leading to misconceptions by youth with disabilities and companies hiring them;
- lack of sufficient medical staff and financial resources of the certifying institutions;
- logistical barriers that make it difficult for an applicant with disabilities to complete the required paperwork, and
- limited competencies, life skills, and technical training of youth with disabilities due to existing barriers that deny them access to formal education and training.

Participants pointed to the need to strengthen the coordination among ISRI, MTPS, and *Instituto Salvadoreño del Seguro Social* (ISSS). These government institutions are responsible for issuing the Certification and Accreditation for Work that is required by a person with disabilities to be counted towards a company's legal quota of employees with disabilities. To address this gap in coordination and the lack of clarity for those with disabilities, Bridges will lead a process in the coming year to develop user-friendly guides with clear instructions on how to navigate this process and the roles and responsibilities of each actor involved in the process (government institutions, employers, and people with disabilities).

On August 21, Bridges convened a second meeting of the Stakeholder Advisory Group with representatives of the following organizations met to discuss how the project can advance employment of youth in the coming year: Tigo El Salvador, *Grupo San Nicolás*, Marriott Hotel, *Asociación Salvadoreña de la Industria del Plástico* (ASIPLASTIC), *Fundación de la Industria del Plástico* (FUNDEPLAST), *Cámara Salvadoreña de Tecnologías de Información* (CasaTIC), *Asociación de Líderes del Talento Humano* (ALTHES), *Fundación Empresarial para la Acción Social* (FUNDEMÁS), *Red de Sobrevivientes y Personas con Discapacidad*, *Asociación La Escalón*, *Universidad Evangélica de El Salvador* (UEES), *Corporación de la Pasión – Servicio Social Pasionista* (SSPAS), *Asociación Fe y Alegría* (FyA), and *Escuela Superior Franciscana Especializada AGAPE* (ESFE-AGAPE). Bridges staff shared its job placement strategy and received feedback from the group about the challenges they face and the opportunities they see to improve the transition of youth into the country's workforce. The conversation served as a starting point for Bridges staff to design a survey of employer perceptions to understand how employers who have hired project-trained youth view their performance in the workplace, to measure how companies view youth employees, and to identify job profiles that may be filled by vulnerable youth. The meeting discussion, as well as the survey results, will help the project to better equip youth with the necessary skills and capacities to meet the needs and expectations of the private sector.

On September 26, Bridges convened a third meeting of the Stakeholder Advisory Group with representatives of the following organizations to discuss the variety of barriers that youth in El Salvador face in securing employment: USAID, Sherwin Williams, MTPS, *Fundación Salvadoreña para el Desarrollo Económico y Social* (FUSADES), FyA, *Joven 360*, Tigo El Salvador, 3Corp, SSPAS, *Asociación La Escalón*, *Fundación Gloria de Kriete* (FGK), *Hoteles Villa Serena*, *Asociación Salvadoreña de Industriales* (ASI), IPSOS Herrarte and youth beneficiaries. Results of the updated Labor Market Assessment were shared with the group, including high-growth sectors and hiring needs (entry-level position profiles) in several industries as well as challenges faced by companies when hiring youth. Results revealed that despite graduating from training courses, young job applicants often lack the specialized training necessary for a particular position and/or the critical life skills to succeed in the workplace, such as self-esteem, communication, proactivity, and teamwork. Private sector representatives stressed that employment opportunities for youth do exist, but youth must have a higher level of skills to meet companies' expectations. Two youth attendees spoke openly about the barriers they have faced, including completing their education with no family or economic support or job prospects in sight, how the insecurity in their communities limits the jobs options available to them, and how the lack of flexible work schedules means they must face dangerous and risky commutes.

After the meeting, the CEO of Sherwin Williams and the Director of *Hoteles Villa Serena* committed to working with Bridges to evaluate trained youth for employment in their companies. Additionally, one of the youth who shared his experience was introduced to the coordinator of the Software Development program at FGK, who immediately took him to the training center to provide him with information about the computer programming courses that could give him an opportunity to enhance his education. These interactions demonstrate that the Stakeholder Advisory Group is a valuable space for immediate connections and synergies.

For Bridges, gathering different perspectives from companies, training centers, and youth about the realities of youth employment is critical to improving the effectiveness of El Salvador's workforce development system, equipping the project and its stakeholders with a better understanding of how to respond to challenges on both the supply and demand sides of the labor market.

**REACHING KEY STAKEHOLDERS THROUGH PRIVATE SECTOR CONFERENCE:** In collaboration with FUNDEMAS, Bridges co-hosted this year's Corporate Social Responsibility and Innovation Week. Held July 9-12, the 2018 conference focused on "Innovation for Sustainability," a topic that directly relates to the core of Bridges interventions, thus serving as an ideal environment to position the project within a broad audience of key stakeholders, including 817 representatives of companies, 17 of industry associations, 379 of CSOs and international development agencies, 79 of government institutions, 475 of training centers and universities, as well as youth.

During the event, project staff met with 42 separate companies to discuss their hiring and training needs and built the capacity of staff from five grantee training centers, demonstrating how to conduct private sector outreach. The team also explored potential areas of collaboration with 11 CSOs and five local government institutions. In addition, the event featured a panel presentation of Ramon Candel of Whitefox Consulting, Roland Despinoy of CasaTIC, and Yolanda Martínez of USAID discussing the project's efforts to improve the inclusion of vulnerable youth in the Salvadoran workforce through the use of the Inclusion and Equity Corporate Index and the Fair Programming initiative.



ROLAND DESPINOY OF CASATIC, YOLANDA MARTÍNEZ OF USAID AND RAMON CANDEL OF WHITEFOX CONSULTING, AT THE CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND INNOVATION WEEK DISCUSSING THE PROJECT'S EFFORTS TO IMPROVE THE INCLUSION OF VULNERABLE YOUTH IN THE SALVADORAN WORKFORCE. USAID BRIDGES TO EMPLOYMENT, DAI GLOBAL LLC. JULY 10, 2018.

## Strengthening support for Salvadoran youth in laws and policies

Bridges engages national and local government entities directly to improve, develop, disseminate, and implement laws and policies that support opportunities for youth education, training, employment, and civic engagement. Enshrining support for youth in public laws and policies is a key strategy for ensuring ongoing support to youth and other vulnerable groups for decades to come. During this reporting period, Bridges and its government partners made significant strides in addressing legal barriers to youth employment in El Salvador through the following:



SOYAPANGO MUNICIPAL YOUTH POLICY.  
USAID BRIDGES TO EMPLOYMENT, DAI  
GLOBAL LLC, AUGUST 23, 2018.

**MUNICIPAL YOUTH POLICIES:** Over the past year, Bridges and INJUVE assisted Ciudad Delgado and Soyapango in updating their municipal youth policies, establishing new legal frameworks for the rights of youth and responding to the specific needs of youth in each municipality. With Bridges support, Soyapango's Municipal Youth Policy was printed in September and is now ready for dissemination. During the reporting period, agreements were made with the municipal governments in the high-crime communities of Mejicanos and Santa Ana for Bridges and INJUVE to support the governments in the process of updating their respective youth policies. As a first step, two full-day workshops were carried out on September 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> to train 25 youth in Santa Ana on how to facilitate consultations with youth to gather their input on the themes to be addressed in Santa Ana's updated municipal youth policy.

Zacatecoluca's municipal government also expressed an interest in updating its youth policy in the coming months. Bridges offered to provide technical and logistical support to assist INJUVE in holding a series of consultations with youth to gather their suggestions on which aspects of the General Youth Law related to education, health, civic participation, environment and employment should be incorporated into Zacatecoluca's new policy. The development of these policies contributes to a strengthened legal framework for youth, enhancing the enabling environment for youth employment.

**INJUVE'S INSTITUTIONAL POLICY FOR ASSISTING YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES:** Bridges is actively engaging with private and public sector agencies to facilitate inclusive work environments for youth with disabilities and other minority groups. After supporting INJUVE in the development stages of a new institutional policy to assist youth with disabilities, Bridges is now helping the youth agency finalize the policy. At the request of INJUVE, Bridges became a member of the Technical Board whose role is to revise the proposed policy, analyze observations, incorporate recommendations, and validate its implementation. In June, Bridges staff participated in two meetings with INJUVE and the Secretariat of Social Inclusion to discuss the feedback received from regional offices, which included suggestions to promote effective participation of youth with disabilities, renovate INJUVE's existing facilities to accommodate the needs of youth with disabilities, facilitate equal access to information, provide inclusive training programs, and increase stakeholder engagement. After undergoing revisions, the proposed policy was distributed in late September to seven departments within INJUVE for their review and edits. In addition, two workshops were held with youth with disabilities in September to gather their feedback to ensure that the institutional policy facilitates and promotes the participation of vulnerable youth. In these workshops, youth suggested that the policy include the dissemination of information in various forms,

such as braille, audio, sign language, accessible social media, and others. The recommendations will be incorporated into the final revised policy, which will be presented to INJUVE's General Direction for approval. Once approved, the policy will be adopted as the youth agency's guiding document on how to assist youth with disabilities and will be implemented nationwide.

## Building CSO capacity to better support youth

To improve the quality of support offered to vulnerable youth and marginalized populations in El Salvador in a sustainable way, Bridges worked over the past six months to build the capacity of CSOs benefitting youth. To tailor its assistance to the individual needs of each organization, Bridges utilized USAID's Organizational Capacity Assessment (OCA) in this and prior reporting periods to determine the existing organizational capacity, including the strengths and weaknesses of the CSOs, and worked with each organization to develop an institutional improvement plan.

At the request of a number of CSOs, Bridges held additional technical assistance workshops in June on best practices in grant writing and strategies to improve environmental impact. Bridges provided training to the following CSOs, some of which reported institutional capacity strengthened during this period:

**ASOCIACIÓN DE LÍDERES DEL TALENTO HUMANO (ALTHES):** a non-profit organization, committed to building human talent within organizations in a strategic way and to facilitating a network of human resource (HR) professionals.

**ASOCIACIÓN LA ESCALÓN:** an association of businesses located in San Salvador's *Colonia Escalón* that helps vulnerable youth and facilitates employment of 60 youth a year in member companies. As a result of participating in technical assistance workshops and receiving ongoing support from Bridges, *Asociación La Escalón* made a number of advances in its specific institutional improvement plan, including the following reported during this period: 1) documenting personnel policies in writing, 2) establishing formal requirements and job descriptions for volunteers and interns, 3) documenting opportunities for professional development, 4) documenting procedures for financial reports, 5) documenting findings of organizational audits, and 6) formalizing and documenting responsibilities of supervisors.

**ASOCIACIÓN TRABAJEMOS POR LA PAZ:** works with vulnerable populations in many of the same municipalities prioritized by Bridges, including San Martín, Soyapango, Tonacatepeque, Cuscatancingo, San Salvador, Mejicanos, and Ciudad Delgado. *Asociación Trabajemos por La Paz* provides technical training to vulnerable youth, helps raise awareness of companies in the San Martin area of the value of providing internship opportunities for youth, and links the youth to these companies.

**FUNDACIÓN SALVADOREÑA PARA LA SALUD Y EL DESARROLLO (FUSAL):** a private, non-profit organization that channels the experience and social responsibility of Salvadoran entrepreneurs committed to human development, serves the less fortunate through programs in health and education. FUSAL recently underwent a major restructuring process, and the organization's leadership decided to repeat the OCA with the newly-assigned management team in order to identify shared priorities for building the institution's capacity. Bridges staff assisted the organization in drafting an updated improvement plan based on the new OCA results. Bridges will provide ongoing support to FUSAL as it works to build capacity in strategic planning and M&E.

**FUNDACIÓN COATEPEQUE:** a foundation composed of private landowners in the Lago de Coatepeque basin who are dedicated to preserving the natural resources and improving community economic development around *Lago de Coatepeque*.

**OPERACIÓN BENDICIÓN:** an international humanitarian organization providing disaster relief, medical assistance, and community development for vulnerable populations. As a result of Bridges assistance, *Operación Bendición*, in coordination with its international headquarters, implemented the following institutional improvements during the reporting period: 1) modifying its policy manual, 2) formalizing and documenting job descriptions, and 3) developing a new strategic plan for the next 3 years, which focuses on the organization's shared objectives, goals, and branding.

**RED DE SOBREVIVIENTES Y PERSONAS CON DISCAPACIDAD:** a non-profit organization that promotes the full inclusion of people with disabilities in El Salvador. As a result of its increased grant writing capacity as a result of the participation in Bridges technical assistance workshop, *Red de Sobrevivientes y Personas con Discapacidad* was better equipped to partner with *Metas y Visión* (MyV) and ALTHES on a successful grant application to Bridges (discussed more below).

These workshops help CSOs address specific weaknesses, helping them make promised advances as set out in each organization's institutional improvement plan. Bridges will continue working with these CSOs in 2019, conducting workshops on budget forecasting and M&E to improve their understanding and usage of data-based decision making, specifically identifying and setting project indicators, drafting M&E plans, and obtaining practical tools that they can customize.

During this period, Bridges also began initial efforts to assist:

**NEHEMIAH INTERNATIONAL:** a non-profit organization committed to equipping and training pastors, leaders, local entrepreneurs, and future generations. After conducting an OCA with Nehemiah International, Bridges held a follow-up session with the purpose of drafting an institutional improvement plan with Nehemiah International. During this session, Dr. Dewhurst, President of Nehemiah International, expressed the impact that this exercise has had on the organization, serving as a trigger to identify and kick-start specific activities that will allow Nehemiah International to develop a formal strategic plan with a sustainable vision. With Bridges support, Dr. Dewhurst is determined to work on the following improvements: 1) ensuring the organization's compliance with legal and administrative requirements and labor laws and 2) establishing a systematic approach to the organization's strategy, processes, and procedures.

Strengthening the quality of services CSOs provide to vulnerable youth in El Salvador is fundamental for Bridges sustainability. By the end of the project, the CSOs strengthened by Bridges will have stronger networks; improved tools and systems, such as manuals, policies, and procedures; and strengthened organizational capacity, making it possible to provide high-quality services to vulnerable populations, transforming communities for years to come.

## Building partnerships with industry associations and private sector businesses

The private sector is the cornerstone for economic development in the country. Bridges has worked to build ongoing partnerships and collaboration with industry associations and companies, 1) sharing information about the project, 2) learning about the company's hiring and training needs, 3) exploring the company's interest in modifying corporate policies and practices to improve inclusion of youth and vulnerable groups, and 4) identifying opportunities to link the company with training centers to align curricula with company needs, and facilitate internship and employment opportunities for youth.

As part of its new job placement strategy, Bridges has prioritized its outreach efforts and engagement with large businesses as well as industry associations with significant hiring needs in order to facilitate increased



employment of youth beneficiaries. With this intention, and the approval of USAID, Bridges began to explore opportunities for collaboration with the textile industry association, *Cámara de la Industria Textil, Confección y Zonas Francas de El Salvador* (CAMTEX). Bridges also utilized its relationships with membership organizations, CasaTIC, FUNDEMAS, ASIPLASTIC, and Rotary International, to engage with large numbers of companies.

During this reporting period, Bridges met with the following companies and industry associations to explore opportunities for collaboration, the results of which are detailed in Objective 2:

Manufacturing Sector	IT Sector
	
Agroindustry Sector	Tourism Sector
	
Energy Sector	
	

## Improving private sector practices

Youth and other vulnerable face significant obstacles to entering the workforce, including patterns of discrimination by employers. To build a better enabling environment for the participation of vulnerable youth in the workforce, Bridges conducted the following activities to support private sector companies in modifying corporate policies and practices to make them supportive of youth and other vulnerable groups, including female employees, single parents, people with disabilities, and those within the LGBTI community.

**ASSESSING AND IMPROVING CORPORATE INCLUSION OF VULNERABLE GROUPS:** As part of its ongoing efforts to improve the enabling environment for youth employment, Bridges leveraged assistance from Whitefox Consulting to 1) raise awareness of company staff on how to support marginalized groups, 2) assist companies in assessing their recruitment, hiring, employment, and retention policies to identify ways to make them more inclusive, and 3) support companies in implementing changes to corporate policies and practices. Using the Corporate Equity and Inclusion Index (iEE), a self-assessment tool developed by Whitefox Consulting, the partners assessed company policies and practices to determine if they support the needs and inclusion of vulnerable groups. During this reporting period, Bridges and Whitefox worked together to assist the following companies:



Bridges and Whitefox Consulting met with Grupo CONSISA, an information technology (IT) consulting company, to share the company's results from the iEE. The results identified opportunities for the company to improve its inclusion of vulnerable groups by creating a non-discrimination policy as well as by implementing policies to promote staff retention.



After completing a simplified assessment, Marriott met with Bridges and Whitefox Consulting to discuss the company's interest in pursuing the annual certification of inclusive corporate policies and practices for its hotels across the region.



After learning of its assessment results, Telus International noted its commitment to improving its inclusion of vulnerable groups. The company has planned a series of awareness-raising workshops for company management, which will be held in the coming months to equip them with knowledge and specific strategies to comply with the company's guidelines on diversity, equity, and inclusion.

**AWARDING OF GRANTS TO IMPROVE CORPORATE POLICIES AND PRACTICES:** During this reporting period, Bridges awarded grants to FUNDEMAS, UEES, and MyV, which in part focus on improving corporate policies and practices to support the employment of youth and other vulnerable groups. FUNDEMAS will utilize its extensive network of member companies to raise the awareness of company staff about the needs of specific populations in the workforce and assist them in making improvements. At the same time, MyV will tap into the strengths of its sub-grantees, ALTHES and *Fundación Red de Sobrevivientes y Personas con Discapacidad*, to assist companies respectively in strengthening human resource policies as well as providing specialized support to employees with disabilities. Through

the implementation of these new grants, Bridges will be able to assist more companies in improving the workplace environment for youth employment, utilizing extra manpower to conduct one-on-one-meetings with more companies and provide tailored and expert assistance to meet company needs.

**SUPPORTING THE EMPLOYMENT OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES:** As a result of its participation in the Stakeholder Advisory Group meeting, The Office Gurus, an outsourcing company, met with Bridges in May to discuss the company's interest in assisting employees with disabilities in completing the certification process to be formally recognized by the government as an employee with disabilities. In response to The Office Gurus interests, Bridges linked the company with partner *Red de Sobrevivientes y Personas con Discapacidad* to evaluate and expedite the certification process of staff with disabilities. In addition, the company is committed to updating its policies and practices to be more inclusive of employees with disabilities, vulnerable youth, and other marginalized groups and has begun to coordinate with Whitefox Consulting. Bridges will link The Office Gurus to new grantee MyV to provide ongoing support in strengthening their policies and practices.

## Fair Programming Initiative

In order to facilitate the entry of youth into the Salvadoran workforce, Bridges is working to provide fair employment opportunities for vulnerable youth in a number of industries. One innovative outcome of the project is the creation of the Fair Programming initiative, which was developed in collaboration with CasaTIC, El Salvador's industry association of information technology (IT) companies, and Central American Software Services (CASS). The goal of Fair Programming is to provide decent employment opportunities for vulnerable youth in the IT industry and for software developers in developing countries to obtain fair prices for their services. Similar to the Fair Trade programs developed for coffee, tea, cocoa, and other crops that focus on ensuring equality and fair treatment of everyone in the value chain, Fair Programming focuses on the inclusion and fair treatment of vulnerable youth from developing countries who are part of the global IT value chain.

During the reporting period, Bridges staff traveled to Costa Rica to learn from the experience of the Rainforest Alliance, INCAE Business School's *Centro Latinoamericano de Competitividad y el Desarrollo Sostenible*, and the *Cámara Costarricense de TIC (CAMTIC)* in order to incorporate best practices into the development of standards for the Fair Programming Seal. These institutions have long-term and successful experience in developing standards, promoting competitiveness strategies, and exporting IT services worldwide, respectively.

The Rainforest Alliance shared its experience in developing certification standards and recommended that Bridges and its partners develop the standards through the ISEAL Alliance to ensure the standards are credible and accepted worldwide. A global membership organization, the ISEAL Alliance registers sustainability standards across a range of industries, measures and shares the impact of the standards, and works closely with governments, businesses, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to build support for the standards.

The standards outline key provisions that companies must comply with in order to be certified, including:

- Inclusive hiring practices with no exploitation
- Profit sharing provisions
- Long-term contracts between service providers and clients
- Flexible and safe working conditions

The draft standards are currently being reviewed by the INCAE Business School, CasaTIC, and Whitefox Consulting. Bridges will gather feedback from others before finalizing the standards next year.

## Sharing the project's efforts with high-level USG stakeholders

During this reporting period, Bridges staff collaborated with the U.S. Embassy and other USG-funded projects to both deter migration and to respond to the increased number of returned migrants arriving to El Salvador. On September 28, Bridges and USAID staff accompanied the Commissioner of US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) to visit the project's interventions in Zacatecoluca and gain insights regarding the impact these interventions have on deterring migration.



KEVIN MCALEENAN, CBP COMMISSIONER, MEETING WITH STAFF OF TRAINING CENTERS, COMPANIES, AND YOUTH BENEFICIARIES IN ZACATECOLUCA. USAID BRIDGES TO EMPLOYMENT, DAI GLOBAL LLC. SEPTEMBER 28, 2018.

During the visit, the CBP Commissioner participated in an informative session with representatives of UEES, ITCA-MEGATEC, and *Asociación para la Organización y Educación Empresarial Femenina en El Salvador* (OEF) training centers; *Grupo GD*, a company that has hired Bridges-trained youth; and youth participating in the project-funded technical, life skills, on-the-job training. Additionally, the CBP Commissioner observed the implementation of life skills training in the classroom. Through this visit, Bridges demonstrated that developing training curricula in partnership with the private sector allows training centers to respond to the labor market's ever-changing needs, ensuring youth have the competencies they need to succeed in local companies.

## Leveraging funding from private stakeholders



By engaging and collaborating with key stakeholders, Bridges leveraged a total of \$1,042,387 in funding from the private sector during this reporting period.

### Upcoming activities for October 2018–March 2019

- Hold youth consultations in Santa Ana, Mejicanos, and Zacatecoluca to develop updated municipal youth policies
- Conduct additional technical assistance workshops to build CSO capacity
- Convene two meetings of the Stakeholder Advisory Group
- Print and disseminate updated laws and policies, including municipal youth policies, INJUVE's institutional policy to assist youth with disabilities, and the General Law of Youth in braille
- Conduct baseline assessment of companies to measure inclusiveness of policies and practices
- Provide ongoing technical assistance to help companies improve corporate policies and practices to support inclusion
- Conduct awareness-raising workshops for staff of companies on how to support vulnerable groups in the workforce
- Design and implement a knowledge exchange with Colombian experts to facilitate inter-institutional coordination and dissemination of information about the work accreditation and certification process for employees with disabilities
- Formally invite key stakeholders to join the certification board for Fair Programming

## OBJECTIVE 2:

Increased institutional strengthening to improve the quality of workforce development services that effectively respond to market demand to insert at-risk youth into target economic sectors

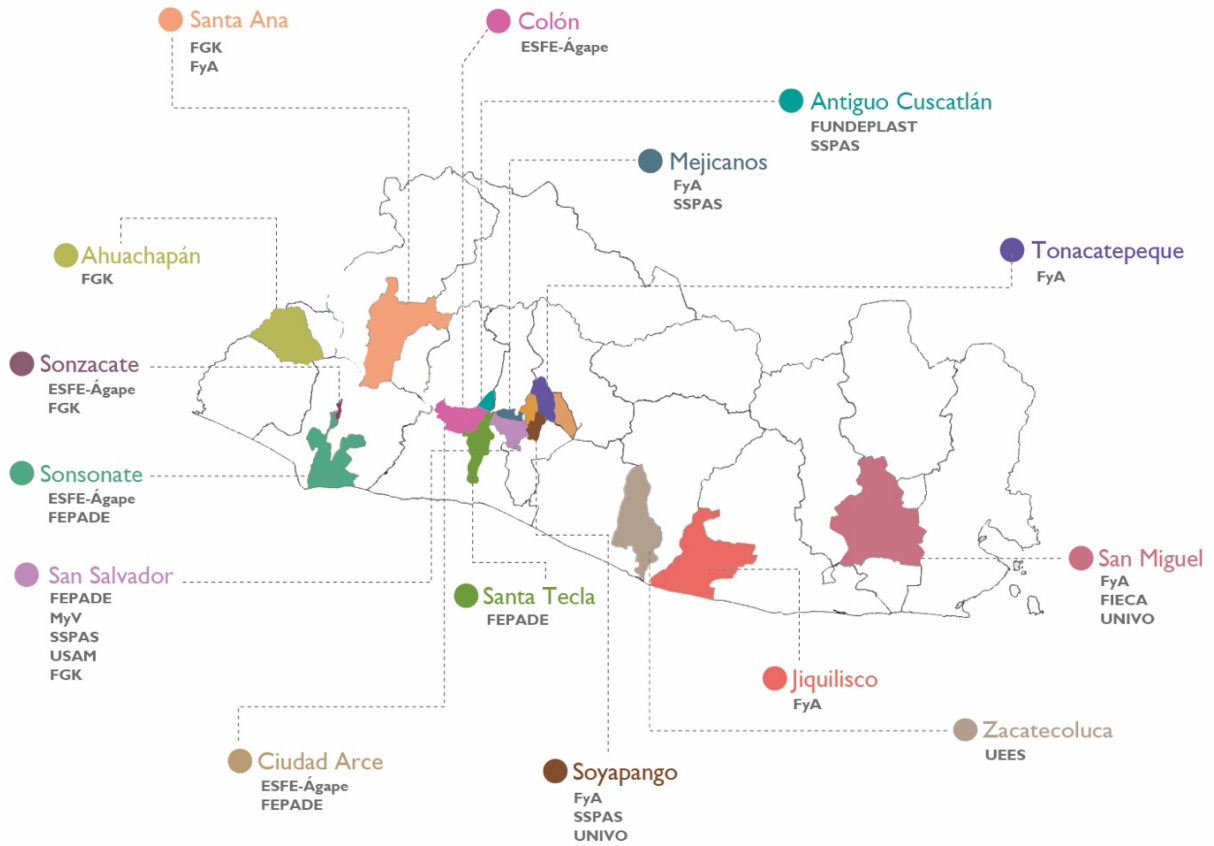
In order to improve the effectiveness of El Salvador's workforce development system, Bridges is devoting great attention to building the capacity of the country's training centers to improve the quality and relevance of workforce development services offered in order to increase employment opportunities for youth.

### Main activities and achievements

- Formalized new alliances between businesses and training centers
- Supported training centers in designing and updating training curricula
- Trained life skills and flexible education instructors
- Strengthened job placement services for youth in the workforce development service providers
- Continued providing capacity building support and technical assistance to training centers

To prepare vulnerable youth with the skills they need to enter and succeed in the workforce, Bridges worked during the reporting period in cooperation with the following grantees, which include training centers, CSOs, and associations, to build the job readiness of youth through technical, life skills, and on-the-job training and to boost their employment through coaching and job placement services:

1. *Capacitación Profesional en Computación (CAPUCOM)*
2. *Asociación Conexión al Desarrollo de El Salvador (CONEXIÓN)*
3. *Escuela Superior Franciscana Especializada/ AGAPE (ESFE-AGAPE)*
4. *Fundación Empresarial para el Desarrollo (FEPADE)*
5. *Fundación Gloria de Kriete (FGK)*
6. *Fundación Innovaciones Educativas Centroamericanas (FIECA)*
7. *Fundación Empresarial para la Acción Social (FUNDEMÁS)*
8. *Fundación de la Industria del Plástico (FUNDEPLAST)*
9. *Asociación Fe y Alegría (FyA)*
10. *Metas y Visión (MyV)*
11. *Asociación para la Organización y Educación Empresarial Femenina de El Salvador (OEF)*
12. *Corporación de la Pasión – Servicio Social Pasionista (SSPAS)*
13. *Universidad de Oriente (UNIVO)*
14. *Universidad Evangélica de El Salvador (UEES)*
15. *Universidad Alberto Masferrer (USAM)*

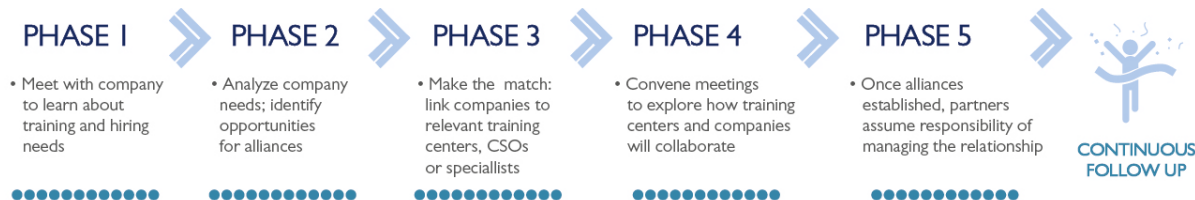


During this reporting period, Bridges grantees training centers implemented the following technical training courses:

 <b>IT Sector</b>	 <b>Tourism Sector</b>	 <b>Manufacturing Sector</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Computer Programming in Java Language Certification (level 1 &amp; 2)</li> <li>• Computer Programming in PHP Language Certification (level 1 &amp; 2)</li> <li>• Customer Service &amp; Sales</li> <li>• Customer Service, Telemarketing &amp; Debt Collection</li> <li>• Design of Web Applications a in C# using ASP.net MVC Certification (level 1 &amp; 2)</li> <li>• Design of Mobile Applications in C# Xamarin Certification (level 1 &amp; 2)</li> <li>• Software Testing Certification</li> <li>• Technical Degree in Software Development</li> <li>• Web Design Certification</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commercial Cashier</li> <li>• Customer Services &amp; Sales</li> <li>• Customer Service in Restaurants</li> <li>• Gastronomy</li> <li>• International Gastronomy</li> <li>• Motorcycle Delivery Driver</li> <li>• Promotional Sales &amp; Display</li> <li>• Sales Room Advisor</li> <li>• Waiter &amp; Bartender</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scientific Injection</li> <li>• Technical Degree in Electrics</li> <li>• Welding Mechanic</li> </ul>

## Meeting the needs of employers

Bridges is collaborating with individual companies and industry associations to equip vulnerable youth with the skills needed to meet the current and future needs of employers in the high-growth economic sectors of manufacturing, IT, tourism, agroindustry, and renewable energy. During the past six months, Bridges has engaged in the following steps to link companies with the best-suited grantee training center to meet their specific training and hiring needs:



After conducting initial outreach to explore opportunities for collaboration with companies and industry associations (discussed under Objective 1), Bridges worked with individual companies to identify how the project and particular training centers can assist them in building the youth workforce equipped with the skills to meet their needs. The following section highlights how Bridges and grantee training centers are responding to the needs of individual companies within each of the project’s prioritized economic sectors:

### Manufacturing Sector

The manufacturing industry is among the sectors prioritized by Bridges and is one of the most dynamic sectors in El Salvador’s economy. According to Bridges’ Labor Market Assessment 2016, manufacturing generates 90% of El Salvador’s exports and accounts for approximately 270,000 jobs. Nonetheless, according to ASI, the demand for roughly 8,000 employees in new manufacturing jobs per year goes largely unmet. The main reason given by business owners is that those applying for these jobs do not have the required skill set and businesses in the manufacturing sector do not have the necessary resources for on-the-job training. To address these challenges, Bridges and its grantee training centers are working to ensure that training curricula equips vulnerable youth with the skills and experience required to meet the needs of manufacturers, with an emphasis on the plastics and textiles industries.

**PLASTICS:** Plastics is one of the most dynamic industries within the country’s manufacturing sector. It has been growing at approximately four percent per year during the last four years, which is almost double El Salvador’s overall rate of economic growth. The plastics industry is now focusing on increasing its exports, specifically those that have grown by over 10 percent a year during the past four years. The plastic industry is part of several industrial value chains as it is a major supplier of goods for the food and beverage, pharmaceutical, textiles and agro-industries. The plastic sector is also a major exporter, shipping over 110 million kilograms of product per year to every continent on the planet, except Antarctica.

While the plastics industry provides above-average wages to ensure its workforce has a specialized level of training, it has faced challenges in filling the following positions: technical operator of flexographic printing machines, technical operator of injection molding machines, technical operator of extrusion blow containers, technical operator of film extrusion machines, plastic quality control technician, technical operator of cutting and plastic seal, and technical operator of plastic recycling machine.



To help the plastics sector address these needs, Bridges signed a \$3 million grant with FUNDEPLAST to provide specialized training to 2,300 vulnerable youth to equip them with the skills for the highly-demanded positions in the industry. FUNDEPLAST initiated the implementation of its grant, which funds training of youth in existing careers as well as new specialized positions (mentioned above) within the plastics industry. The grant will also strengthen the ability of FUNDEPLAST to address the industry's needs by integrating innovative teaching methods and instructional materials into their existing curriculums, such as 3-D printers, basic CNC milling equipment, 3-D Computer-Aided Design techniques, and workflows related to mold making for injection. The grant provides funding for the necessary machinery and laboratory equipment for youth to practice producing and testing plastic products and will support youth-led innovations by making new digital fabrication equipment available to students outside of class hours through a "Makerspace" laboratory – a collaborative workspace in which participants can access machines for learner-driven projects.

While FUNDEPLAST awaits the arrival of specialized plastics machinery and laboratory equipment, it has begun short-term review courses, which build the skills of existing youth employees so they can improve their job performance and increase their chances of promotion or salary increases in the future. FUNDEPLAST will begin the following three courses in October: 1) Technical Operator of Flexographic Printing Machines, 2) Technical Operator of Injection Molding and Blow Molding Machines, and 3) Technical Operator of Film Extrusion Machines and Cut & Seal of Bags.

Equipping vulnerable youth with highly-demanded skills, FUNDEPLAST will facilitate the employment of 1,150 trained youth in jobs with plastics companies. This project will help youth get their start in a growing industry, equip training centers with an innovative training model that is at the forefront of international industry trends, and allow El Salvador's plastic industry to continue expanding its operations, diversifying its products, and reaching new markets.

**TEXTILES & APPAREL:** As part of its new job placement strategy, Bridges is focusing on building strategic alliances with large companies and industry associations that have substantial hiring needs. Textiles make up 45% of Salvadoran exports, and the sector employs 83,000 people, 10% of the country's formal employment. The textile association, CAMTEX, as well as individual textile and apparel companies shared their challenges of high turnover rates, that quality of the available training for sewing machinists has decreased in recent years, and that the existing training curriculum does not respond to their needs.



BRIDGES AND USAID STAFF MEETING WITH THE TEXTILE INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION, CAMTEX, TO EXPLORE COLLABORATION WITH THE TEXTILE SECTOR. USAID BRIDGES TO EMPLOYMENT, DAI GLOBAL LLC. SEPTEMBER 13, 2018.

As a result of these discussions, Bridges and CAMTEX identified different models that could be used to support companies based on their size and level of resources. For large companies, like Hanes and Fruit of the Loom, which have their own training centers and course curricula, Bridges grantee training centers would supply youth to be trained or placed in their vacancies, and/or instructors to teach the courses. Through the other model, training centers would collaborate with smaller companies that do not have the same level of resources to develop tailor-made training curricula and host training courses. The following highlights the advances Bridges has made with Hanes Brands, Inc. and Fruit of the Loom:

## HANES Brands Inc

Hanes Brands is a multinational apparel conglomerate with four companies based in El Salvador that collectively employ 11,000 people. As one of the largest apparel companies in El Salvador, Hanes hires 200 entry-level employees each month but faces challenges with high levels of rotation. The company currently provides training to all new employees, but 45% of new employees either leave or must be retrained to meet required skills levels, resulting in increased costs as well production delays. Through discussions over several months, Bridges and Hanes have explored various ways the project may link the company to grantee training centers to 1) train youth to operate industrial sewing machines, 2) retrain existing employees, and/or 3) provide life skills training for all employees. Bridges technical staff has worked with Hanes and project grantees to better understand Hanes training needs and begin tailoring a sector-wide response that will train vulnerable youth under a demand-driven approach, which will foster an increase in youth employability in the textile industry.



Fruit of the Loom is an international apparel company with a presence in 44 countries. Through four manufacturing plants, the company employs more than 8,000 people in El Salvador. Currently, all new hires must complete a four-week training through the company's training center. Fruit of the Loom expects to grow its workforce by 250-300 people in the next year, and its key hiring needs are for entry-level sewing machinists. The company is specifically looking for employees with knowledge of the operation of flat lock and overlock sewing machines. Fruit of the Loom is interested in outsourcing training on the operation of industrial sewing machines to Bridges grantee training centers, as well as youth selection and the life skills training. Currently, Fruit of the Loom is reviewing and modifying the *Instituto Salvadoreño de Formación Profesional (INSAFORP)* curriculum to meet its needs. It is expected that once the curriculum is approved, Fruit of the Loom will formalize an alliance with those training centers which have strengthened their institutional capacity through the implementation of their project-funded grants and are now equipped to respond to the sector-wide training and hiring needs of the textile and apparel industry.

Alliances between USAID project-funded training centers and textile companies will not only ensure training curricula meet current needs of the textile industry but also facilitate an increased number of internship and employment opportunities for youth in El Salvador with some of the country's largest employers. In addition to the textile and apparel industry, Bridges also worked closely with the shoe

company, ADOC, and the logistics company, *Urbano Express*, to meet their training and hiring needs as detailed below:

ADOC®

Bridges continued to support the shoe manufacturing company, ADOC, in addressing its hiring and training needs and working to improve its policies and practices. With an aging workforce, the company is focusing on training younger workers who will lead the company in the future. ADOC used to run a shoe academy to provide specialized training on shoe sewing and manufacturing. With the closure of the academy several years ago, ADOC has had challenges finding qualified employees with experience working with leather. Through a series of discussions with Bridges, the company shared that it is interested in 1) hiring youth trained in sales and customer service to staff ADOC retail locations nationwide, 2) incorporating Bridges life skills training into the company's internship program, and 3) adapting its existing curricula or designing a new shoe-sewing curriculum to provide industry-specific technical training to youth. Through an alliance with FyA, ADOC hired six youth who completed the Promotional Sales and Display course at the training center to run a three-day tent sale for company employees. In addition, ADOC is collaborating directly with FyA to hire graduates for the busy holiday season. As of September, 22 Bridges youth beneficiaries have passed through ADOC's selection process for holiday sales and customer services positions. Similar to last year, the top performers will be hired on for full-time positions. Bridges staff responded directly to ADOC's interest in incorporating life skills training into the company's internship program, which provides youth in their last year of high school studying accounting or software development at the *Instituto Nacional de San Martin* with the opportunity to complete their on-the-job training at ADOC. Bridges staff built the job readiness of 51 interns, training them in critical life skills, including self-esteem, assertiveness, empathy and critical thinking, building their job readiness. In October, 48 of these youth will receive diplomas for their completion of the life skills training and will participate in ADOC's hiring process for the upcoming holiday season.

URBANO

During this period, Bridges began to explore opportunities for collaboration with *Urbano Express*, a national logistics company. Bridges met with company officials in April and May to 1) learn about the messenger company's training and hiring needs and 2) propose that *Urbano Express* create alliances with FyA and SSPAS training centers to align training curricula with the company's needs. While the organizations pursue a formal alliance, they have agreed to work together on creating training curricula to equip students with the skills needed to become drivers, auxiliary drivers, and motorcycle messengers. Staff of FyA and SSPAS have collaborated with technical experts from *Urbano Express* to begin the curricula design process. During the reporting period, *Urbano Express* invited youth trained by Bridges to apply for positions as warehouse administrators, customer service assistants, and motorcycle messengers. Bridges staff shared CVs of 25 qualified youth trained by the project.

## IT Sector



The IT sector is one of El Salvador and Bridges' priority sectors because of its high growth potential. According to Bridges' Labor Market Assessment 2016, 58% of IT companies expect to expand their workforce within the next 12 months, yet 62% of them have difficulty finding qualified applicants with the necessary technical expertise. Furthermore, according to the IT industry association, CasaTIC, Salvadoran IT companies have an opportunity to expand software exports but lack the specialized workforce to seek additional markets and clients. In response to the sector-wide challenges and help boost the competitiveness of El Salvador's IT sector, Bridges collaborated with CasaTIC to develop new training curricula on six different computer-programming languages (C# MVC, C# Xamarin, PHP, Java, CSHTML CUT and Analysis & Test), which has resulted in 18 industry-recognized computer programming certifications.

Through Bridges grant funding under RFA#002, vulnerable youth have begun computer programming training courses using this new curricula through FGK in the municipalities of Ahuachapán, Santa Ana, Sonzacate, and San Salvador, USAM in San Salvador, and UNIVO in San Miguel and Soyapango. The youth have the opportunity to improve their skills and work remotely on real company projects through Software Development Centers established through the program. In addition, Bridges has worked in coordination with CasaTIC and the three grantees to modify the project's life skills curricula to address the specific skills required by the IT industry.

*“Central American Software Services is allowing us to do an internship in the company where we can apply everything we have learned in the classroom into real software development projects.”*

Oscar Rafael Mendoza Recinos, 20 years old, Sonzacate

In addition to building a skilled youth workforce for the IT sector, Bridges and CasaTIC sought to raise the awareness of IT companies of the key role that youth can play in meeting the current and future needs of El Salvador's growing IT industry. Bridges and CasaTIC brought together high-level representatives of over 45 IT companies to discuss how the project's youth, who have been trained in computer programming and software development, can contribute to and boost the productivity and competitiveness of IT companies. *Grupo GD*, a national company specializing in value-added IT business consulting, shared its experience of creating five paid internships for project-trained youth and urged the meeting participants to invest and believe in the potential and talent of youth in the program.

During the reporting period, Bridges collaborated with Tigo, GBM, and *Grupo GD* to determine how the project can address their specific needs and facilitate internship and employment opportunities for youth beneficiaries trained in computer programming. Highlights of the individual companies are included below:



Bridges has built a strong relationship with the international telecommunications giant, Tigo. El Salvador's largest phone, cable and internet provider, Tigo has a workforce of over 4,000 in El Salvador, but the company has faced difficulties in finding trained workers for positions such as door-to-door salespersons, customer service representatives, and cable installers. Tigo also noted its problems with employee turnover, especially for door-to-door sales in the high-crime municipalities of Soyapango, Mejicanos, and downtown San Salvador. To address these needs, Bridges held a workshop in June to assist Tigo in re-examining the skills and experience needed for each position and updating the job descriptions to focus on competencies rather than academic knowledge. This shift provides more opportunities for youth from high-crime municipalities to meet eligibility requirements for jobs within the company, helping to reduce employee turnover. Tigo's CEO also noted that the company contracts a number of service providers that perform the installations and maintenance, but that the service providers train their employees in different ways. Tigo and its service providers are working together with Bridges and its grantee training centers, FyA, SSPAS, FGK, and USAM, to develop a shared curricula to train maintenance and installation crews. Once the curricula is finalized, Tigo will formalize an alliance with at least one training center to implement the training. During the reporting period, Tigo organized several job fairs and invited vulnerable youth who completed USAID project-funded training in software development, customer service, sales, and life skills to participate, where the youth had the opportunity to meet with Tigo staff, submit their resumes for the recently revised positions in external sales and technical support, and participate in brief interviews. In the coming months, Bridges will continue its partnership with Tigo, providing life skills training to employees, hiring project beneficiaries for the holiday season, implementing a new curriculum to train maintenance and installation crews, and assisting the company in modifying its hiring policies to better support the employment of vulnerable youth and other marginalized groups in the company.



During this reporting period, Bridges began developing a relationship with GBM, an IT company supporting IBM products in Central America and the Dominican Republic. GBM's current staffing need is for junior programmers, who will provide remote support to clients on IBM Solutions software. To fill these positions, GBM is interested in Bridges youth beneficiaries who have been trained in life skills and computer programming, specifically in Java language – the format of IBM Solutions. Bridges will continue discussions with GBM, including the development of tailored curricula to meet their needs.



*Grupo GD*, a Salvadoran company specializing in value-added IT business consulting, is one of CasaTIC's member companies who assisted in the development of the new curricula for computer programming courses implemented under RFA#002. *Grupo GD* created five paid internships for project-trained youth, and five youth trained by USAM are working remotely on company projects from USAM's SDC. *Grupo GD* noted it will be hiring additional project beneficiaries from future courses and urged other IT companies to invest and believe in the potential and talent of youth in the program.

## Tourism Sector



Tourism is a rapidly-growing sector, employing over 85,000 people and representing 5% of the Salvadoran economy. The tourism industry in El Salvador has grown exponentially over the past 23 years, drawing over 2.2 million tourists in 2017 compared to 180,000 in 1994.<sup>2</sup> The industry as a whole has grown an average of 11% per year over the last nine years - significantly higher than the national average of 2% per year. To keep up with the rising demand for services, Bridges has been working with the *Distribuidora Salvadoreña* (DISAL) and Marriott Hotel on the following projects:

Through Bridges coordination, DISAL, a beverage distribution company, is financing courses through *Academia Panamericana de Arte Culinario* (APAC) and FyA training centers for project youth beneficiaries to be trained as waiters and bartenders, partnering with hotels and restaurants across the country to place all trained youth in jobs. During this reporting period, the alliances have resulted in the following training and employment opportunities in El Salvador's growing tourism sector:

- 15 youth completed a course through APAC and are working in jobs in Las Flores Resort, Hotel Comfort Inn, and Grupo Lorena's Hotel Villa San Miguel in the country's eastern zone.
- 50 youth will also be trained through two additional courses through the FyA training center in Santa Ana for jobs in restaurants in the popular tourist areas in the western region of El Salvador.



Through DISAL's alliances with training centers, hotels, and restaurants, it aims to facilitate 150 jobs for vulnerable youth per year, building the capacity of the youth workforce for years to come. This provides an example of how the project's efforts to strengthen alliances between training centers and companies can be sustainable in the future.

<sup>2</sup> El Salvador Ministerio de Turismo, "Informe Estadístico de Turismo Enero – Diciembre 2017 preliminar." Unidad de Inteligencia de Mercado, 31 de marzo 2018.



During this reporting period, Bridges continued its ongoing collaboration with Marriott Hotels to address hiring and training needs of the company's two hotel brands in El Salvador: Courtyard Hotel and Fairfield by Marriott. As in the past, Marriott is interested in tapping into the pool of Bridges-trained youth to fill customer service, waiter, bartender, kitchen assistant, housekeeping, and maintenance positions. Marriott has already hired two Bridges youth beneficiaries. Bridges will work closely with Marriott in the coming months to hold job fairs solely for youth trained by the project for temporary and/or holiday positions. As mentioned earlier, Marriott is considering pursuing the certification process to recognize the inclusive policies and practices of the hotel chain at the regional level.

### Agroindustry Sector



While El Salvador's agroindustry sector has focused historically on coffee and sugarcane production, due to the country's small size, it has been moving from basic farming to processed, value-added, agricultural production. As such, businesses in this sector have demanded a more qualified workforce with knowledge of industrial processes rather than traditional farming techniques. El Salvador offers an ideal location for food production and processing, meeting specific market niches that go beyond traditional agricultural industries. Its proximity to high-consumption markets facilitates the export of these products. During the reporting period, Bridges engaged with *Industrias la Constancia* and Viva Espresso to determine how the project can build the youth workforce with the skills to meet their respective needs. The following section highlights these efforts:



During the reporting period, Bridges began to develop a relationship with *Industrias La Constancia*, the parent company of a variety of beverage companies, including Coca-Cola, Powerade, Agua Cristal, FUZE Tea, Pilsner, and Golden. *Industrias La Constancia* is interested in assistance from Bridges and its grantees to conduct awareness-raising sessions to improve employees' understanding of how to support the needs of vulnerable groups in the workplace. In the coming months, Bridges will collaborate with grantee FUNDEMAS to identify ways for *Industrias La Constancia* to support youth in neighboring communities to improve their job readiness and employability through the company's corporate social responsibility (CSR) program. In addition, Bridges will determine how best it may assist the company, once it learns of the training and hiring needs of *Industrias La Constancia*.



Bridges also began a relationship with Viva Espresso, a gourmet coffee company. To date, the coffee company has hired three youth trained by FyA as waiters and cashiers. Pleased with the performance of these employees, Viva Espresso will continue work with FyA in the coming months to supply trained youth to fill positions in the store's brand new location.

## Renewable Energy Sector



El Salvador imports roughly 30% of the country's fuel requirements for electrical production. Therefore, the Salvadoran government wants to expand the country's natural resource capacity in order to decrease dependence on fossil fuels. In 2007, the Salvadoran government passed a law granting tax breaks to companies that develop renewable energy projects and 10 years of import tax exemption on machines and equipment. Furthermore, the Salvadoran government is interested in energy projects based on biomass, wind, solar, hydroelectric, and geothermal energy generation. These opportunities require a highly-skilled workforce not currently present in the country. Bridges has been working on the following activities with DELSUR and Dymel to meet their needs, which will benefit the renewable energy industry:



During this reporting period, Bridges met numerous times with DELSUR, an electrical distribution company, to discuss how the project can assist the company in filling its hiring needs and in integrating more women into its workforce (currently 18% female, 82% male). DELSUR is in the process of forming alliances with grantee training centers ESFE-AGAPE and FyA to collaborate on a pilot in which the training centers provide training for 20 young women and 10 young men to build the skills necessary to work as Category 4 electricians through the company and its contractors. The partners agreed that two training courses would be held, one through FyA in the municipality of Soyapango and the other through ESFE-AGAPE in the municipality of Santa Tecla. With Bridges assistance, each training center modified its existing curricula to meet DELSUR's needs and presented the project proposal, implementation plan, and timeline to DELSUR. DELSUR will sign individual alliances with ESFE-AGAPE and FyA in October, and the training courses are scheduled to begin in November. If successful, the pilot will be scaled up, making it possible for DELSUR to open its doors to more young women to take part in a male-dominated field, equipped with the skills and support they need to succeed. To ensure that the workplace environment is supportive of female employees, Bridges will also hold two workshops to raise the awareness of the electrical distribution company's contractors on themes of diversity and gender inclusion.



Bridges also met with representatives of Dymel, an electrical installation company, to discuss Dymel's hiring needs and to explore the benefits of alliances with ESFE-AGAPE and FyA training centers. To begin designing curricula to meet the specific needs of the renewable energy sector, Bridges and training center staff interviewed an expert from Dymel in May to learn more about the knowledge and skills needed by employees working in installation and maintenance of photovoltaic equipment and technical support for special electrical equipment. The training centers are awaiting a response from Dymel on the design of new curricula to train youth for jobs with the company in installation and maintenance of photovoltaic equipment and technical support for special electrical equipment. During this reporting period, Dymel hired nine Bridges-trained youth.



Bridges grantee training centers will continue collaboration with individual companies in the coming months to design and develop curricula on the following topics:



- Operation of button attaching and buttonhole sewing machines
- Operation of flat lock sewing machines
- Operation of overlock sewing machines
- Sewing and assembly of shoes
- Phone/cable/internet maintenance and installation
- Delivery drivers, auxiliary drivers, and motorcycle messengers
- Category 4 electricians
- Installation and maintenance of photovoltaic equipment
- Technical support for special electrical equipment in the renewable energy sector

## Building capacity of training centers

The institutional capacity of training centers is key to determining not only the successful implementation of USAID project-funded activities but also the ability of training centers to provide high-quality services to youth over the long term. During the reporting period, Bridges conducted the following activities to build the staff capacity of grantee training centers:

**TRAINING OF LIFE SKILLS INSTRUCTORS:** The findings of Bridges Labor Market Assessment 2016 as well as the Participatory Youth Assessment identified that in addition to technical skills, youth lack basic life skills, such as self-esteem, communications, and critical thinking, required for employment. To address this gap, Bridges continued its ongoing efforts to ensure that all youth beneficiaries are trained in life skills, using a curricula developed by INJUVE, El Salvador's national youth agency, which aligns with the standards of both USAID and the World Health Organization (WHO). During this reporting period, Bridges continued its collaboration with INJUVE to increase the numbers of training center staff certified as life skills instructors. The partners held a series of training-of-trainers (ToT) workshops to teach grantee and partner staff about the project's life skills curriculum and how to incorporate life skills themes into their ongoing courses and youth programs in order to build critical skills and competencies of vulnerable youth. In order to become certified instructors of INJUVE's life skills methodology, each participant was required to complete a practicum, teaching one module of the life skills curriculum.

During the reporting period, 109 people (including technical course instructors, psychologists, and social workers from training centers and youth service providers) from 10 institutions were trained and certified to be life skills instructors. As part of Bridges ongoing efforts to verify the quality of life skills instruction

for vulnerable youth, Bridges staff conducted follow-up visits to training centers to observe instructors' delivery of life skills curriculum, to provide feedback to instructors on how to strengthen trainings, and to verify the use of pre- and post-test assessments.

Bridges also continued efforts to update and expand the INJUVE life skills curricula by adding two new modules on self-control and critical thinking skills to align it with the themes outlined in USAID's *2016 YouthPower Action: Key Soft Skills for Cross-Sectoral Youth Outcomes*. Bridges will share the new modules with USAID, and, once approved, project staff will share the new life skills materials and instructor manuals with grantee training centers and partner organizations, providing training to staff on how to incorporate the new modules into their respective training programs for youth.



GRADUATION CEREMONY FOR 166 PEOPLE CERTIFIED AS FLEXIBLE EDUCATION INSTRUCTORS BY THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION. USAID BRIDGES TO EMPLOYMENT, DAI GLOBAL LLC. AUGUST 10, 2018.

**TRAINING TUTORS TO SUPPORT YOUTH THROUGH FLEXIBLE EDUCATION:** A lack of secondary education poses a key challenge to employment for youth who have dropped out before completing high school. To help youth meet this requirement, Bridges is assisting youth completing their high school education through the Ministry of Education's (MINED's) Educational Strategy of Academic Leveling Tutoring. Through this flexible education modality, which combines classroom instruction and independent study, instructors help students to accelerate their learning so that they are able to complete a grade of high school in six months.

During this reporting period, 166 people from the high-crime municipalities of San Salvador, San Miguel, and Santa Ana received the certification of MINED, after completing the required training and practica to become flexible education instructors. Some of these instructors will work with Bridges grantees FIECA and FyA, while others will become part of other implementers of the MINED program, making it possible for the GOES to assist an increased number of youth across the country in completing their secondary education. Of the 166 certified, 77 are vulnerable youth themselves, who will have the opportunity to give back to their communities through their education, work, and experience. In addition, 25 of these youth are working as flexible education instructors through FyA and FIECA.

**STRENGTHENING LESSON PLANNING:** To support RFA#002 grantees in implementing brand new computer-programming courses designed and accredited by the IT industry association, CasaTIC, Bridges staff held individual workshops at USAM, FGK, and UNIVO to strengthen the skills and abilities of training

center staff in lesson planning. Through these workshops, a total of 42 staff members learned various methodologies to develop engaging and creative lessons for their new computer-programming courses in order to improve the overall quality of instruction provided to students, by fostering their active participation in the lessons. UNIVO participants developed a compendium of nine didactic techniques, which they shared with the other RFA#002 grantees, to improve the quality of instruction and to boost student learning of IT competencies.

## Improving and expanding job placement services for youth

One way Bridges is working to improve the long-term job placement support available to youth is through the creation of career centers, or One-Stop Shops. Housed within training centers, municipal buildings, or CSOs, the One-Stop Shops provide a physical space where youth, teachers, businesses, NGOs, governmental agencies, and municipal governments can visit to both share and receive information about a wide range of topics, including:

- labor market data,
- resume writing,
- interview preparation,
- mentoring and coaching,
- training opportunities,
- internship/apprenticeship opportunities,
- job openings,
- job fairs, and
- support to entrepreneurs.

During this reporting period, Bridges coordinated with the following training center grantees to begin amending their agreements to include specific provisions for the creation or strengthening of One-Stop Shops in the coming months:

**FyA:** FyA will strengthen its Youth Employability Office, which was first established with funds from the Swiss international development organization, Brücke Le Pont. Located in the municipality of Antiguo Cuscatlán, the office will house a multidisciplinary team trained to provide services to vulnerable youth, using a participatory methodology. In addition, FyA will create mobile units to serve youth in additional municipalities, such as Jiquilisco, San Miguel, Soyapango, Mejicanos, and Santa Ana.

**ESFE-AGAPE:** In the next reporting period, ESFE-AGAPE will open a One-Stop Shop at its facilities in Sonzacate. This One-Stop Shop will strengthen the linkages ESFE-AGAPE has with the four partner technical high schools it supports in the municipalities of Ciudad Arce, Colón, Sonzacate, and Sonsonate.

**SSPAS:** SSPAS will open a One-Stop Shop at its training center located in San Salvador. Through the One-Stop Shop, SSPAS will strengthen its alliances with companies and municipal governments to help facilitate increased youth employment in the greater San Salvador area.

Bridges has collaborated with training centers to develop a standardized list of services that One-Stop Shops provide, with each One-Stop Shop providing a unique mix of the following services:

### One-Stop Shop Services

#### Job Search Services

- Share list of resources with tips and advice for jobseekers
- Provide tips on resume writing and preparation
- Share list of available jobs and potential employers based on area of interest
- Provide guidance to youth on how to perform well in an interview
- Conduct psychometric tests
- Hold workshops on critical life skills, including communication, teamwork, critical thinking, and proactivity, among others
- Train youth on how to make a positive impression online and offline and how to use social media to advance their job search
- Assist youth in registering in various employment databases
- Facilitate internship opportunities to provide hands-on experience for youth
- Monitor and follow up with course graduates

#### Career Guidance Services

- Speak with individual youth about their areas of interest and discuss possible career paths
- Share the education and training opportunities available to the youth, including flexible education, to build their skills for employment in a specific field
- Provide information about scholarship opportunities
- Help youth articulate their life goals and create a plan identifying specific steps to reach them

#### Entrepreneur Support Services

- Share information about institutions that provide seed capital and training to assist individuals in starting a business
- Share information about the steps to start a business, including how to register the business
- Connect youth to various networks of entrepreneurs

Bridges intends for the One-Stop Shops to be self-sustaining hubs that serve communities for years into the future. When the three One-Stop Shops officially open their doors in the next reporting period, they will have a standardized name and look, through consistent usage of logos, signage and decoration.

## Technical assistance to workforce development service providers

To provide youth with a quality education, training centers and educational institutions must have the facilities, learning materials, and staff capacity to address the needs of youth and other vulnerable groups, including youth with disabilities, LGBTI youth, and young parents. The Bridges Workforce Development Service Provider Assessment found that training centers have weak organizational management capacity (including unqualified staff, inadequate facilities, lack of information management systems, and lack of knowledge on overall organizational management). While training centers are responsible for the implementation of their grant-funded activities, they have required substantial assistance from Bridges during different stages of program implementation. Project staff have devoted significant time and attention to providing ongoing technical assistance to support grantee-training centers on a range of topics, including the following key themes:

**OPERATIONS & ADMINISTRATION:** Bridges staff provided guidance and support to training centers to strengthen institutional operations and grant administration, including reviewing the grant implementation

plan and timeline of activities, coordinating the start date of classes, and assisting grantees in planning the course schedule. As part of their grant orientation, training center staff learned about key project requirements, including documenting youth attendance, providing stipends to participating youth, and managing the safety and security of youth beneficiaries and project staff.

**HIRING AND TRAINING NEW STAFF:** Ensuring that training centers are fully staffed and that staff have the necessary trainings and qualifications is critical to improving the quality of services offered to youth. Bridges has provided ongoing guidance related to hiring processes to ensure that training centers have multidisciplinary teams in place to provide wrap-around services to youth through job placement managers, education advisors, psychologists, and social workers. Bridges provided ongoing support to grantees to ensure that teaching and administrative staff have the required teaching accreditations, possess relevant technical skills for subject areas, and meet requirements of INSAFORP and/or MINED.

**STUDENT RECRUITMENT AND REGISTRATION:** Bridge staff provided frequent training and follow-up assistance on its specific recruitment, application, registration, and selection processes, including how to present the project to potential beneficiaries, fill out the *Registro Único de Participantes (RUP)*, conduct interviews, administer psychometric tests, and compile an enrollment list. Bridges held technical assistance workshops for grantee staff on how to strengthen their management of recruitment events, including how to increase the number of attendees, how to provide clear instructions to youth about the registration process, and how to improve the quality of interviews with potential youth beneficiaries.

**NEW OR MODIFIED CURRICULA AND LEARNING MATERIALS:** As discussed in the section above highlighting the work with specific companies, Bridges provided ongoing support to training centers to modify training curricula to better align it with the needs of the private sector. Bridges staff assisted grantees in reviewing lessons plans, teaching methodologies, and learning manuals.

**COMMUNICATIONS:** Bridges trained all new grantees on how to comply with USAID branding and marking requirements, outlining rules regarding media coverage of the project and co-branding of events. In addition, the team provided ongoing technical assistance to individual grantees, designing course materials, social media content, materials for recruitment events, and invitations for graduations. In addition, Bridges staff provided tips to job placement managers on how to promote the project and pitch youth beneficiaries to employers. Project staff also emphasized the importance of documenting success stories, collaborating with training centers to record and highlight the stories of exceptional youth beneficiaries.

**FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT:** The majority of grantees required substantial assistance on issues related to the financial management of their grant funding. Bridges staff provided ongoing support and guidance on the procurement of goods and services, documenting the bidding process, calculation of implementation costs, reporting the value of cash and in-kind donations, and the required deliverables for payment.

**DATA MANAGEMENT AND REPORTING:** The majority of grantees required significant assistance in improving their data quality and management. Bridges staff held a number of training sessions and one-on-one meetings to train grantee staff on the use of the project's data management system, conducting multiple follow-up visits to ensure that each training center was correctly using the system. During these visits, staff verified the use of pre- and post-test assessments to measure student learning; reviewed the physical and electronic files of course participants to ensure the information was accurate, consistent and up to date; and, provided guidance on how to correct missing or erroneous data. In addition, Bridges staff stressed the importance of training centers complying with the project requirement to follow up with

students for six months post-graduation to track their employment status and report the names of employers.

**REPORTING:** Bridges shared feedback with each training center on ways to strengthen its technical and financial reporting in the future. In addition, project staff conducted multiple site visits to ensure that training centers were complying with their specific Environmental Mitigation & Monitoring Plans (EMMPs) and providing the required support documentation.

By strengthening the training centers, Bridges aims to improve the functioning of El Salvador's workforce development system and the quality of services provided to vulnerable youth.

## Upcoming activities for October 2018–March 2019

- Conduct workforce development exchange events with experts from Colombia
- Open One-Stop Shops in at least three locations
- Finalize alliances between training centers and companies to train youth the skills needed by the private sector
- Support training centers in designing and updating training curricula
- Continue providing capacity building support and technical assistance to training centers

## OBJECTIVE 3:

### Increased youth engagement to improve workforce readiness

Youth in El Salvador have the potential to play a powerful role in the country's workforce and help drive economic development, if given the chance and the proper training and support. Bridges is working to improve the job readiness and employability of vulnerable youth by assisting them in 1) continuing their formal education, 2) advancing their professional development through technical training, life skills training, and on-the-job training, or 3) becoming entrepreneurs.

#### Main activities and achievements

- Participated in USAID Celebration of Global Youth Service Day
- Developed Psychosocial Assistance Toolkit
- Supported youth in completing high school through flexible education opportunities
- Funded technical, life skills, and on-the-job training for vulnerable youth
- Improved job readiness of youth
- Boosted employment of vulnerable youth
- Provided support to youth entrepreneurs

#### Celebrating youth leadership and innovation

In celebration of Global Youth Service Day, Bridges joined USAID staff, top young social entrepreneurs, USAID implementing partners, other donors, and young leaders to participate in “USAID Youth-led Innovations: The Journey to Self-Reliance” on April 17 in Washington, DC. The event highlighted youth leadership and youth-led innovations around the world. Bridges Youth Workforce Development Program Officer, a young woman herself, highlighted the project's efforts to improve educational and employment opportunities for vulnerable youth in El Salvador. She shared, “El Salvador is one of the most violent countries in the world where most vulnerable youth often have just two choices: joining a gang or migrating. Bridges to Employment is changing that, creating opportunities for youth to make their ‘Salvadoran Dream’ come true. We are using an innovative and integrated approach for at-risk youth to learn in-demand technical skills, as well as critical life skills,” helping them to get their start in high-growth industries.

Through the project's interactive booth, Bridges staff demonstrated to USAID Administrator Mark Green and other participants the types of skills youth will learn through the project, including creating prototypes for the plastics industry through a 3-D printer. Visitors had the opportunity to learn how to create their own circuits. Bridges staff also discussed how the project is building critical life skills of youth, working with the GOES through INJUVE to incorporate positive youth development methodology into the curriculum.

#### Psychosocial assistance

Many youth in El Salvador face a myriad of difficult challenges on a daily basis, including physical or sexual abuse, threats of violence, and/or discrimination based on gender, sexual orientation, disability, physical appearance and/or residence. These challenges often pose barriers to their education and employment. Working closely with CSOs, vulnerable youth, and GOES institutions specializing in psychosocial interventions, Bridges developed a resource toolbox containing a psychosocial assistance protocol and

five reference guides to equip communities and institutions with key information to help link youth to the necessary psychosocial assistance.

The draft reference guides are designed to address the needs of the following vulnerable populations: 1) youth experiencing exclusion from work and/or education, 2) youth affected by crime and social violence, 3) young returned migrants, 4) youth with disabilities, and 5) young victims of discrimination. The reference guides provide a summary of the challenges faced by the vulnerable group, step-by-step instructions for psychosocial interventions, guidelines for care of the specific population, an inventory of resources available to help the individual strengthen his or her resilience, a list of psychosocial care tools, and a directory of services to refer young people to the appropriate assistance. The protocol includes information on comprehensive care and psychological first aid for populations in critical conditions of social vulnerability. At the request of USAID, Bridges crosschecked the protocol to ensure it aligns with the various types of discrimination outlined by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) and will finalize the fifth guide in the next reporting period covering the twelve types of discrimination reported by the EEOC. Once approved, Bridges will disseminate the materials to communities, institutions, and USAID project-funded training centers and provide training on their use.

## Preventing dropout

A lack of secondary education poses a key challenge to employment for youth who have dropped out before completing high school. During this reporting period, Bridges continued its efforts to prevent youth from abandoning their education, working closely with MINED to provide vulnerable youth with opportunities to complete their high school education through flexible education programs, specifically the Educational Strategy of Academic Leveling Tutoring. As discussed earlier, the flexible education modality uses tutors to help students to complete their high school education in a reduced amount of time.

During the reporting period, youth began flexible education programs through FIECA in the municipalities of San Miguel, Jiquilisco, and Usulután and through FyA in Santa Ana, San Miguel, and Jiquilisco. A total of 281 youth participated in training for their first year of high school and 64 for their second year. To meet MINED requirements, the youth must pass the standardized test, *Aprendizaje y Aptitudes para Egresados de Educación Media*, to demonstrate they have acquired the required grade-level knowledge. To ensure that the youth not only have the minimum education but also the competencies required by employers, the youth in the flexible education program also completed life skills training and had the opportunity to participate in job readiness sessions and job fairs.

## Completion of training

To increase youth employment, Bridges is working to ensure that vulnerable youth gain the knowledge and skills they need to get their start in the workplace. Bridges employs a holistic approach to youth workforce development, ensuring that youth are not only trained in relevant technical skills needed for the high-growth sectors of IT, manufacturing, agroindustry, tourism, and renewable energy, but also are equipped with the practical skills they need through life skills training and on-the-job training to thrive in the workplace. Based on the security challenges and the threats many face in traveling long distances, the project's approach focuses on ensuring that training, internships, and employment opportunities are located where youth live, work, or study. In addition, Bridges provides additional assistance to support the specific needs of single mothers and fathers and youth with disabilities to make it possible for them to participate in USAID project-funded training.





300 YOUTH FROM THE HIGH-CRIME MUNICIPALITIES OF SANTA TECLA, CIUDAD ARCE, SONSONATE, AND SAN SALVADOR RECEIVED DIPLOMAS FOR THEIR COMPLETION OF LIFE SKILLS TRAINING BY GRANTEE FEPADE. USAID BRIDGES TO EMPLOYMENT, DAI GLOBAL LLC. JULY 27, 2018.

Using INJUVE's life skill curriculum, the training equips youth with the critical life skills they need, such as self-esteem, critical thinking and communications, to get their start and succeed in El Salvador's workforce. Specific modules develop the emotional skills and resilience of youth, strengthening their ability to keep their own emotions under control to avoid negative reactions to situations of frustration, provocation, opposition or any kind of hostility. Youth noted how the course changed their lives, helping them realize their strengths, build their self-confidence, and solidify their determination to follow their dreams.

*“Thanks to the Bridges life skills course, I was able to strengthen my skills to take my business idea to another level.”*

Marvin Alberto Elías Rodríguez,  
28 years old, Sonsonate

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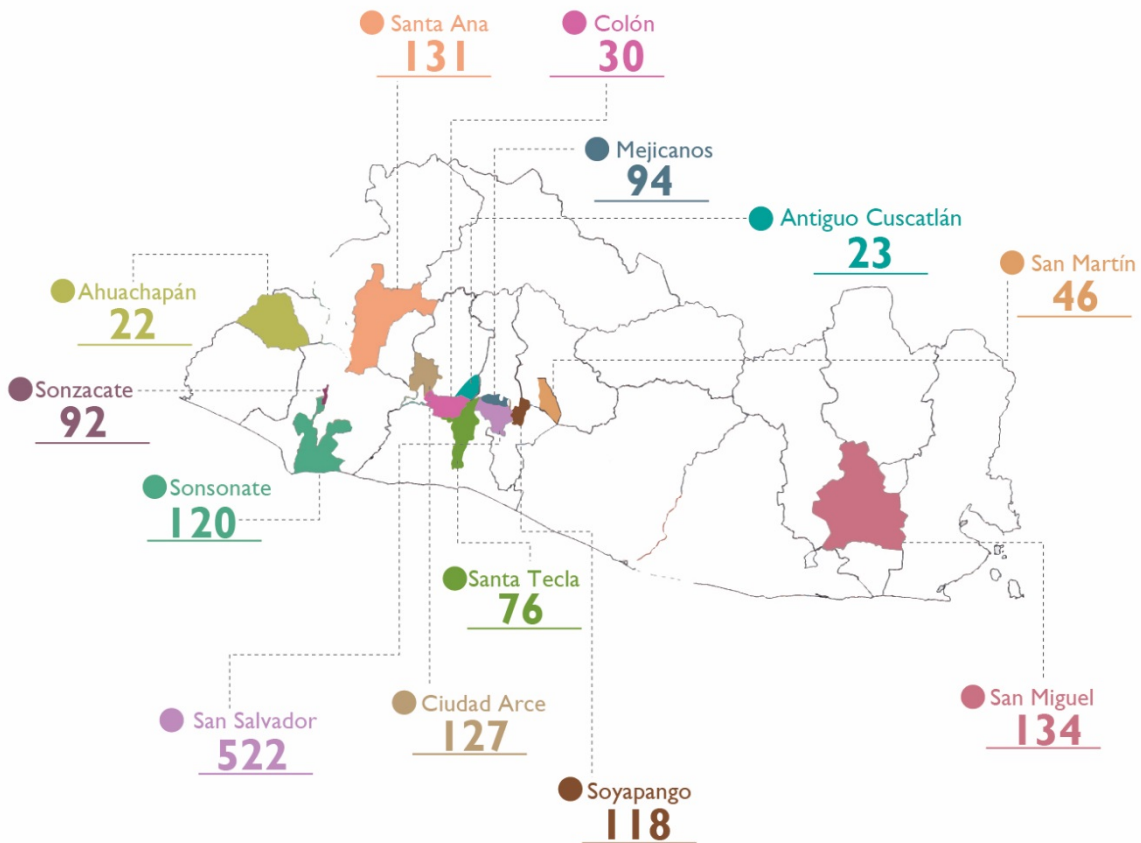
During this reporting period, 1,535 vulnerable youth completed technical and/or life skills training courses through USAID project-funded training centers. See Annex I for the list of specific training courses.

# 1,535



vulnerable youth completed training courses

The map below highlights the number of youth who completed training by municipality:



## Improving job readiness

The results of Bridges' Labor Market Assessment 2016 and the Participatory Youth Assessment identified that a key obstacle to youth employment is that most vulnerable youth lack the knowledge, skills, and experience necessary to successfully navigate the job search and interview processes, both of which have become more complex and challenging over time. Bridges continued its ongoing efforts to build the employability of youth through job readiness sessions while also expanding the range of support services offered to youth through new grants providing individualized coaching and mentoring services.

**JOB READINESS SESSIONS:** During this reporting period, a total of 331 youth improved their employability by participating in job readiness sessions, facilitated by Bridges and ALTHES at the *JuvenTour* conference in San Salvador and as part of a job fair in San Miguel. Participating youth visited different stations, where they:

- 1) received career guidance,
- 2) participated in mock interviews and received feedback from HR professionals on how to improve their performance,
- 3) received personalized tips and assistance on how to strengthen their resumes, and
- 4) disseminated resumes to companies participating in the job fair as well as through online job search platforms.



YOUTH PARTICIPATING IN A BRIDGES JOB READINESS SESSION AT JUVENTOUR IN SAN SALVADOR. USAID BRIDGES TO EMPLOYMENT, DAI GLOBAL LLC. AUGUST 24, 2018.

Bridges joined thousands of youth in August at *JuvenTour*, El Salvador's largest annual gathering of youth. Thousands of young people attended the event, which highlighted the role of youth in the development of the country and the opportunities available to them related to education, employment, entrepreneurship, technology, sports, and art. Through its participation in *JuvenTour*, Bridges staff were able to engage face-to-face with 240 vulnerable youth, sharing information about the project, encouraging them to participate, and helping them to take steps to improve their job readiness and employability.

In San Miguel, 91 youth participated in the job readiness session facilitated by Bridges, ALTHES and partner companies, such as ADOC, Manpower, Global Alimentos, and *Sagastume y Asociados* in September. In addition to helping to provide mentoring services to youth, the participating companies used the opportunity to identify potential candidates for available positions within their respective companies.

**WRAPAROUND SERVICES:** In addition to assisting youth through job readiness sessions, Bridges expanded the array of services it provides to improve the employability of youth through awarding funding through RFA#008 “Providing Wraparound Services for Vulnerable Youth and Facilitating their Incorporation into the Workforce” to new grantees, MyV and UEES. The grant supports the entire continuum of youth workforce services by not only improving the job preparedness of vulnerable youth through wraparound services but also assisting companies in modifying their practices and policies to build a more enabling environment free of bullying or discrimination for youth employees. In June, MyV and UEES began implementation of their grant-funded activities, which will collectively assist a total of 950 youth and 40 companies.

**LABOR ORIENTATION VIDEOS FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES:** As part of its ongoing efforts to improve the job readiness and employability of youth and other vulnerable groups in El Salvador, Bridges coordinated with the MTPS on the creation of labor orientation videos that provide tips and advice for youth jobseekers, with a special focus on youth with disabilities. The videos feature one-minute segments on 1) resume preparation, 2) interview tips, 3) workers’ rights and obligations, 4) job search strategies, and 5) communication skills, and will be accessible to people with disabilities through the use of subtitles and the Salvadorean Sign Language (LESSA). An additional video was created that provides advice to MTPS job placement managers on how to offer inclusive job-oriented services to people with disabilities.

Bridges staff consulted with government agencies, ISRI, *Consejo Nacional Integral a la Persona con Discapacidad* (CONAIPD), as well as CSOs, *Fundación Red de Sobrevivientes y Personas con Discapacidad*, *Academia de Lenguaje de Señas*, and *Fundación Manos Mágicas*, to ensure the content is relevant to, inclusive of, and accessible for people with disabilities.

Developed in conjunction with youth with visual, auditory and physical disabilities, produced by 503.media, a youth-led media company started by a USAID project-funded youth entrepreneur, and featuring youth actors, these videos are a powerful example of the potential of young people to lead their own development. Once approved by USAID, the videos will be shown nationwide in the MTPS *Bolsas de Empleo* employment offices, *Centro de Atención Integral para Migrantes* (CAIM) returned migrant resource centers, through project grantees, and through social media.

## Facilitating youth employment

As there is no one clear path to take to secure employment for youth or anyone else, it is critical for jobseekers to promote themselves through a number of methods, platforms, and events to broaden their opportunities for employment.

**JOB FAIRS:** Bridges hosted and/or participated in a number of job fairs, making it possible for youth to meet face-to-face with employers, learn about job openings, and apply to positions of interest. Bridges collaborated with INJUVE and MTPS to hold job fairs with over 125 companies as part of the *JuvenTour* conference in San Salvador in August and with over 50 companies in San Miguel in September. In addition, over 30 vulnerable youth who completed USAID-funded training in software development, customer service, and life skills participated in a job fair hosted by Tigo, where they had the opportunity to meet with Tigo staff, submit their resumes for job openings, and participate in brief interviews.



YOUTH SPEAKING WITH A REPRESENTATIVE OF PIZZA HUT AT THE JOB FAIR AT JUVENTOUR. USAID BRIDGES TO EMPLOYMENT, DAI GLOBAL LLC. AUGUST 24, 2018.

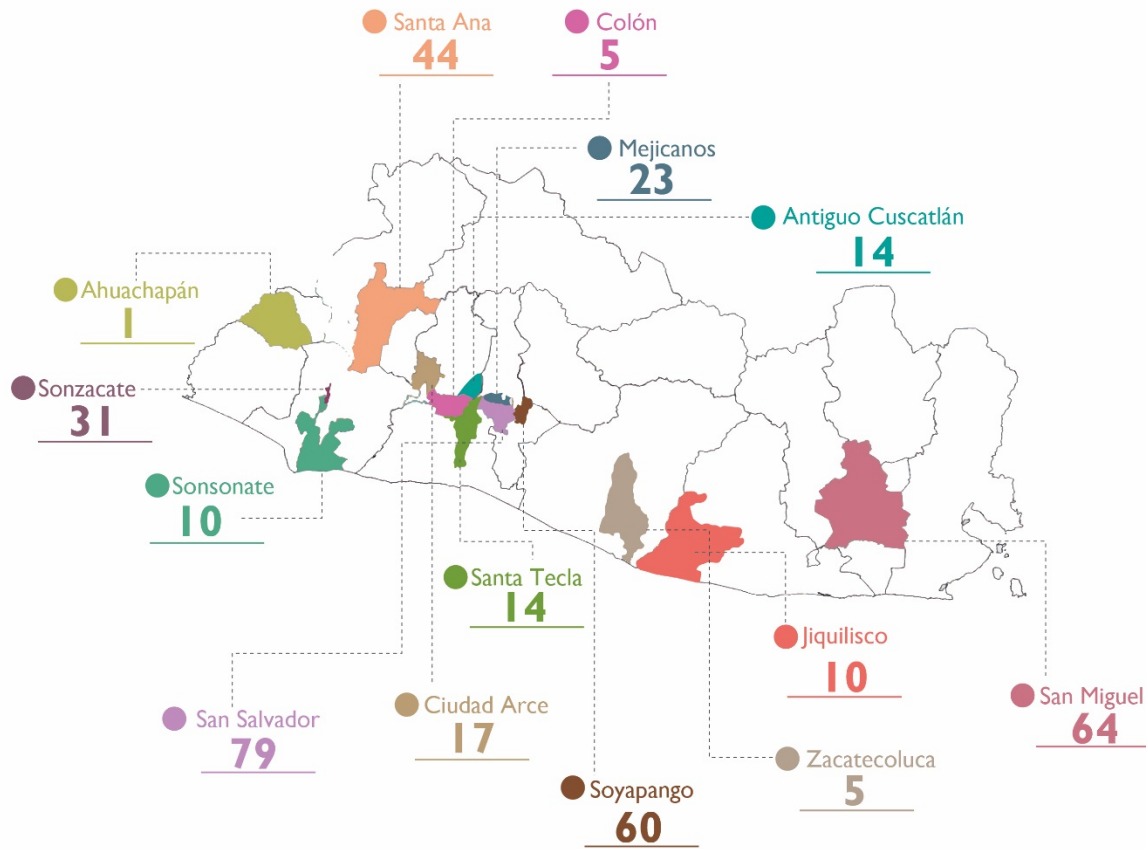
**ALUMNI NETWORK:** During this reporting period, Bridges launched an alumni network to improve youth beneficiaries’ access to information about employment and training opportunities. Given that youth are highly active online, Bridges is utilizing Facebook and WhatsApp to create social networking groups of youth, providing a common space where current and past youth participants can share useful information with their peers regarding job fairs, employment opportunities, scholarships, internships, and entrepreneurship opportunities. Through three different meetings of the Alumni Network, Bridges trained a total of 309 alumni on how to make a positive first impression online and offline and how to use social media mechanisms to advance their job hunt. To improve their chances of employment, alumni registered in a number of different job search platforms. Bridges staff encouraged youth to self-report their employment, and three youth at the meeting at *JuvenTour* did so on the spot. These networks will not only increase youth’s access to information but also make it easier for training centers to track youth following their graduation and provide necessary job placement support.



FIRST MEETING OF BRIDGES ALUMNI NETWORK. USAID BRIDGES TO EMPLOYMENT, DAI GLOBAL LLC. AUGUST 24, 2018.

## Youth employment

The ultimate goal of the project is to boost the employment of vulnerable youth in El Salvador’s workforce, equipping them with the skills they need to meet the demands of employers. Through Bridges assistance, 377 youth gained employment during this reporting period following their successful completion of technical, life skills and on-the-job training.



While the path of each person is unique, the following stories demonstrate what vulnerable youth in El Salvador are able to accomplish, through their own hard work and determination as well as the necessary training and support.

During the reporting period, project-trained youth have been hired by the following employers, covering a broad range of economic sectors:

### AGROINDUSTRY

AVINSA	Centro Nacional de Tecnología Agropecuaria y Forestal	Grupo CALVO	LIVSMART
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### COMMERCE

ADHESIVO	BK de Perla's	Comercial Josué	Contrataciones Estratégicas
Cooperativa Camaronera El Torno DRL	Digitex El Salvador	Diseños Deysi	Dollar City
Empresa Arucha	Gasolinera Texaco Masferrer	Grupo Monge	Inmobiliaria Apopa
Imperio USA	La Camisola	Librería El Triunfo	Librería y Papelería Energy
Omnisport	Papaya's	Súper y Ferretería Félix	Tienda Marina
Ventas de Accesorios de Celulares	Walmart		

**CONSTRUCTION**

ARHEDES	Áridos y Concretos	Duralita de Centroamérica	Proyectos e Inversiones
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**CREATIVE INDUSTRIES**

Cyber de Juegos

**EDUCATION**

Asociación Fe y Alegría	Centro Escolar Natalia López	Centro Escolar Caserío San Felipe	Centro Escolar Colonia El Coco
Complejo Educativo Dr. Michael de Witte	Fundación Innovaciones Educativas Centroamericanas	Fundación Pro Educación de El Salvador	Instituto Nacional La Laguna
Universidad de Oriente	Universidad Salvadoreña Alberto Masferrer		

**ELECTRICITY**

Aluminio de El Salvador	Comisión Ejecutiva Hidroeléctrica del Río Lempa	DYMEL	Electrónica 2001
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**FINANCE**

ATLASA	Fundación Campo		
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**FOOD & BEVERAGES**

Alimentos MamaCon	Choripanes Migueleños	Crepe Lovers	Crio Inversiones
Deliarte	Denny's	DISZASA	Fénix Bar
Grupo DAVSA	Inversiones Mercomun	La Orden del Taco	Lácteos Hernández
Las Catrinas	Los Arriolas	Lucky Dragon	Mister Donut
Open Mind	Panadería 4 Estrellas	Panadería y Pastelería El Rosario	Papa John's
Papalandia Javi's	Pastelería Ban Ban	Pepe y Rony	Pizza El Guanaco
Pollo Campestre	Premium Restaurants of America	Productos Alimenticios Bocadeli	Restaurante La Casona
Restaurante Doña Victoria	Restaurante El Encanto de Teté	Restaurante Hunan	Restaurante La Casa de Fernando
Restaurante La Movida	Restaurante Mar y Tierra	Restaurante Pasquale	Rincón Gourmet
Rincón Típico	Servamatic	Sinergia Corporativa	Sociedad Cortez Valle



SULOGISTICA Empresarial	Tapas y Cañas	The Green House	Típicos Margoth
VE El Salvador	Villa Napoli		

## IT

Applaudo Studios	Asociación Promotora de Centros Educativos	BOLPROS	Central American Software Services
E&G	Grupo GD	Grupo Treming	High Tech
Intelfon	Kadevo Studio	Korinver	The Next Services

## LOGISTICS

Mobu Logistics	RANSA	Transportes Flores Escobar	
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## MANUFACTURING

ADOC	Arnecom	Industrias Magaña	INTRADESA
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## MEDICAL SERVICES

Clínica Integral de Atención al Estrés y el Dolor	Farmacia San Esteban	Laboratorio Clínico de Asís	Laboratorio Clínico Ultralab
Óptica Lentes y Accesorios			

## SERVICES

ACOSEVPROG	Alquileres de Carros GT	Arquitecto Independiente	Clean Air
Cyber Génesis	Decoraciones de Fiesta	Distribuidora Los Héroes	Distribuidora Santa Elena
El Patio de Chele	Emprendedurismo Sonsonate	Estructuras Metálicas Viejito	Gourmet Express
P.C. Servicios	Platinum Discomóvil	Pozos Artesanales	Punto de Taxi Hospital de la Mujer
SANABRIA	Servicios Legales y Notariado	Taller Álvarez	Taller Velásquez
Teleperformance	Valores y Servicios Regionales		

### TEXTILES & APPAREL

AD Inversiones Textiles Opico	Decotex Textil	HanesBrands Inc.	Piel y Calzado
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### TOURISM

Go Travel El Salvador	Hotel Don Renno	Hotel Fairfield Marriott	Hotel Las Flores Resort
Hotel Los Mangos	Hotel Miraflores	Hotel Papaya Lodge Las Flores	Hotel Tropico Inn
Termos del Río	Vista Las Olas Surf Resort		

### OTHER

ADESCO de La Comunidad INSA	Alcaldía de Nahulingo	Alcaldía Municipal de Santa Ana	C.D. Liberal
CIPAC	Expendio de Agua Ardiente	Programa Mundial de Alimentos	

## Supporting youth entrepreneurship

For youth living in communities with few formal jobs, starting their own micro-business provides a potential way for them to earn an income. To be successful, however, youth entrepreneurs need to learn practical skills to design, launch, and manage their new business. As part of its efforts to improve access to employment for youth in El Salvador, Bridges is working to build the skills of youth entrepreneurs. During the reporting period, the project focused on the following activities to support youth in starting and running their own businesses:

**UPDATING ENTREPRENEUR ASSISTANCE MODEL:** Bridges led an effort to review and update the existing model used by GOES agencies, specifically the National Commission for Micro and Small Enterprises (CONAMYPE), to assist entrepreneurs. Bridges collaborated with CONAMYPE and Inbox to expand the approach, content, and instruments used to serve entrepreneurs with the aim of raising the profile of entrepreneurs, strengthening collaboration among entrepreneurs, and promoting their ongoing learning. Bridges conducted an assessment to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the existing model, visiting CONAMYPE's entrepreneur centers and holding interviews and focus groups with entrepreneurs and professionals dedicated to assisting them.

With these results, Bridges and its partners developed a new model to assist entrepreneurs, including a map of the services available to support entrepreneurs during the different stages of starting and running their own business as well as five manuals on Design Thinking, Lean Startup, innovation, and creativity, and other themes. The materials were reviewed and validated during workshops with 32 professionals who serve entrepreneurs and are members of CONAMYPE's Entrepreneurship Advisory Council. The model will be submitted to USAID, and, once approved, the materials will be shared with the Entrepreneurship Advisory Council, with CONAMYPE entrepreneur centers, with universities providing support services to entrepreneurs, and directly with youth entrepreneurs.

**ASSISTING YOUTH ENTREPRENEURS:** Bridges continued to refer youth beneficiaries interested in starting their own business to CONAMYPE's *Juventud Emprende* program. While many of these youth have successfully started their own businesses, and are able to support themselves and their families, others have generated employment for other youth as well. David Rodriguez, who runs 503.media, the company producing the labor orientation videos discussed earlier is an example of a youth entrepreneur, who has been able to expand his business through employing and collaborating with other youth.

## Upcoming activities for October 2018–March 2019

- Conduct Participatory Youth Assessment Follow-Up focused on employment and job placement
- Support youth dropouts in completing high school through flexible education opportunities
- Fund technical, life skills, and on-the-job training for vulnerable youth
- Improve job readiness and employability of vulnerable youth
- Boost employment of vulnerable youth through sectoral job fairs
- Expand Bridges Alumni Network

## B. CROSS-CUTTING ACTIVITIES

The following section highlights cross-cutting activities related to communications and M&E that took place during this reporting period.

### COMMUNICATIONS

#### Main activities and achievements

- Hired the firm that will produce the public communications campaign to improve perceptions of vulnerable youth
- Held events, meetings, technical assistance, and networking sessions with private sector, training centers, and youth
- Increased engagement with youth through social media to highlight project impact and share information about job openings

#### Public communications campaign

One of the key challenges youth face in securing employment is the negative stereotypes employers hold of youth in general, and of vulnerable youth in particular. One way Bridges aims to improve the enabling environment for youth employment is by implementing a communications campaign to change negative attitudes about youth from high-crime areas, raise public awareness about the importance of mobilizing the youth workforce, increase the positive perceptions of technical/vocational trades for youth and their families, and improve businesses' perceptions of youth employees. On September 10, Bridges signed a contract with the marketing and public relations firm, FCB CREA, which will implement the campaign.

At the direction of USAID, the primary purpose of the campaign was shifted from changing public perceptions of vulnerable youth in Salvadoran society to encouraging employers to hire trained youth without discrimination. As such, 65% of the campaign's creative pieces and media buys will be targeted to employers (i.e. the brand marketing work in favor of the youth), and 35% will be targeted toward youth (i.e. the marketing communications work that helps youth know how to secure employment), with an equal distribution between young men and young women. To align with the priorities of the U.S. Embassy in El Salvador, there will be a special focus on returnees with the aim of expanding job opportunities for this population.

#### Key events

During this reporting period, Bridges collaborated with partners to host, sponsor, and/or participate in the following events, which helped strengthen connections between training centers, employers, and youth and raise awareness and visibility of the project:

- **2018 CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND INNOVATION WEEK:** Through co-hosting of the 2018 Corporate Social Responsibility and Innovation Week conference with FUNDEMAS, Bridges reached a large gathering of key stakeholders and the U.S. Ambassador Jean Manes highlighted the importance of the project's efforts in El Salvador's development.



U.S. AMBASSADOR JEAN MANES DELIVERING THE KEYNOTE ADDRESS AT THE CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND INNOVATION WEEK. USAID BRIDGES TO EMPLOYMENT, DAI GLOBAL LLC. JULY 9, 2018.

- **JUVENTOUR:** Bridges sponsored key events at the 2018 *JuvenTour*, El Salvador’s largest youth conference, including a job fair with 125 different companies and job readiness sessions with HR professionals from ALTHES.



A YOUNG MAN WALKS THROUGH THE BRIDGES-SPONSORED JOB FAIR AT JUVENTOUR. USAID BRIDGES TO EMPLOYMENT, DAI GLOBAL LLC. AUGUST 24, 2018.

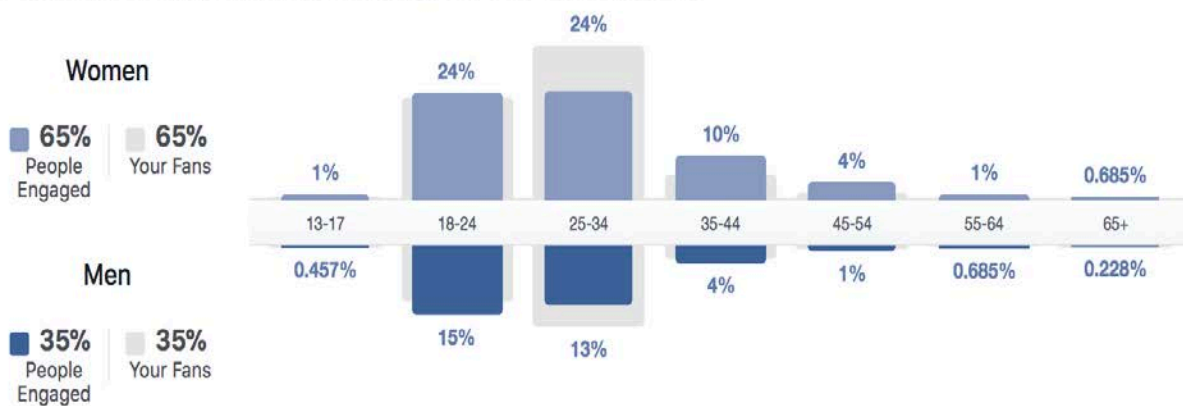


A YOUNG WOMEN RECEIVES FEEDBACK ON HER RESUME FROM AN HR PROFESSIONAL AT THE JOB READINESS SESSION AT JUVENTOUR. USAID BRIDGES TO EMPLOYMENT, DAI GLOBAL LLC. AUGUST 24, 2018.

## Engaging youth through social media

Bridges continued using Facebook as a way to connect directly with youth, sharing the opportunities that are available to them through the project to improve their personal and professional development. Some statistics from the social media engagement are highlighted below:

The number of People Talking About the Page by user age and gender.

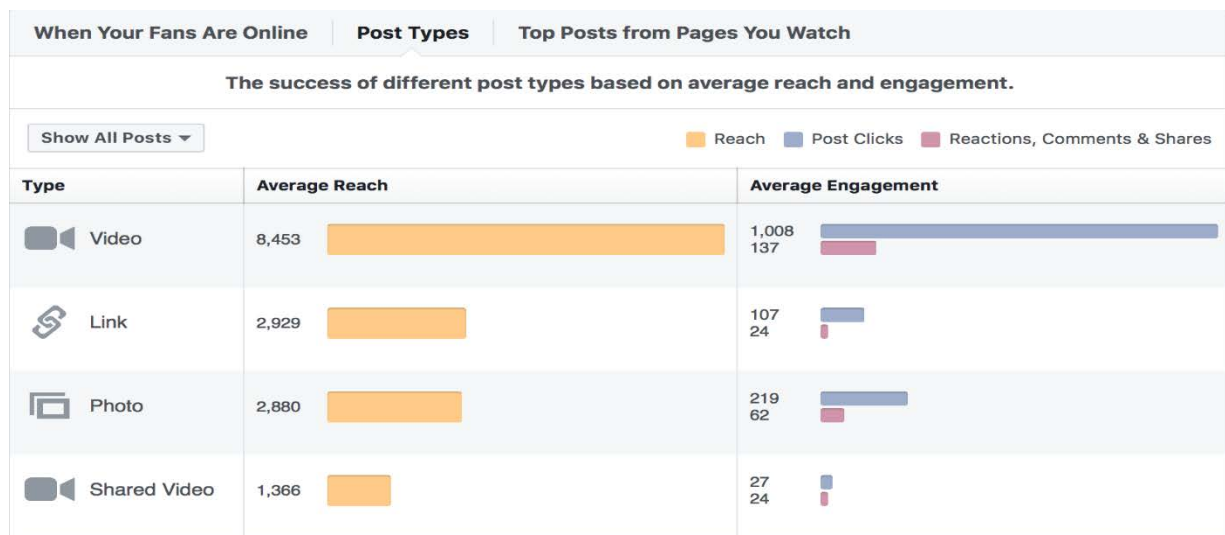


During this period, 3,250 new fans joined the project’s Facebook page, bringing the total to 19,977. In addition, Bridges reached a total of 76,171 fans and non-fans through Facebook, engaging 8,905 who liked, commented, or shared a post. The demographic analysis below shows that 65% of the project’s Facebook fans, followers, reached, and engaged are female and 35% male, with the great majority (76%) between the ages of 18 and 34 years old. This reflects Bridges effectiveness in reaching and engaging youth, who fit the project’s target profile, through Facebook.

Bridges shared a number of powerful videos on Facebook during this period to introduce a new sustainable business model for companies to contract IT services that also benefits vulnerable youth, including:

- **SDCS:** how youth are being trained in computer programming and software development and working on company projects through the project’s SDCs implemented by UNIVO, USAM, and FGK. See video: <https://www.facebook.com/USAIDpuentesempleo/videos/343713266198375/>
- **GRUPO GD:** a testimonial of the experience Grupo GD has had in providing paid internships to five youth trained through SDCs and the role youth can play in boosting a company’s productivity. See video: [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1cIDEoUQ7XOf4BvcSGU6G7O8IkP\\_OIS3P/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1cIDEoUQ7XOf4BvcSGU6G7O8IkP_OIS3P/view)

The graphic below highlights that these videos generated the greatest reach and engagement out of all of the project’s different types of Facebook posts.



## Broadening reach through social media

In addition to the information available on the Bridges Facebook page, messages about the project have been shared by USAID and grantees, amplifying the project’s visibility and youth engagement through the following postings:

USAID/EI Salvador shared the following success story of Bridges beneficiary Christopher Aquino as part of its global “Youth-Led Innovation Campaign”:



Bridges also boosted the project’s visibility by working in collaboration with FUNDEMÁS to promote Corporate Social Responsibility and Innovation Week, conducting a digital campaign through Facebook and Twitter, which ran from June 12-July 12.

- **FACEBOOK:** The campaign reached more than half a million (589,865) people, and 10,847 people interacted with the campaign, “liking” it, sharing it with others, and posting comments or messages. The campaign webpage was visited by 1,900 people. In total, there were 751,225 “impressions,” or times campaign-related content was viewed.
- **TWITTER:** Through the campaign, the Innovation Week Twitter handle increased its reach by 33% in July, reaching more than 93,000 views and gaining 115 new followers. Some of the highest-reaching posts included:





## Video production

One key achievement during this period was the production of six labor orientation videos that provide tips and advice for youth jobseekers and/or job placement managers, with a special focus on youth with disabilities. Working in collaboration with 503.media, a media company founded by a USAID-funded youth entrepreneur, project staff contributed to all phases of the video production, including conducting research, scouting, script development, conducting interviews, and video production and editing.



FILMING OF THE LABOR ORIENTATION VIDEOS USAID BRIDGES TO EMPLOYMENT, DAI GLOBAL LLC. JULY 8, 2018.

## Branding and marking

During this reporting period, Bridges continued its ongoing work to ensure the project and its grantees comply with USAID branding and marking requirements. Bridges staff:

- designed the layout for the Municipal Youth Policies for Soyapango and Ciudad Delgado,
- designed the psychosocial assistance protocol and reference guides, and
- created all communications materials for grantees, including banners, backings, social media publications, course materials, flyers, posters, diplomas, event invitations, among others.

## Upcoming activities for October 2018-March 2019

- Implement public communications campaign to targeted audiences
- Create a landing page through social media to serve as a centralized location to share project materials with all project stakeholders
- Provide technical assistance to grantees and youth beneficiaries on how to use social media as a tool to search for and apply to jobs

## MONITORING & EVALUATION

### Main activities and achievements

- Finalized the development of the project's data management system
- Supported grantees in building M&E capacity
- Established framework to integrate beneficiary data into SETEPLAN database
- Conducted follow-up visits to verify grantees' compliance with EMMPs
- Participated in regional meeting of the Youth Workforce Development Learning Program

### Finalizing data management system

Bridges worked extensively to finalize the development and implementation of a consolidated data management system, which allows project staff and grantee training centers to track youth beneficiaries and evaluate progress towards project indicators. The system makes it possible to share data on youth participants (registration, attendance, test scores) in training courses and to track their employment status after they graduate. During the last six months, Bridges staff worked arduously to train all grantee training center staff on the proper use of the system, conducting ongoing follow-up visits to provide personalized assistance.

### Building grantee M&E capacity

As part of its ongoing institutional strengthening efforts to build the capacity of training centers in El Salvador, Bridges staff continued to provide tailored technical assistance to grantee training centers to improve their data management and reporting. Project staff conducted frequent site visits to grantee training centers to verify physical records and review system data. Bridges also continued to review remotely, on a weekly basis, the data in the system, to ensure the accuracy of training center data as well as to improve system management. Bridges offered multiple trainings to build the capacity of all grantee M&E technicians, reinforcing processes and procedures as well as project requirements to help to ensure that grantees reach their respective indicators.

**TRAINING WORKSHOPS:** In May, Bridges led a workshop with training center coordinators and M&E staff to build their data management and monitoring capacity. Bridges staff highlighted common errors that it finds in the data that the training centers submit to the system and explained how to avoid making these mistakes. The discussion also focused on the importance of verifying information sources and how to track progress toward project indicators and objectives. Bridges held another workshop in August with 13 of its project grantees to strengthen the M&E competencies of 39 staff members, including program coordinators, job placement managers, and M&E specialists. Project staff reviewed the project indicators, the supporting documentation required for each indicator, and the correct use of the shared data management system.

By clarifying processes and empowering training center staff to accurately document their efforts, Bridges is working to promote a culture of monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) within its grantee training centers. These trainings help Bridges ensure proper data collection and management during the life of the grants, as well as clarify the forms, indicators and procedures that will be expected from project grantee during the life of the grant.

**DATA QUALITY ASSESSMENTS:** During this reporting period, Bridges conducted Data Quality Assessments (DQA) with grantee training centers, and USAID staff assessed Bridges. The assessment includes a review of procedures for data collection, analysis, storage, and input to the project’s shared data management system, to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the data and the extent to which the data can be trusted to influence management decisions.

Beginning in June, Bridges staff conducted DQAs with six grantees: SSPAS, FyA, FGK, UNIVO, USAM, and ESFE-AGAPE. In general, the training centers have a good understanding of proper data collection, analysis, storage, and input. Project staff provided guidance to each grantee on how to improve their data quality – such as the speed with which the data is processed, quality control, and the efficient flow of data between different project areas. In response to these recommendations, SSPAS, for example, is making improvements to their policies and procedures regarding data, as well as implementing monthly meetings between M&E and project areas, and streamlining information flows between colleagues. Bridges will follow up with all training centers to verify that improvements are made.

In September, USAID-El Salvador carried out a DQA of Bridges, specifically reviewing data on six key project indicators that are reported to Congress, including:

- Number of individuals with new or better employment following completion of U.S. Government-funded workforce development program.
- Number of vulnerable people benefitting from U.S. Government-supported social services.
- Number of direct partnerships between workforce development service providers and private sector companies, as a result of U.S. Government assistance.
- Number of individuals with improved knowledge or skills following completion of USG-assisted workforce development programs.
- Number of individuals who complete USG-assisted workforce development programs.
- Number of youth trained in social or leadership skills through U.S. Government-assisted programs.

During the DQA, Bridges was able to demonstrate the high quality of the data that the project is collecting, analyzing, and reporting on training and assistance provided to vulnerable youth in El Salvador. Based on the DQA results, Bridges will revise the indicator on “Number of direct partnerships between workforce development service providers and private sector companies, as a result of U.S. Government assistance.”

## Sharing data with GOES

Since the early stages of the project, Bridges has coordinated with the *Secretaría Técnica y de Planificación de la Presidencia* (SETEPLAN) to utilize its youth registration form, RUP. Bridges plans to share its data on youth beneficiaries with SETEPLAN to contribute to SETEPLAN’s evidence base on beneficiaries of a wide variety of programs in the country. During the reporting period, Bridges has worked with SETEPLAN to agree on a framework for sharing this data. In the next year, Bridges will develop the systems necessary to share the data. This integration will generate benefits such as tracking youth beneficiaries long term and ensuring that youth do not receive the same training or assistance twice.

## Environmental mitigation & monitoring

All USAID project-funded grantees are responsible for mitigating the impact their activities have on the environment. During this reporting period, Bridges provided ongoing follow-up and support to the training centers to ensure they comply with their Environmental Mitigation & Monitoring Plans (EMMPS). Bridges visited training centers to review the implementation of and documentation for the EMMPS, making recommendations on the standardization of formats, reports, and logs to simplify reporting processes.

**VERIFYING COMPLIANCE:** During this semester, Bridges staff visited FGK and ESFE-AGAPE in Sonsonate and UNIVO/CONEXION in Soyapango to verify compliance with their respective EMMPs and proper recording of the monitoring and mitigation to ensure there are no environmental impacts.

**RAISING ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS:** In addition, Bridges trained project staff and counterparts on relevant environmental considerations, encouraging the incorporation of cross-cutting environmental themes in all training courses. During the month of April, Bridges Environmental Compliance Specialist gave two workshops to raise environmental awareness of training centers – one with staff of FyA and the other with staff and students from USAM. The goal of these workshops is to promote a culture of environmental stewardship in the project’s youth beneficiaries as well as in the training centers. Following the workshop, students participating in computer-programming courses at USAM started a recycling program at the university.

## Contributing to and benefitting from youth workforce development community of practice

Bridges continued to contribute to and learn from the research and evidence base for youth workforce development programs in developing countries in the following ways:

**PARTICIPATION IN REGIONAL COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE:** Bridges is participating in a regional community of practice, coordinating with five other USAID youth workforce development projects in Central America to share lessons learned and develop a unified approach to data measurement. Facilitated by Mathematica, the group meets annually and is working to standardize project indicators, making it possible to provide a consolidated report to Congress each year on the impact of U.S.-funded interventions in Central America. During the reporting period, Bridges Chief of Party (COP) and Senior M&E Specialist traveled to Tegucigalpa, Honduras to attend the second annual USAID Regional Workforce Development (WFD) Learning Agenda Workshop. The main objectives of the workshop were to foster sharing and learning across missions and implementing partners in Central America, share and discuss findings from the first-annual Central America Youth WFD report, continue building a community of practice around youth WFD, and conduct a deep dive into some key challenges faced by WFD projects.

**PRESENTATIONS AT INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES:** Bridges COP participated two international conferences in September, sharing information about the project’s efforts to build El Salvador’s youth workforce through Positive Youth Development. Through a lightning round talk at the YouthPower Annual Learning Network Meeting in Washington, DC, Bridges COP discussed how Bridges is addressing El Salvador’s complicated challenge of double migration. In addition, Bridges COP participated in the Making Cents International’s “Global Youth Economic Opportunities Summit” on September 25<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup>, where she gave a presentation on how Bridges is integrating life skills into the project’s technical training.

## Upcoming activities for October 2018-March 2019

- Conduct the Employer Perception Survey
- Develop the systems to facilitate sharing of beneficiary data with GOES
- Continue to improve functioning of the project’s data management system and grantees’ use of the system, as well as pursue the system’s integration to and adoption by INSAFORP
- Continue providing technical assistance to grantees to build their M&E capacity
- Conduct follow-up visits to verify grantees following EMMPs

# C. FINANCE, ADMINISTRATION, MANAGEMENT, AND OPERATIONS

## Grants

Bridges ramped up its grant-funded activities during this reporting period, awarding funding to four new grantees: FUNDEPLAST, FUNDEMÁS, MyV, and UEES. With a total of 22 grants, the project has awarded \$13.5 million out of the total \$17.5 million grants budget. While Section A focused on the achievements made through the implementation of grants and the range of assistance provided to support grantees, the following section provides a summary of the status of grant awards:

### **RFA 001 “GRANTS FOR TECHNICAL TRAINING SERVICES AND THE STRENGTHENING OF WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SERVICE PROVIDERS IN FOUR ECONOMIC SECTORS”**

In this reporting period, SSPAS, FyA, and ESFE-AGAPE implemented grant-funded activities, which include building the capacity of training centers, improving the quality of the training services provided, strengthening the capacity of training center staff and operations, and providing technical and life skills training to vulnerable youth. Bridges staff provided ongoing support and guidance on the technical and financial management of their grants and the implementation of their EMMPs.

### **RFA 002 “GRANTS FOR DEVELOPMENT OF SOFTWARE DEVELOPMENT CENTERS (SDCS)”**

RFA#002 grantees, UNIVO, USAM, and FGK implemented projects to build the youth workforce for El Salvador’s growing IT industry. The projects include 1) training of vulnerable youth on software development and on six different computer programming languages, 2) creation and management of fully-equipped SDCs, which serve as practice laboratories where youth and businesses come together to work on company projects, and 3) building partnerships between the training centers and CasaTIC and its members to facilitate internship and employment opportunities for trained youth.

### **RFA 003 “GRANTS FOR TRAINING CENTERS AUTHORIZED BY INSAFORP TO DEVELOP 40 TRAINING COURSES FOR AT-RISK YOUTH”**

During the reporting period, the final RFA#003 grantees, FyA and OEF, completed the execution of their grants. RFA#003 provided funding to training centers to cover services (including expanded curriculum, internship opportunities, job placement, organizational capacity building of training centers, and strengthening of private sector linkages) to build upon INSAFORP’s existing, authorized technical training courses. This marks the closure of RFA#003.

### **RFA 005 “GRANTS FOR LIFE AND SOFT SKILLS TRAININGS FOR AT RISK YOUTH”**

This RFA provided funds to organizations oriented to youth workforce development, workforce development service providers, companies or firms specialized in human talent management, CSOs, and similar entities to provide INJUVE’s soft and life skills curriculum. During this reporting period, FEPADE was awarded grant funding and began and finalized implementation of its grant. Bridges held an introductory training on April 12-13 for eight staff members of FEPADE to provide them with the necessary information to begin implementation of their grant under RFA#005. The training addressed procurement processes, human resources, recruitment, and registration processes, delivery of life skills training, monitoring and evaluation procedures, and reporting requirements. FyA also completed the execution of its life skills program, training a total of 300 vulnerable youth. CONEXION completed

closeout procedures for its grant under RFA#005, in which 117 vulnerable youth completed life skills training.

#### **RFA 006 "GRANTS FOR BLENDED HIGH SCHOOL EDUCATION MODALITY FOR AT-RISK AND VULNERABLE YOUTH"**

During this reporting period, RFA#006 grantees FIECA and FyA initiated courses to assist vulnerable youth in completing their high school education and gaining life skills through MINED's Educational Strategy of Academic Leveling Tutoring. The new flexible education modality, which is a combination of classroom instruction and independent study, uses tutors to accelerate a student's learning, allowing youth participants to complete a grade of high school in six months.

#### **RFA 007 "GRANTS FOR STRENGTHENING PLASTICS INDUSTRY WORKFORCE"**

Bridges signed a grant agreement with FUNDEPLAST on May 29 to provide grant funding under RFA#007 to train the youth workforce for El Salvador's plastics industry. The grant 1) funds specialized training, including recycling, for vulnerable youth in the plastics industry, 2) incorporates life skills training into curriculum, 3) provides machinery and laboratory equipment for youth to practice producing and testing plastic products, 4) integrates new teaching methods and methodologies into curricula, 5) establishes a Makerspace laboratory, and 6) creates and strengthens formal alliances between training centers and plastic sector companies.

Bridges held a grants orientation workshop on May 30 and 31 to train staff of FUNDEPLAST on project requirements and procedures for the implementation of their new grant. On July 25, Bridges staff held a workshop in the municipality of Ilopango to train eleven members of the teaching staff of FUNDEPLAST on the design and implementation of pre- and post-test assessments to measure student learning. While FUNDEPLAST awaits the arrival of specialized plastics machinery and laboratory equipment, it has begun short courses which focus on building the skills of existing youth employees to improve their job performance, in order to obtain better employment in the future.

#### **RFA 008 "GRANTS FOR WRAP-AROUND SERVICES FOR AT-RISK YOUTH AND FACILITATING THEIR INCORPORATION INTO THE WORKFORCE"**

During this reporting period, Bridges signed grant agreements with MyV and UEES. Bridges held an orientation workshop on June 11-13 to train staff of MyV and UEES on project requirements and procedures for the implementation of their grants. The workshop covered stakeholder engagement, registration and selection processes of youth, data management and reporting requirements, communications protocols, grant administration, and financial management and reporting. The RFA#008 grantees have begun implementation of their projects, which provide counseling, job readiness, and support services to facilitate the entry of vulnerable youth into the workforce, and also establish partnerships in order to implement verifiable and practical changes in private sector companies.

#### **UNSOLICITED PROPOSAL**

Bridges signed a grant agreement with FUNDEMÁS on July 11. Through the funding, FUNDEMÁS will 1) assist private sector companies in modifying their policies and practices to improve the inclusion of youth and other vulnerable groups, 2) strengthen the capacity of CSOs and workforce development service providers, and 3) facilitate the employment of vulnerable youth through strengthening and improving access to a job search platform. Bridges conducted an orientation session for the staff of FUNDEMÁS, and the new grantee has begun project implementation.

#### **GRANTS STRATEGY**

During this reporting period, Bridges developed and implemented a new grants strategy to strategically allocate remaining grant funds in order to reach the project goals, targets, and indicators by September

2020 by 1) amending existing grants, 2) revisiting already submitted proposals which are technically sound and feature high job placements, and/or 3) developing new RFAs to train youth with the skill needed by large companies with substantial employment opportunities. Through its focus on job placement, this strategy aims to improve the lives and job prospects of greater numbers of vulnerable youth in El Salvador, reducing their likelihood of migration, while also improving the sustainability of the project's efforts.

## Security management

Bridges continued to monitor the security situation in the country to ensure the safety and security of project staff.

### TRAININGS

During this reporting period, project staff participated in a workshop to learn more about the project's Security Plan and its updated Operational Safety Procedures. To ensure the Bridges team was familiar with the various provisions of the plan, all staff were required to complete quiz about the content and note how they would respond depending on the scenario. In addition, Bridges staff all completed a training on global IT security awareness, which was required by DAI.

### EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

The Bridges Occupational Health and Safety Committee continued to hold monthly meetings. To comply with the *Ley General de Prevención de Riesgos en los Lugares de Trabajo*, the committee met with each staff person to assess risks associated with each role and location within the office. To boost emergency preparedness, safety and emergency guidelines have been posted in each meeting room, which feature evacuation routes as well as photos of each member of the Occupational Health and Safety Committee.

In addition, the Security Manager conducted a simulation of the office's emergency phone tree and held a number of evacuation drills.

### ROUTINE MONITORING

In addition to the policies and trainings discussed above, the Security Manager monitored the security situation on an ongoing basis, taking necessary steps to ensure the safety and security of project staff and beneficiaries. Specific steps are discussed below:

- **Bridges staff and office.** Security measures and protocols have been implemented within the Bridges office in San Salvador to ensure the safety and security of staff. Safety recommendations are issued and immediate action is taken when any risk is identified to project staff and facilities. Through the WhatsApp communication network, all project personnel receive timely security alerts, security recommendations, and notifications of protests and demonstrations. Likewise, staff share information that they receive and consider important to share with the rest of the staff.
- **Field visits.** Security staff accompany project staff on field visits. The security staff carries out preliminary evaluations of the security conditions in the site to be visited and coordinates with the police forces in the area. Based on the level of insecurity in each location, security staff provides project staff with a safety data sheet listing security recommendation, emergency phone numbers, evacuation routes, and even satellite coordinates. In addition, the security team analyzes whether using the USAID magnetic emblem on project vehicles will minimize or elevate the risks to staff traveling to a particular community.

- **Recruitment events.** The security staff also joins project staff at recruitment events and other events with high concentrations of youth. The security team maintains communication with other international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), with the United Nations (UN), and with the local police forces to monitor the event.

In addition to the ongoing coordination with DAI's security team, Bridges Security Manager meets on a monthly basis with security counterparts from the United Nations and other international NGOs to exchange relevant security information to reinforce project security and prevent incidents.





“If you cannot find a great leader, then be one.”

Oscar Rafael Mendoza Recinos,  
youth trained in computer programming

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