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LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN (LAC) READING EVALUATION CONTRACT

Third Annual Central America Workforce Development Report



July 2020

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DISCLAIMER

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

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ACRONYMS

AGAPE	<i>Asociación AGAPE de El Salvador</i> (AGAPE Association in El Salvador)
CAMTEX	<i>Cámara de la Industria Textil, Confección y Zonas Francas de El Salvador</i> (Chamber of the Textile, Clothing and Free Trade Zone of El Salvador)
CAPUCOM	<i>Centro de Capacitación en Computación</i> (Computing Training Center)
CAYAC	Community At-Risk Youth Advisory Committees
CBT	Cognitive Behavioral Therapy
CETAA	Center for Agroforestry and Environmental Education
COMPAS-T	Comprehensive Positive Assessment Tool
CONAMYPE	<i>Comisión Nacional de la Micro y Pequeña Empresa</i> (National Commission of Micro and Small Enterprises)
CRM	Customer relationship management
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DAI	DAI Global, LLC
EF	<i>Empleando Futuros</i> (Employing Futures)
EFS	Education for Success
FADCANIC	<i>Fundación para la Autonomía y el Desarrollo de la Costa Atlántica de Nicaragua</i>
FPI	Full Program Intervention
FUDI	Fundación para el Desarrollo Integral (Comprehensive Development Foundation)
FUNDAP	<i>Fundación para el Desarrollo Integral de Programas Socioeconómicos</i> (Foundation for Comprehensive Development of Socio-Economic Programs)
FUNIDES	<i>Fundación Nicaragüense para el Desarrollo Económico y Social</i> (Foundation for the Economic and Social Development of Nicaragua)
FY	Fiscal Year
HDI	Human Development Index
ICA	Institutional Capacity Assessment
ICT	Information Communications Technology
IGER	<i>Instituto Guatemalteco de Educación Radiofónica</i> (Guatemalan Institute of Radio Education)
IIDP	Individual Integrated Development Plan

ILA	Institutional Landscape Analysis
INFOP	<i>Instituto Nacional de Formación Profesional</i> (National Vocational Training Institute)
INJUVE	<i>Instituto Nacional de la Juventud</i> (National Institute for Youth)
INSAFORP	<i>Instituto Salvadoreño de Formación Profesional</i> (Salvadoran Vocational Training Institute)
KII	Key Informant Interviews
LAC	Latin America and the Caribbean
LGBTI	Lesbian Gay Bisexual Trans Intersex
LMA	Labor Market Assessment
LOP	Life of Project
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MEL	Monitoring, evaluation, and learning
MINEDUC	<i>Ministerio de Educación</i> (Ministry of Education in Guatemala)
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
OCA	Organizational Capacity Assessment
OCAT	Organizational Capacity Assessment Tool
OEF	<i>Asociación para la Organización y Educación Empresarial Femenina de El Salvador</i> (Association for the Organization and Education of Women in Business of El Salvador)
RACCN	<i>Región Autónoma de la Costa Caribe Norte</i> (North Caribbean Coast Autonomous Region)
RACCS	<i>Región Autónoma de la Costa Caribe Sur</i> (South Caribbean Coast Autonomous Region)
RENET	<i>Red Nicaragüense para la Educación Técnica</i> (National Network of Technical Education)
SBAC	Study of Barriers to Access and Completion
SEL	Social and emotional learning
SENA	<i>Servicio Nacional de Aprendizaje</i> (National Learning Service)
TVET	Technical Vocational Education and Training
TVET CAT	Technical Vocational Education and Training Capacity Assessment Tool
TVET-SAY	Technical Vocational Education Strengthening for At-Risk Youth

Acronyms

U.S.	United States
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USG	United States Government
VIP-RA	Violence Involved Persons Risk Assessment
WFD	Workforce Development
YAC	Youth Advisory Council
YSEI	Youth Self-Employment Initiative

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A. Purpose and background of the Workforce Development Learning Agenda

Several countries in Central America continue to face major challenges to their development, including weak political and judicial systems, high levels of poverty, high unemployment rates, widespread criminal activity, and high levels of emigration. In order to support Central America in its development, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has made workforce development (WFD) programming an important part of its comprehensive approach. WFD projects can support youth in finding new or better employment opportunities. However, the evidence suggests that the most promising technical and vocational skills training programs are combined with soft skills and on-the-job training components (Bertrand et al. 2017).

Under the USAID-funded Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) Reads Evaluation contract, the USAID LAC education team asked Mathematica to produce a series of annual reports from 2018 to 2020 tracking progress of WFD investments in Central America to assist in reporting to stakeholders¹. These reports will facilitate USAID's reporting to Congress on the achievements of six large, multi-component USAID-funded WFD projects² expected to account for a total of \$181 million in investments in the sub-region. The six projects are occurring in the Northern Triangle countries (Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador) as well as Nicaragua (Table ES.1).³

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

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

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

* Operations in Honduras and Guatemala will close in 2020 but operations in Jamaica and the Dominican Republic will close in 2022.

¹ See Bagby et al. (2018) for information on the first annual report and Bagby et al. (2019) for information on the second annual report.

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

³ One project, Advance Regional is working with universities in three countries—Guatemala, Honduras, and Jamaica. In FY2020, the project plans to expand into the Dominican Republic. Because the Jamaican context is so different from that of Central America, we do not discuss it in this report.

This annual report is the third and last in the series; it provides information on the six WFD projects and their progress against their fiscal year (FY) 2019 as well as cumulative targets of training at-risk youth so they can obtain employment, but it does not capture projects' final results. However, we provide our best assessment of projects' likelihood of reaching their life of project (LOP) targets based on achievements to date. It is important to note that we are reporting on data shared before the COVID-19 pandemic, and we are not able to comment on how the pandemic has affected the likelihood of projects reaching their LOP targets. Given that this is the last report in the series, it will also focus on several lessons learned and projects' actions for sustainability.

B. Focus areas and methodology

These annual reports cover selected project achievements in four focus areas important to WFD programming: (1) beneficiary participation, (2) beneficiary employment or investing in employability, (3) engagement with the private sector and other actors in the labor market, and (4) WFD system strengthening. In essence, the six WFD projects are supply-side interventions that aim to improve youth employability and youth employment, though all do some work with the demand side (largely the private sector) to inform training and facilitate job placement. Each focus area incorporates several common indicators that all six projects use to report to USAID on project success. The selection of these focus areas and indicators for reporting projects' progress was based on discussions with USAID and project implementers.

To understand the progress and achievements of each project for this report, we compiled quantitative and qualitative information from various sources within each of the six projects. We used key project documents and data, including monitoring and evaluation plans, work plans, and annual reports. We also collected indicator data directly from projects to facilitate reporting across all projects on common indicators. We interacted directly with project staff to ensure the data collected and reported were correct and that we appropriately understood project activities.

C. Findings

Throughout their implementation, the six WFD projects together expect to enroll more than 63,218 beneficiaries in integrated skills training programs that focus on helping youth develop technical/vocational and soft skills. The beneficiaries' enhanced skills should lead to improved employment. The overall target is for 25 percent of the beneficiaries who complete training to gain new or better employment. See Table ES.2 for a summary of enrollment, completion and employment findings through the end of FY2019.

Table ES.2. Cumulative accomplishments of 6 WFD projects through the end of FY2019

Project	Cumulative enrollment in training	Cumulative completion of training	Cumulative employment	Cumulative positive outcome (employment or further education)
Bridges Guatemala	21,210	13,303	571	N/A
EF Honduras	6,729	2,998	997	1,098
Advance Regional	2,220	116	2**	8**
Bridges El Salvador	10,786	8,185	2,939	N/A
TVET-SAY Nicaragua	2,172	1,365	390	767
EFS Nicaragua*	2,585 (TVET)	2,250 (TVET)	411 (TVET)	942 (TVET)
	2,447 (basic education)	2,652 (basic education)		

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

* EFS Nicaragua has been working with beneficiaries since 2010, but we focus on its work during its last expansion phase (FY2017 to FY2020). For basic education beneficiaries, the cumulative completion number is higher than the cumulative enrollment number since it includes more youth who enrolled prior to FY2017 but did not complete their training until FY2017 or later.

** The cumulative employment and cumulative positive outcome for Advance is based on the project's employment survey of 16 out of 116 graduates, given that only 16 beneficiaries were within three to six months of training completion and thus eligible to participate in the survey.

N/A = not applicable.

From FY2017 to FY2019, projects' enrollment increased fivefold—from 4,819 enrollees in FY2017 to 25,440 in FY2019. In FY2019, the six projects succeeded in enrolling slightly more than the total targeted number of FY2019 beneficiaries, and they reached 48,149, 76 percent of their combined LOP enrollment target of 63,218.

With 20,044 youth who completed training (completers), the six projects reached 97 percent of their overall FY2019 target. This number of completers represents 59 percent of the projects' LOP completion target of 52,067. Additionally, 30,869 beneficiaries who enrolled in FY2019 (or a previous year) completed their training program, for a 64 percent cumulative completion rate. Bridges Guatemala, with 10,461 *Diplomado* completers, surpassed its FY2019 target by 39 percent and achieved a completion rate of 80 percent, which was much higher than its FY2018 rate. TVET-SAY Nicaragua exceeded its FY2019 target of 750 completers by 12 percent and achieved a completion rate of 94 percent. EFS Nicaragua had 1,500 basic education and 722 TVET program graduates—100 percent and 92 percent of its FY2019 targets, respectively. Bridges El Salvador reached 65 percent of its FY2019 target, with 4,048 completers, and achieved a completion rate of 76 percent, which is similar to the rates achieved in previous years. EF Honduras had 2,360 completers in FY2019 (72 percent of its target). The project achieved a higher completion rate than in previous years, with 66 percent of FY2019 enrolled youth completing training in the same year. In FY2019, 116 Advance Regional beneficiaries (21 percent of its target) completed their two- to three-year technical career programs. Advance Regional fell short of its

target because it made some inaccurate assumptions on enrollment⁴ when setting original targets and because some beneficiaries took longer than expected to graduate.

In FY2019, labor-bridging activities were instrumental in helping youth beneficiaries find employment. Projects with one year or less left in implementation ramped up labor-bridging activities—in addition to their training programs—in an effort to increase the number of youth employed. Labor-bridging support included (1) career services for youth beneficiaries, with the aim of providing youth with improved tools and skills for employability; (2) activities that aimed to connect employers to youth through job fairs and promotional events; and (3) short internships (two to six months) or longer on-the-job training opportunities (up to one year), primarily available through project alliances with the private sector.

In FY2019, the six projects reported a fourfold increase in FY2018 employment numbers, with 3,816 employed youth—75 percent of their target employment numbers for FY2019. From project start to the end of FY2019, the six WFD projects overall have facilitated the employment of 5,310 youth, an employment rate of 19 percent. Four projects—Bridges El Salvador, EF Honduras, TVET-SAY Nicaragua, and EFS Nicaragua—have achieved a cumulative employment rate⁵ of 32 percent for their beneficiaries. TVET-SAY Nicaragua has connected 100 percent of scholarship beneficiaries who have completed training to employment. Bridges El Salvador and EF Honduras reported cumulative employment rates of 36 and 33 percent, respectively. EFS Nicaragua has reported that 14 percent of TVET beneficiary completers were employed. In their second full year of working with beneficiaries, Bridges Guatemala and Advance Regional have achieved cumulative employment rates of 5 and 4 percent, respectively. Bridges Guatemala currently expects to employ 4,000 youth (16 percent of *Diplomado* completers) by the end of FY2020 and Advance Regional expects to employ 586 youth (50 percent of technical career track completers) by FY2022.

Enrollment in WFD training programs, completion, and subsequent employment differ by sex and age group. Across projects, 6 percent more females enrolled in WFD trainings through the end of FY2019 and 4 percent more females completed trainings. However, despite high levels of females enrolling and completing, 6 percent more males found employment. By age group, cumulative program enrollment and completion were highest for youth in the 20 to 24 age range for all projects except Bridges Guatemala and Advance Regional. Employment rates were also highest in the 20 to 24 age range for all projects, except Advance Regional. Across projects, the age group of 20 to 24 included 30 percent of enrollees, 30 percent of completers, and 48 percent of employed youth.

Projects continue to successfully engage with the local labor market in various ways. To tailor training interventions to the demands of the local labor market, all projects conducted local labor market assessments or similar studies during their first years of implementation. After conducting these studies, projects developed various tools and strategies to engage with the private sector, including trainings around engaging

⁴ Advance Regional originally intended to enroll a second cohort of students for 2018 and 2019, but in Guatemala it was only possible to enroll one cohort of students per academic year according to universities' enrollment policies and academic calendars.

⁵ In this report, we estimate cumulative employment rates as the cumulative number of completers reported as employed over the cumulative number of completers. The employment rate calculations exclude TVET-SAY Nicaragua partial scholarship recipients and EFS Nicaragua basic education beneficiaries because the projects do not track these beneficiaries after they complete training. The employment rate for Advance Regional is likely an underestimate of the overall employment rate since only 16 out of the 116 completers were within three to six months of training completion and thus eligible to participate in Advance's employment survey. In FY2020, Advance expects to have updated information on the employment status of the other 100 completers who were not surveyed in FY2019.

the private sector, customized communication, and meetings. These efforts often enabled them to forge alliances that led to modifications of private sector firms' internal hiring policies and practices, and to creating and updating curricula for individual TVET centers. In some cases, projects also used these partnerships to facilitate employment for youth through internships, apprenticeships, or other on-the-job training opportunities. Because of the alignment between these WFD projects and private sector interests, projects were also able to secure additional funding from the private sector for project activities. In FY2019, projects obtained just under \$3 million in cash and in-kind contributions to support project objectives.

The six projects covered in this report are also working to strengthen the WFD system by building the capacity of local WFD service providers or improving the enabling environment for WFD. In building local organizations' capacity, projects contribute to the sustainability of their interventions by leaving behind institutions with better-trained teachers, market-oriented curricula, and in some cases, updated infrastructure. Thus far, projects have updated or created 126 curricula, trained more than 3,300 staff and faculty, and strengthened 67 local organizations. Projects have also been strengthening national institutions that help elevate the role of WFD in improving youth outcomes. Projects have created sustainable networks with the goal of advocating for TVET programs, improved the laws around internships, and strengthened institutions that prioritize TVET trainings and two-and-three year technical higher education programs nationally.

D. Summary of lessons learned

The six projects on which this report focuses are in progress, and all six will end between 2020 and 2022. Given that this is the third and last annual report in the series, below is a summary of lessons learned based on projects' experiences during implementation:

- Many of these projects fell short of their targets in the their first year for the outcomes (enrollment, completion, and employment) but this is unsurprising given the time and effort needed to (1) recruit and vet youth who are most likely to benefit from and complete the training;⁶ (2) understand private sector employment needs and build alliances for internships, job training programs, or job placement; and (3) identify and train local service providers to offer high quality trainings that respond to the private sector needs. When future WFD projects set targets, they should take into consideration that projects may not see large numbers of youth trained within the first year of implementation.
- The modality and structure of the trainings should be tailored to the specific circumstances in each country. Most projects that started with very structured programs ended up creating more flexible versions of the programs to minimize dropout and maximize completion. Projects should also consider at project outset using blended modalities for training programs (such as in person, online, radio, and/or on-the job) to maximize participation. Flexible programs can help meet the needs of larger groups of beneficiaries and also help respond to political, economic, or natural threats (which all of these projects confronted). All projects provided youth with both technical/vocational and soft skills trainings and employers viewed this combination favorably, which reflects private sector needs.

⁶ For TVET-SAY Nicaragua and EFS Nicaragua projects, the recruitment process intentionally focuses on the needs of vulnerable youth, and dropout potential at the recruitment stage is not always a consideration.

- Projects reported that a focus on labor bridging facilitated much of the increase in employment numbers seen in these projects in FY2019. WFD projects should begin offering labor-bridging services when training programs start. In fact, WFD projects should consider working with vulnerable youth who need training and labor-bridging support, as well as those who have prior training but need labor-bridging support only. This shift in strategy could yield higher employment for youth.
- Collaborating with the private sector throughout the life of the project is pivotal for the success of WFD projects that have employment as a key outcome measure. In the first years, partnerships with the private sector help WFD projects tailor the trainings to what employers are seeking. Once training begins, strong collaborations with the private sector can help provide youth with job training or internship opportunities. These opportunities provide youth with valuable skills that help them find employment. Finally, when private sector employers trust WFD projects, they are more likely to recruit graduates from the WFD programs, thereby leading to increases in employment numbers.
- The activities needed to strengthen the WFD system are time- and resource-intensive. These activities are key to future WFD projects and align with USAID's Journey to Self-Reliance. Unfortunately, due to the timing of this report, we were not able to assess the long-term effects of WFD system-strengthening efforts. It might be important for USAID to consider evaluating these efforts after the projects end, to see if project activities are sustainable. This type of evaluation might provide USAID with information on which strengthening activities future WFD projects should prioritize.

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Background and purpose of the Third Annual Central American WFD report

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

1. U.S. Central America Strategy

U.S. assistance to Central America and its associated funding levels have shifted based on the strategic interests and objectives of each administration. The U.S. Strategy for Central America was developed in 2014, funded by Congress in fiscal year (FY) 2016, and then updated by the current Administration in 2017. The Central America Strategy includes three objectives: (1) promoting prosperity and regional integration, (2) strengthening governance, and (3) improving security. The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) is currently implementing projects under each of these objectives. Such projects include workforce development (WFD) programs, behavior-change counseling for youth most at risk of engaging in violent behavior, and capacity building for civil society organizations (CSOs).

The current Administration has continued to support the Central America Strategy and its three main lines of action (prosperity, governance, and security), though the priority has shifted from improving governance and economic growth to improving the rule of law and security. The updated U.S. Government-wide Central America Strategy intends to foster an environment that decreases illegal immigration by combating rampant crime and violence, addressing corruption and impunity, disrupting the activities of transnational criminal organizations, and providing greater economic opportunity. Most of the funds appropriated by Congress have been for the Northern Triangle countries of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras. However, in March 2019, at the direction of President Trump, the State Department and USAID suspended most aid for the Northern Triangle. The administration withheld some of the assistance that had been appropriated by Congress in FY2017 for the region, reprogrammed almost all of the assistance that had been appropriated in FY2018, and as of November 2019, had not released most of the assistance appropriated for FY2019 (Meyer 2019). As a result of funding uncertainties, some projects in the region—including several of those profiled in this report—have made changes to program activities during FY2019. In October of 2019, the administration resumed targeted U.S. foreign assistance funding for El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras.

2. LAC Reads WFD reports

Under the USAID-funded Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) Reads Evaluation contract, the USAID LAC education team asked Mathematica to produce a series of annual reports from 2018 to 2020 tracking the progress of WFD investments in Central America to assist USAID in reporting on progress toward achieving the objectives of the Central America Strategy. During this timeframe, six USAID-funded WFD projects are being implemented in Central America. These projects represent an important portion of the United States Government’s (USG’s) investments under the Central America Strategy. These annual reports cover selected project achievements in four focus areas: (1) beneficiary participation, (2) beneficiary employment or investing in employability, (3) engagement with the private sector and other actors in the labor market, and (4) WFD system strengthening. Each of the focus areas includes key indicators that the projects report, which enable us to measure progress against targets. By documenting achievements, challenges, and lessons learned, these annual reports may inform the design and implementation of future WFD programs in LAC, in which national governments, USAID, and other donors have made a variety of investments.

This annual report is the third and last in the series⁷; it provides information on the six WFD projects and their progress against their targets of training at-risk youth⁸ so they can obtain employment. This last report is not able to capture projects’ final results, given that some of them continue to operate beyond the period covered here. However, we provide our best assessment of projects’ likelihood of reaching their life of project targets based on achievements to date. Given that this is the last report in the series, it focuses on several lessons learned and projects’ actions for sustainability.

B. Overview of Central American WFD projects

USAID selected six WFD projects across four Central American countries—Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, and Nicaragua—for inclusion in these reports.⁹ The projects aim to increase workforce readiness and income-generating opportunities for at-risk or disadvantaged youth ages 10 to 30 in project countries by offering a variety of WFD and education-related services, as well as by working with local private and public sectors to facilitate the employment of trained youth. The projects also aim to contribute to violence and crime prevention by providing at-risk youth with soft skills (also known as life or noncognitive skills) training. The total amount budgeted for all six projects is \$181 million, with individual project budgets ranging from \$9 million to \$65 million. Table 1.1 summarizes key information for the six WFD projects in this report.

⁷ See Bagby et al. (2018) for information on the first annual report and Bagby et al. (2019) for information on the second annual report.

⁸ For the purpose of readability, when we discuss the projects as a group, we refer to their targeted beneficiaries as “at-risk youth.” However, Bridges Guatemala and Advance Regional use the term “disadvantaged youth” and Bridges El Salvador uses the term “vulnerable youth.”

⁹ One project, Advance, is working with universities in three countries—Guatemala, Honduras, and Jamaica. In FY2020, the project expanded into the Dominican Republic. Because the Jamaican context is so different from that of Central America, we do not discuss it in this report.

Table I.1. Summary of six WFD projects in this report

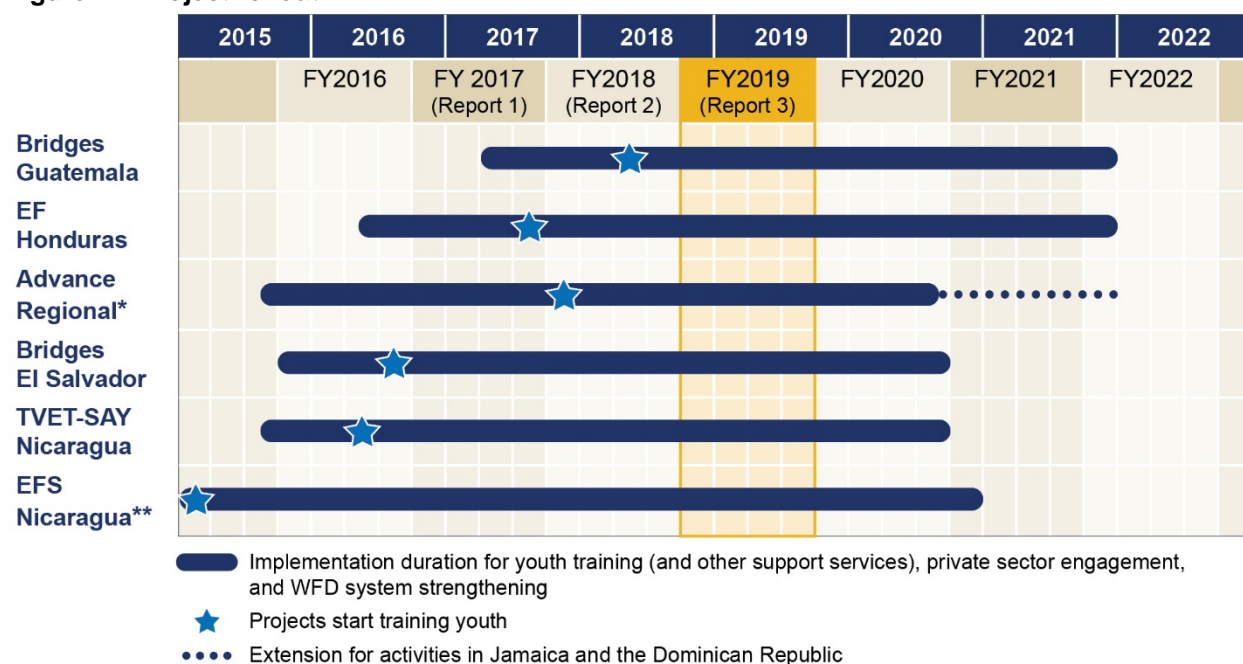
Project name	Country	Implementing partner	Duration (calendar year)	Targeted youth age range (years)
<i>Proyecto Puentes/Bridges</i> (Bridges Guatemala)	Guatemala	World Vision	2017–2022	15–24
<i>Empleando Futuros/Employing Futures</i> (EF Honduras)	Honduras	Banyan Global	2016–2021	16–30
<i>Avanza/Advance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

Notes: Compiled from Banyan Global 2019b, Creative Associates 2019b, DAI 2019a, DAI 2019b, FHI 360 2019, FADCANIC 2019, World Vision 2019.

* Operations in Honduras and Guatemala will close in 2020 but operations in Jamaica and the Dominican Republic will close in 2022.

Figure I.1 depicts the timeframe over which the projects rolled out their interventions. Although the projects are at different stages of implementation, four will begin their final year of implementation in FY2020 and two will continue to implement planned services through 2021 and 2022.

Figure I.1. Project rollout



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

* Operations in Honduras and Guatemala will close in September and December 2020 respectively but operations in Jamaica and the Dominican Republic will close in 2022.

** EFS Nicaragua began project activities in 2010 and then had two additional rollout phases into other municipalities in 2012 and 2017. In this report, we focus on project activities during its last rollout phase.

The six WFD projects target specific geographic areas with high levels of at-risk youth or WFD institutions serving at-risk youth in the countries in which they operate. These areas are characterized by high levels of poverty, outward migration, and crime, and they are a priority for USAID. Appendix C provides detailed information on the context in which the projects are working. The target areas for Bridges Guatemala and EFS Nicaragua are primarily rural, whereas EF Honduras and Bridges El Salvador work primarily in urban communities. Technical Vocational Education and Training Strengthening for At-Risk Youth (TVET-SAY) Nicaragua covers both rural and urban areas. Advance Regional's focus areas overlap with the Bridges Guatemala and EF Honduras target municipalities and cover six additional municipalities in Honduras. The projects are also targeting at-risk youth who have certain demographic characteristics that are often also found in people who have a higher propensity to migrate. Appendix D provides detailed information on the geographic coverage, targeted beneficiaries, and project activities.

The WFD projects included in this report are working in complex and unstable situations caused by both events within their countries and changes in the Central America Strategy. For three of the projects profiled in this report, FY2019 was marked by geopolitical disruptions that affected project implementation. In April and May of 2019, Honduras experienced civil unrest that resulted in the cancelation of several planned activities. Nicaragua also continued to see periods of significant sociopolitical instability in 2019, resulting in delays of program operations as well as a contraction in the private sector. Notably, FADCANIC, which is implementing EFS in Nicaragua, has been publicly accused by the national government of using USAID funds to finance protests. To address this, the USAID Nicaragua and EFS Nicaragua team asked staff to keep a low profile and limit attendance of

activities and events to less than 60 people. Uncertainty about ongoing U.S. support, as well as a suspension of FY2018 funding, to Northern Triangle countries has also affected WFD projects in those countries. As a result, Bridges El Salvador, Bridges Guatemala, and EF Honduras cancelled some training programs and significantly accelerated labor-bridging activities to demonstrate that these projects were yielding results of interest to the U.S. government. The long-term impact of the uncertainty these Northern Triangle countries experienced is still unclear, but Bridges El Salvador, EF Honduras, and Bridges Guatemala made notable changes to their activities, work plans, and targets. In response, these four projects have placed more emphasis on working with returning migrants and/or high-migration communities, to better frame program activities within U.S. priorities. For example, Bridges El Salvador and EF Honduras adopted new migration-related indicators and provided returned migrants with alternatives to migration such as training and employment opportunities, with the help of the private sector and government. EF Honduras also added municipalities that specifically targeted high-migration communities.

C. Outline of report

This report has five chapters. In Chapter II, we discuss the WFD focus areas covered in the report. In Chapter III, we report the findings for the first two WFD focus areas related to youth training: (1) beneficiary enrollment in and completion of training and (2) employment or investment in employability. In Chapter IV, we discuss project activities related to understanding and engaging with the labor market. In Chapter V, we discuss project activities related to WFD system strengthening. Finally, in Chapter VI, we provide a brief summary of findings and lessons learned. The appendices of this report contain additional detail on the projects' activities and the context in which they work.

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II. REPORT FOCUS AREAS

The six WFD projects in this report were designed based on existing evidence and experience in building the capacity of youth and supporting their ability to obtain employment (see Appendix A for more details). As the projects have been implemented, they also have made modifications to their activities to improve the delivery of services and achievement of project goals.

This report concentrates on four focus areas important to WFD programming. These areas are (1) beneficiary participation, (2) beneficiary employment or investment in employability, (3) engagement with the private sector and other actors in the labor market, and (4) WFD system strengthening. Each focus area incorporates several common indicators that the WFD projects use to report on project success to USAID and that can be combined across projects to assess high-level achievement of goals and objectives. These indicators were carefully selected after an extensive review of all six projects' standard and custom indicators and have been used in all three of the annual reports. We based the selection of these focus areas, and the indicators on which to report progress, on discussions with USAID and project implementers (Table II.1). To understand the progress and achievements of each project for this report, we compiled quantitative and qualitative information from key project documents and data, including monitoring and evaluation plans, work plans, and annual reports. We also collected indicator data, using a template we developed to facilitate reporting on the focus areas. We interacted directly with project staff to ensure the data collected in the tool were correct and that we appropriately understood project activities and reports.¹⁰

¹⁰ We reviewed the indicator data the projects shared for inconsistencies; however, it was beyond our scope of work to further assess the quality of the data and information shared. USAID conducts its own data quality assessments of indicator data included in project quarterly and annual reports it receives.

Table II.1. WFD report focus area, description, and indicators

Focus area description	WFD indicators
Youth training and support services: Beneficiary participation	
Number of persons enrolled in and completing WFD programs or activities	Number of beneficiaries enrolled in the WFD program and/or activity
Number of persons enrolled in and completing WFD programs or activities	Number or percentage of beneficiaries completing the WFD program and/or activity*
Youth training and support services: Beneficiary employment or investment in employability	
Number of persons employed, newly employed, or better employed (including better self-employment) as a result of participation in USG-funded workforce development programs	Number or percentage of beneficiaries completing a WFD program who go on to new or better employment**
Number of persons in formal and/or nonformal education (may include secondary or postsecondary schooling or training programs)	Number or percentage of beneficiaries who complete, and who then progress to formal or nonformal education programs
Engagement with private sector	
Alignment of WFD programs to private sector labor needs/changes in private sector practices to recruit and employ youth; partnerships formed and money leveraged to support WFD programs	Understanding private sector needs—labor market assessments
Alignment of WFD programs to private sector labor needs/changes in private sector practices to money leveraged to support WFD programs	Contributions received (from private sector, public sector, or other donors)
WFD system strengthening	
Improvement in the organizational capacity to deliver WFD services to at-risk youth in the community	Enabling environment strengthened
Improvement in the organizational capacity to deliver WFD services to at-risk youth in the community	Organizational capacity assessment (OCA)
Improvement in the organizational capacity to deliver WFD services to at-risk youth in the community	Number of new/revised WFD programs
Improvement in the organizational capacity to deliver WFD services to at-risk youth in the community	Number of WFD service providers strengthened

Notes: Developed by the authors based on source materials from World Vision, Banyan Global, FHI 360, DAI, Creative Associates, and FADCANIC.* This indicator maps to the standard employment indicator EG.6-1: “Number of individuals with new or better employment following completion of USG-assisted workforce development programs”.

* This indicator maps to the standard completion indicator EG.6-3: “Number of individuals who complete USG-assisted workforce development programs” except for in the case of Bridges Guatemala. To capture Bridges Guatemala’s completion accomplishments related to the *Diplomado* (core skills curriculum), we report completion based on the project’s custom indicator “number of youth completing the core skill curriculum.”

III. YOUTH TRAINING AND SUPPORT SERVICES

Throughout their implementation, the six WFD projects combined expect to enroll 63,218 youth (30,484 females and 32,734 males) in integrated skills training programs focused on helping them develop technical/vocational and soft skills, based on revised targets as of the end of FY2019. In this chapter, we describe project efforts to recruit, enroll, train, and graduate beneficiaries. We also discuss advancements in outcomes of interest for WFD programs: employment and continuing education, which we refer to as investing in future employment. Finally, we disaggregate enrollment, completion, and employment findings by sex and age groups.

In this chapter, we present FY2019 accomplishments of the six WFD projects and compare their numbers to project targets for FY2019. To understand the likelihood of projects reaching their final project targets, we also compare cumulative project accomplishments against life-of-project (LOP) targets. However, it is important to note that we are reporting on data shared before the COVID-19 pandemic, and we are not able to comment on how the pandemic has affected the likelihood of projects reaching their life of project targets. EFS Nicaragua has targets for the at-risk youth ages 10 to 24 that it supports with primary and secondary school scholarships (basic education beneficiaries) and targets for the at-risk youth ages 16 to 29 that it supports with scholarships for technical/vocational training (TVET beneficiaries). TVET-SAY Nicaragua has separate targets for beneficiaries who, based on their economic situation, receive full scholarship and those who receive partial scholarships for technical/vocational training. Given that many projects are ending in FY2020,¹¹ we would expect to see those projects nearing their LOP targets. It is important to note that some projects have revised their LOP targets several times throughout implementation in response to contextual factors or because of extensions in time and funding. In Table III.1, we present each project's original (as of project start date) and latest (as of the end of FY2019) LOP targets for enrollment, completion, and employment. In FY2019, EF Honduras, and Bridges El Salvador adjusted their targets as a result of President Trump's directive to suspend most of the aid intended for the Northern Triangle and the subsequent reduction in activities.¹² EF Honduras is also planning to decrease its completion and employment LOP targets in FY2020. Advance Regional adjusted its targets to exclude enrollment for a second cohort in Guatemala for 2018 and 2019, since in Guatemala it was only possible to enroll one cohort of students per academic year according to universities' enrollment policies and academic calendars. TVET-SAY Nicaragua updated its LOP targets in response to the continued socio-political crisis facing the country.

¹¹ Bridges El Salvador will end on September 30, 2020. The expected end date for EFS Nicaragua is December 30, 2020. EF Honduras' end date is June 2021; however, due to limitations in funding, it currently has funding through November 2020. Bridges Guatemala will end on April 9, 2022. Advance Regional's extension was approved and operations in Honduras and Guatemala will close in September and December 2020 respectively but operations in Jamaica and the Dominican Republic will close in 2022. TVET-SAY Nicaragua has received a no-cost extension through September 2020.

¹² While Bridges Guatemala did not adjust its enrollment, completion, and employment targets, it did adjust some of its other project targets in response to the cuts in funding to the Northern Triangle.

Table III.1. Original and revised life-of-project targets

Indicator	Bridges Guatemala	EF Honduras	Advance Regional	Bridges El Salvador*	TVET-SAY Nicaragua	EFS Nicaragua**
Enrollment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Original: 30,000 • Latest revision: No revisions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Original: 12,000 • Latest revision: 11,250 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Original: 3,726 • Latest revision: 3,021 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Original: 20,000 • Latest revision: 11,000 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Original: 2,100 • Latest revision: 1,724 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Original: 3,355 (TVET); 2,868 (basic education) • Latest revision: No revision
Completion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Original: 25,000 • Latest revision: No revisions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Original: 7,500 • Latest revision: Revision expected in FY2020 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Original: 1,981 • Latest revision: 1,430 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Original*: 20,000 • Latest revision: 10,000 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Original: 1,380 • Latest revision: 1,250 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Original: 3,109(TVET); 3,778 (basic education) • Latest revision: No revision
Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Original: 4,000 • Latest revision: No revisions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Original: 3,750 • Latest revision: Revision expected in FY2020 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Original: 723 • Latest revision: 586 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Original: 5,000 • Latest revision: 4,000 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Original: 265 • Latest revision: 270 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Original: 560 (TVET) • Latest revision: No revision
Calculated employment rate***	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Original: 16% • Latest revision: No revisions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Original: 50% • Latest revision: Revision expected in FY2020 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Original: 36% • Latest revision: 41% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Original: 25% • Latest revision: 40% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Original: 19%**** • Latest revision: 22%**** 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Original: 18% (TVET) • Latest revision: No revision

Notes: Source materials from World Vision, Banyan Global, FHI 360, DAI, Creative Associates, and FADCANIC. Original LOP targets are as of each project's start date. The revised targets are as of the end of FY2019. TVET-SAY Nicaragua does not track employment outcomes for partial scholarship recipients. EFS Nicaragua does not track employment outcomes for basic education beneficiaries since they are not expected to find employment.

* Bridges El Salvador did not originally have a formal enrollment indicator and target. The original target of 20,000 is an internal target the project shared with the report authors. The project added a formal enrollment indicator in its second year of implementation with an LOP target of 16,000 enrolled youth.

** EFS Nicaragua began project activities in 2010 and then had two additional rollout phases into other municipalities in 2012 and 2017. In this report, we focus on project activities during its last rollout phase, so the reported LOP target is the sum of the FY2017 to FY2020 targets.

*** In this report, we estimate employment rates as the number of employed completers over the number of completers.

**** The calculated employment rates for TVET-SAY Nicaragua are likely higher than they appear in the table because the project does not measure employment outcomes for partial scholarship recipients.

A. Recruitment and enrollment in WFD training programs

Before enrolling beneficiaries in training activities, projects invest a significant amount of time recruiting and screening youth who are at risk and eligible to participate. Recruitment and eligibility screening activities are key to attracting youth who demonstrate an interest in being trained and who are likely to complete the program and find employment. The recruitment process for four projects—EF Honduras, Bridges El Salvador, TVET-SAY Nicaragua, and EFS Nicaragua—includes administering assessments to determine eligibility and/or the appropriate WFD service for each beneficiary. EF Honduras, TVET-SAY Nicaragua, and EFS Nicaragua all administer risk-level assessment tools to better identify the risk level of

youth and the level of support they need. EF Honduras and Bridges El Salvador also focus on identifying youth who are “learning ready” to ensure commitment to completing the training requirement. For example, Bridges El Salvador’s four-hour eligibility screening process involves completing a registration form and either a psychometric test or a personal interview. This fairly lengthy intake process helps identify youth who are committed to participating in WFD training, thereby improving the likelihood that participants will complete the extensive training. Advance Regional does not count students enrolled in any degree program in partner colleges and universities, but rather only the students enrolled in the two- and three year degree programs that Advance helped to design or strengthen. This means that prior to counting enrolled students, Advance underwent the lengthy process of partnering with universities, designing or re-designing curricula for two- to three-year degree programs, getting new curricula approved, and piloting curricula, and did not start counting enrollment until FY2018.

In FY2019, due to concern about the continuous flow of migrants from the Northern Triangle to the United States, Bridges El Salvador and EF Honduras placed more emphasis on recruitment of returned migrants. For example, Bridges El Salvador developed and shared an information card featuring details about various education and training opportunities and created a public communications campaign targeted to returned migrants. EF Honduras started working with the Ministry of External Relations to provide training opportunities for returned migrants.

Successful recruitment strategies can help projects ensure they are enrolling sufficient youth to meet their completion or employment targets. The LOP enrollment targets vary across the six projects (Table III.2), ranging from 1,724 enrollees for TVET-SAY to 30,000 enrollees in Bridges Guatemala’s core skills curriculum, *Diplomado Emprender con Éxito*. These differences are due to the project scope and intended coverage, as well as the type and duration of WFD services offered. The projects provide technical/vocational and soft skills training for widely varied durations and intensity due to different levels of funding and differences in design.

Table III.2. WFD training duration and life-of-project enrollment targets

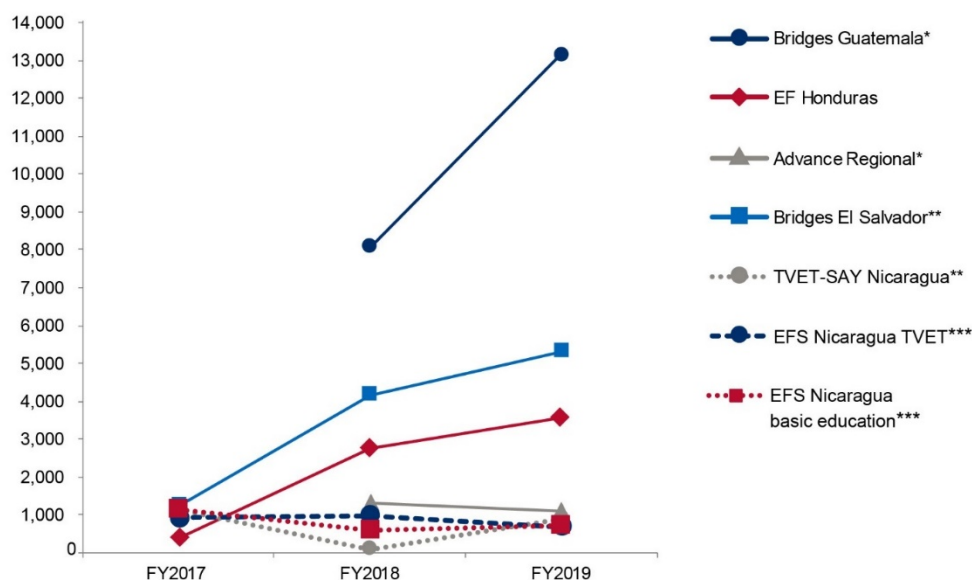
	Bridges Guatemala	EF Honduras	Advance Regional	Bridges El Salvador	TVET-SAY Nicaragua	EFS Nicaragua
Duration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The <i>Diplomado Emprender con Éxito</i> is 112 hours and can be completed in 4 to 6 months 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimum 237 hours. Specialized courses can range from 240 to 500 hours depending on the occupation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Full-time technical degree programs last 2 to 3 years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most last 8 to 12 weeks Specialty courses last 6 to 9 months 40 hours per week 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technical careers last 2.5 to 3 years Short-term trainings last 2 weeks to 4 months 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technical/vocational training lasts 1.5 to 3 years Short term-trainings last 6 weeks
LOP enrollment target (number of beneficiaries)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 30,000 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 11,250 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3,021 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 11,000 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 550 (scholarship recipients) 1,174 (partial scholarship recipients) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3,030 (TVET) 2,555 (basic education)

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

From FY2017 to FY2019, projects’ enrollment increased fivefold, from 4,819 enrollees in FY2017 to 25,440 in FY2019. In Figure III.1, a separate trend line for each project connects their FY2017, FY2018, and FY2019 enrollment numbers. Bridges Guatemala experienced the most dramatic increase in

enrollment, rising from 8,061 enrollees in FY2018 to 13,149 in FY2019. EF Honduras and Bridges El Salvador also manifested continuous increases in enrollment from FY2017 to FY2019. In FY2018 and FY2019, Advance Regional enrolled a similar number of new youth in its two- to three-year technical degree programs. The two Nicaragua projects had lower numbers overall in FY2018 than in previous years due to the continuing socio-political crisis. TVET-SAY recovered in FY2019 with higher numbers than in previous years for scholarship recipients, but the crisis continued to affect EFS's FY2019 enrollment numbers.

Figure III.1. FY2017 to FY2019 enrollment numbers achieved, by project



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

* Bridges Guatemala and Advance Regional did not start enrolling youth until FY2018.

** Bridges El Salvador and TVET-SAY Nicaragua also enrolled beneficiaries in FY2016 (not shown in this figure).

*** EFS Nicaragua's enrollment numbers for both TVET and basic education only cover its last expansion phase (FY2017 to FY2020).

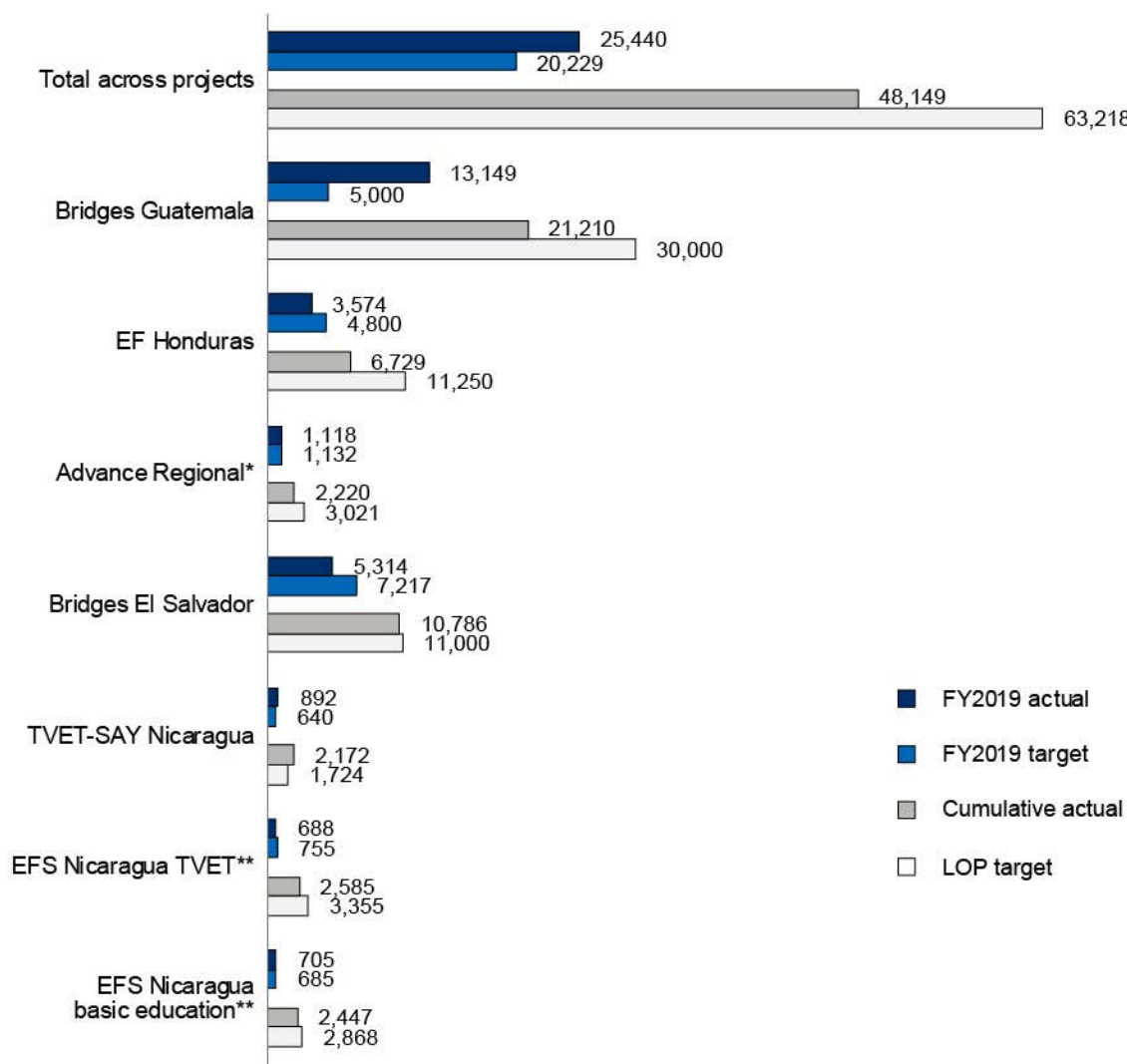
Three or more years into implementation, projects have structures in place to enroll larger numbers of youth. In their initial years, projects focused on designing their recruitment strategies and developing the capacity of their local partners to recruit youth. Projects also worked to build relationships with local entities including government stakeholders, community leaders, churches, and schools. By FY2019, projects had refined their recruitment strategies, improved the capacity of their recruitment partners, and strengthened their relationships with local entities. For example:

- Bridges Guatemala expanded to additional municipalities and continued with the community-level recruitment strategy that it had launched in FY2018. As part of this strategy, the project holds project presentations with municipal leaders and then receives their formal approval to work in the community.
- Despite the ever-present socio-political turmoil, the two Nicaragua projects continued to maintain support from the strong system of volunteers and alumni that they have built over the years. EFS Nicaragua worked with its Community At-Risk Youth Advisory Committee (CAYAC) volunteer members and alumni to recruit and select beneficiaries through household-level recruitment. EFS has found that when families are informed about training opportunities, they are more likely to support

youth enrolling in training, especially single mothers. TVET-SAY Nicaragua's Youth Advisory Council (YAC) members, some of whom are TVET-SAY alumni, also helped recruit youth within their communities.

In FY2019, the six projects combined succeeded in enrolling slightly more than the total targeted number of FY2019 beneficiaries and reached 76 percent of their combined LOP enrollment target of 63,218. In Figure III.2, we present project FY2019 actual, FY2019 target, cumulative actual, and LOP target figures for enrollment by project.

Figure III.2. Enrollment numbers: FY2019 actuals, FY2019 targets, cumulative actuals, and LOP targets



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

* Advance Regional does not have an official target for new enrollees so the FY2019 enrollment target presented in this figure is an estimate shared by the project for the purposes of this report.

** EFS Nicaragua's LOP target for both TVET and basic education is for its last expansion phase, covering FY2017 to FY2020.

Three WFD projects—Bridges Guatemala, TVET-SAY Nicaragua, and EFS Nicaragua — exceeded their FY2019 enrollment targets (Figure III.3). Bridges Guatemala, in its second year of working with beneficiaries, exceeded its FY2019 target by 163 percent. Guatemala’s enrollment numbers include only youth who enroll in the core skills program, not those who go on to enroll in some of the technical/vocational trainings offered by the project that can last two months to two years depending on the course. The project was able to significantly exceed its FY2019 target because in FY2018 it expanded the way the *Diplomado* was delivered, moving from in-person only training to offering the program via radio, thus making core skills training accessible to more youth. Despite the unrest in Nicaragua, TVET-SAY Nicaragua exceeded its target for scholarship recipients by 39 percent. The project achieved this response through successful deployment of its blended learning package, which includes a mixture of in-person and online training with a duration of two to four months. TVET-SAY Nicaragua began offering the package in FY2018 and it gained increasing popularity among youth in FY2019. EFS Nicaragua exceeded its FY2019 enrollment target for basic education by 3 percent and reached 91 percent of its TVET target. In FY2019, the government in Nicaragua began falsely accusing FADCANIC (EFS’s implementer) of using USAID funds to finance youth protests. These false accusations have affected the project’s relationship with public institutions including public schools, which FADCANIC can no longer visit to collect information on the youth beneficiaries supported by the project. While EFS still has support from communities and other local stakeholders, the government’s accusations have limited the project’s ability to reach some of its targets.

Three projects—Bridges El Salvador, EF Honduras, Advance Regional —did not meet but approached their FY2019 enrollment targets (Figure III.2).

- Bridges El Salvador, in its fourth year of working with beneficiaries, enrolled 5,314 youth (74 percent of its FY2019 target) in soft skills and/or technical/vocational training. Some of the project’s trainings scheduled to be completed before the end of FY2019 were delayed, as trainings could not start until they reached the minimum level of enrollment to ensure a return on investment. However, having reached 98 percent of its LOP target, the project is still on track to reach its LOP target by the end of FY2020.
- EF Honduras, in its third year of working with beneficiaries, enrolled 3,574 beneficiaries (74 percent of its FY2019 target) and reached 60 percent of its current LOP target. The funding restrictions on the Northern Triangle forced the project to slow down activities, which then prevented it from reaching its FY2019 targets. Due to limited funds, the project expects to further adjust its LOP targets in FY2020.
- Advance Regional, in its second year of working with beneficiaries reached 99 percent of its FY2019 target. In FY2020, the project plans to place more emphasis on increasing the number of students enrolled working closely with universities to strengthen their outreach and recruitment efforts and target disadvantaged students. The project still anticipates reaching its LOP target by the end of FY2022.



The EFS Nicaragua project found that recruitment strategies that were centered within the community worked best. EFS Nicaragua CoP Hazel Wilson commented that “EFS went house-to-house to recruit youth. We also heavily relied on churches as a way to disseminate the goals and advantages of our TVET programs. The connection with family and community members, not just the youth alone, helped push youth such as single mothers to enroll.”

Flexibility around the design and delivery of training has helped projects approach their enrollment targets. As mentioned above, starting in FY2018, Bridges Guatemala made its core skill curriculum highly accessible through a radio version, which has the same minimum hourly requirement as the in-class *Diplomado* but allows youth to complete the training from any location. In FY2019, Bridges Guatemala also added an in-class version of the *Diplomado* in multiple locations that can be completed in person in just one 8-hour session every two weeks, for six months—instead of the original in-class schedule of four hours weekly over the same period of time. Overall, Bridges Guatemala core skills curriculum implementation is flexible, meaning the number of hours and days selected to impart each of the seven modules is dependent on participant schedules. TVET-SAY Nicaragua increased the number of youth enrolled in training with the help of the blended learning package, which is significantly shorter than the two- to three-year programs offered in previous years. The blended learning package was launched in FY2018 to create opportunities for advancing education in the context of an increasingly insecure environment and the package attracted even more youth in FY2019. In FY2019, EF Honduras identified ways to shorten and better integrate training components without sacrificing quality. The project now has three different training models: (1) the traditional model, where youth complete soft skills training (phase 1) in their communities and then transition to more centralized training in vocational centers (phase 2); (2) the integrated services model, which combines phases 1 and 2; and (3) the business training model, where youth are recruited for a specific opportunity by a business or group of businesses, and part of their training is conducted on site within those businesses. Bridges El Salvador and EFS Nicaragua both offer technical/vocational trainings of different durations, ranging from 8 weeks to 9 months for Bridges El Salvador and 150 hours to 3 years for EFS Nicaragua. Additionally, Bridges El Salvador and Advance Regional gives youth the opportunity to participate in some training courses over the weekend so they can work during the week.



Lessons learned

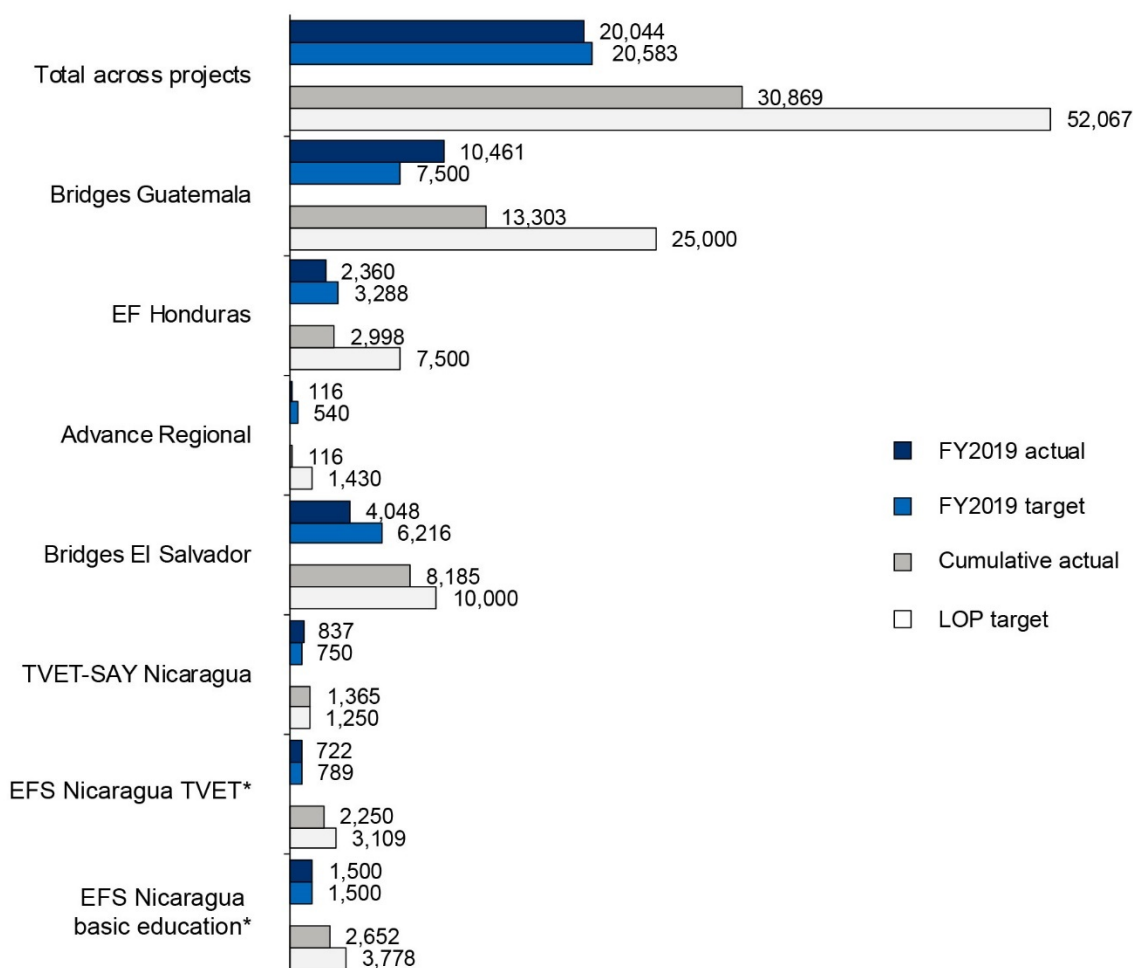
- **WFD projects need time to build connections with local organizations, set up multiprong recruitment strategies, and build trust among youth, so projects use their first year to set themselves up for success.** To achieve high LOP enrollment numbers, projects need to invest time up front to set up recruitment structures and refine their outreach strategies. Setting up the necessary structures can include developing the capacity of local recruitment partners and or building relationships with local entities (churches, municipal governments, youth centers). When setting enrollment targets in monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) plans, WFD projects should consider that enrollment numbers will be low in the first year but will rapidly climb when strategies and structures are in place.
- **The recruitment process of WFD projects should include strategies for identifying motivated youth who will understand and be committed to meeting training requirements.** Successful recruiting motivated youth may include at-risk youth who demonstrate a commitment to the learning objectives or who have applied for jobs but were not selected and are looking for additional training, or those who are completing high school but do not have plans to attend university. Recruiting youth with these characteristics will enable WFD programs to enroll more participants who are committed to meeting and completing participation and training requirements..
- **Flexible training delivery mechanisms and designs will allow projects to reach more youth.** Projects have used a mix of radio, online, in-classroom, and on-the job training modalities to reach youth. Offering programs with varying schedules and duration has also helped boost enrollment numbers.

B. Completion of WFD training programs

“Program completion” means that the beneficiary has met the completion requirements of the specific program. Except for Bridges Guatemala, the completion numbers reported in Figures III.3 and III.4 are for the USAID standard indicator “E.G.6-3: Number of individuals who complete USG-assisted workforce development programs.” Under the standard indicator, individuals do not necessarily have to receive a certification to be considered completers. To capture Bridges Guatemala’s completion accomplishments related to the *Diplomado* (core skills curriculum), we report completion based on the project’s custom indicator “number of youth completing the core skill curriculum.” For *Diplomado* completers who go on to enroll in TVET training, Bridges Guatemala tracks the number who complete this training through the standard E.G.6-3 completion indicator; we report the FY2019 number for this indicator separately in the bullets on page 16.

Completion targets vary across projects because the intensity and duration of the training programs vary. For example, some beneficiaries enrolled in FY2019 may not complete training until FY2020 or later due to the design of the training. Projects with multiyear WFD training programs, such as Advance Regional, will report on the enrollment of a cohort of beneficiaries during one fiscal year and measure their completion and employment status two to three years later. In addition, completion requirements vary across projects. For example, Bridges El Salvador and TVET SAY Nicaragua count youth as completers only if they complete all final requirements, including an internship or on-the-job training, while as mentioned above, Bridges Guatemala counts youth as completers when they complete the core skills curriculum (*Diplomado*).

Overall, projects expect approximately 82 percent (or 52,067) of enrolled beneficiaries to complete training programs by the project end dates (Figure III.3). In other words, projects expect that approximately 18 percent of participants will not complete the program because they dropped out for various reasons (discussed below). When interpreting this completion rate, it is important to note that program participants are at-risk youth who often face many financial, security, or personal obstacles to completion.

Figure III.3. Completion numbers: FY2019 actuals, FY2019 targets, cumulative actuals, and LOP targets

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

* EFS Nicaragua's LOP target for both TVET and basic education is for its last expansion phase, covering FY2017 to FY2020.

With 20,044 completers, the six projects reached 97 percent of their overall FY2019 target. This number of completers represents 59 percent of projects' LOP completion target of 52,067 (Figure III.3). Additionally, 30,869 beneficiaries who enrolled in FY2019 or a previous year completed their training program, for a 64 percent cumulative completion rate (Figure III.4).¹³ Although projects were close to reaching their overall FY2019 target, projects are not as close to reaching the overall LOP completion target because 3 out of 6 projects—EF Honduras and Bridges Guatemala, and Advance Regional—still have several years to achieve their LOP targets.

¹³ We estimate the completion rate across projects as the number of beneficiaries who completed training in FY2019 over the number of beneficiaries who enrolled in training in FY2019. However, some FY2019 enrollees might not be expected to complete until FY2020 or later, so actual completion rates might be higher.

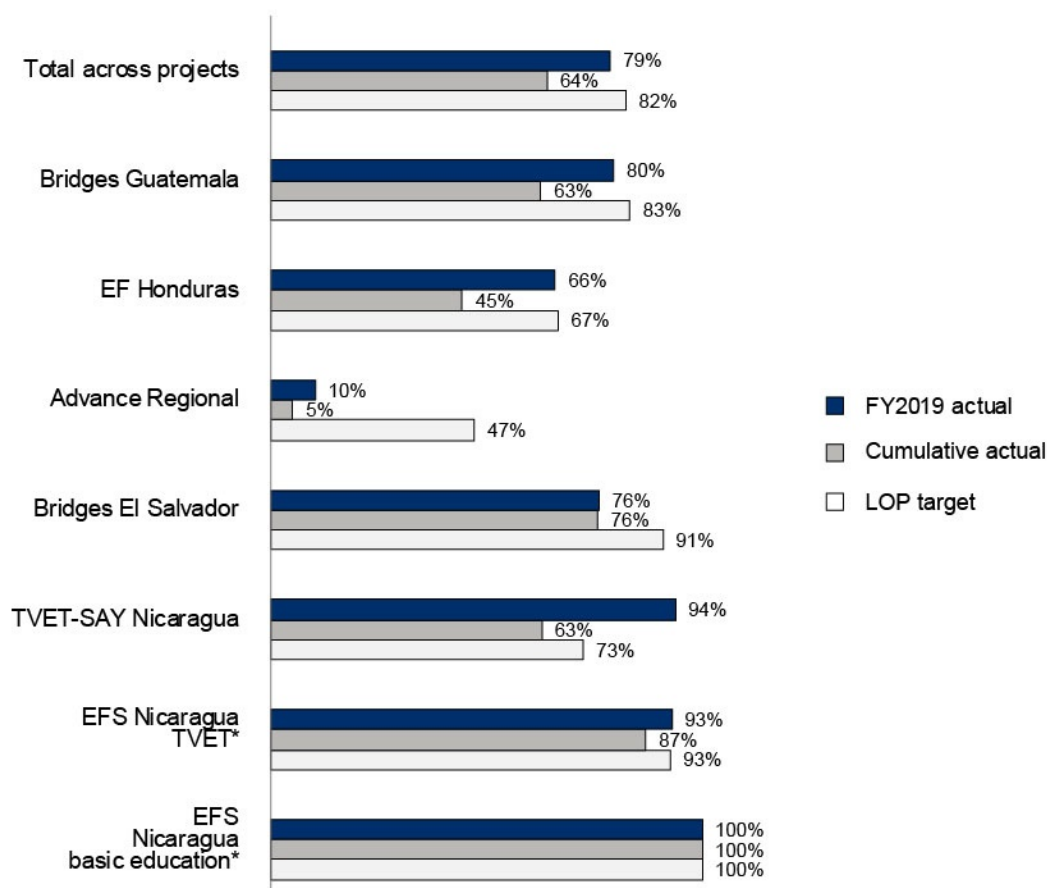
Three WFD projects—Bridges Guatemala, TVET-SAY Nicaragua, and EFS Nicaragua—met or exceeded their FY2019 completion targets.

- Bridges Guatemala, with 10,461 *Diplomado* completers, surpassed its FY2019 target by 39 percent (Figure III.3) and achieved a completion rate of 80 percent for the year, which was much higher than the rate achieved in FY2018 (Figure III.4). Of these completers, 3,544 (34 percent) went on to complete one of the technical/vocational trainings offered by the project, as reported for the standard E.G.6-3 indicator. With these high completion numbers, the project, which has over two years left in implementation, is on track to reach its LOP target of 25,000.
- TVET-SAY Nicaragua exceeded its FY2019 target of 750 completers by 12 percent and achieved a completion rate of 94 percent (Figures III.3 and III.4). Its completion rate was much higher than in previous years, primarily because some beneficiaries completed their two- to three-year career tracks in FY2019, so were not marked as completed in previous years. With about one year left in implementation, the project is a little over one-third away from reaching its LOP completion target.
- EFS Nicaragua had 1,500 basic education and 722 TVET program graduates—100 percent and 92 percent of its FY2019 targets, respectively (Figure III.3). The project achieved a 100 percent completion rate for basic education beneficiaries and 93 percent for TVET beneficiaries. The project has slightly over a year of implementation left and is slightly less than one-third away from reaching its LOP completion targets for basic education and TVET beneficiaries.

The remaining three WFD projects—Bridges El Salvador, EF Honduras, and Advance Regional—approached their FY2019 completion targets.

- Bridges El Salvador reached 65 percent of its FY2019 target with 4,048 completers (Figure III.3) and achieved a completion rate of 76 percent, which is similar to the rates achieved in previous years (Figure III.4). With one year of implementation left, the project is only 18 percent away from meeting its LOP completion target.
- EF Honduras had 2,360 completers in FY2019 (72 percent of its target), including 75 youth with a history of criminal or violent behavior (Figure III.3). The project achieved a higher completion rate than in previous years, with 66 percent of FY2019 enrolled youth completing training in the same year (Figure III.4). The project, which expects to end in June 2021, is currently planning to adjust its LOP target to account for the continued slow-down of activities caused by the cuts in funding to the Northern Triangle.
- In FY2019, 116 non-scholarship Advance Regional beneficiaries (21 percent of its target) completed their two- to three-year technical careers (Figure III.3). Advance Regional fell short of its target because it made some inaccurate assumptions on enrollment when setting original targets and because beneficiaries took longer than expected to graduate, but it still anticipates it will reach its LOP completion target before it ends in FY2022. The project conducted a qualitative study with enrolled beneficiaries to understand the delays in finalizing the programs and found that students take longer to graduate due to universities' complex administrative processes for graduation after students complete their coursework. Advance Regional is sharing the study with partner institutions and recommending solutions to help mitigate some of these barriers.

Figure III.4. Completion rates: FY2019 actuals, cumulative actuals, and LOP targets



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

* EFS Nicaragua's LOP targets for TVET and basic education are for its last expansion phase, covering FY2017 to FY2020.

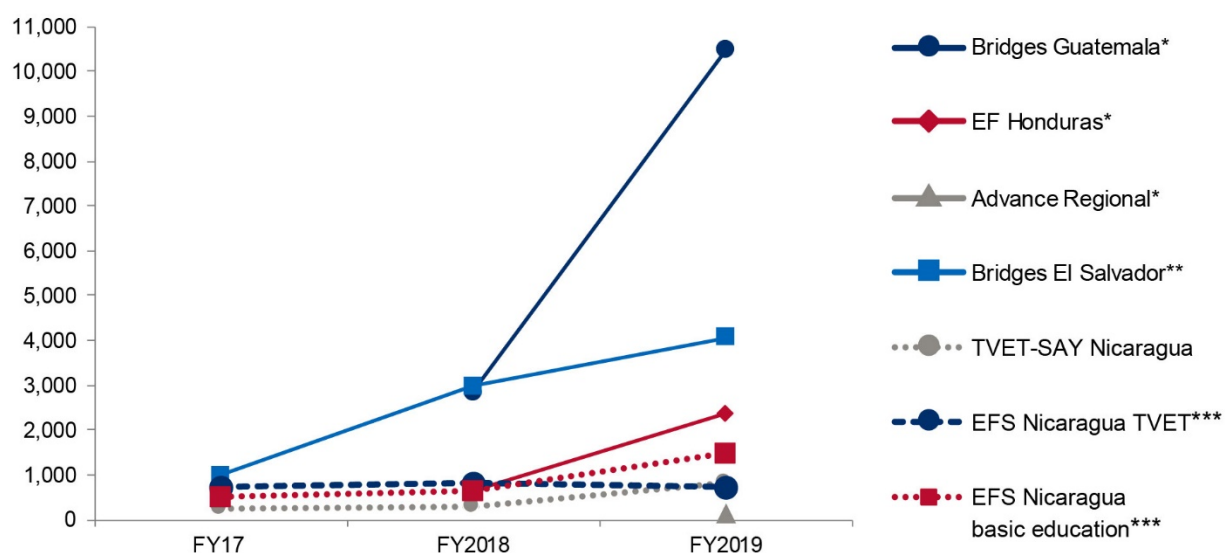
To enable beneficiaries to participate in and complete training, projects have implemented a variety of barrier reduction mechanisms, including scholarships, stipends, cash transfers, and coverage of transport and meal costs.

- Scholarships.** Three projects—Advance Regional, TVET-SAY Nicaragua, and EFS Nicaragua—offered beneficiaries full or partial scholarships to participate in training. Advance Regional's scholarship program covered tuition, academic fees, and incentives costs, such as transportation, lodging, food, and school supplies. In a survey of youth beneficiaries carried out by Advance Regional in FY2019, over 50 percent of respondents reported that the scholarship helped them overcome tuition costs, one of the key barriers to education access. However, the same survey found that 75 percent of respondents from one of the three participating countries still faced challenges covering their transportation costs and daily food expenses. Advance Regional is working to ensure students get their financial stipends to cover transportation, food, etc. more efficiently and on time. TVET-SAY Nicaragua offered full or partial scholarship to youth to participate in technical/vocational training. EFS Nicaragua offered basic education and TVET beneficiaries scholarships consisting of in-kind support. Through its Social Inclusion Fund, Bridges Guatemala offered scholarships (sometimes called vouchers) for youth in alternative primary and secondary education and vocational training programs by providing the programs free of charge.

- **Stipends or cash transfers.** Bridges El Salvador provided youth beneficiaries participating in training courses with stipends (\$5 to \$7 per day) to cover the costs of transportation, meals, and child care. If youth were interested in participating in an additional Bridges El Salvador-sponsored technical/vocational training, the stipend then dropped to \$3 per day to dissuade youth from remaining students for too long. Bridges Guatemala also offered cash transfers for meals, childcare and transportation to youth who have time and economic limitations so that they can participate in trainings and or complete internships. Advance Regional provides stipends and cash transfers as part of its scholarship package. EF Honduras also offered small transportation stipends for some cohorts in cases where they had additional support from municipalities or the private sector.

From FY2017 to FY2019, the number of beneficiaries who completed programs under the projects increased from 2,480 in FY2017 to 20,044 in FY2019 (Figure III.5). In Figure III.5, we present a separate trend line for each project connecting FY2017, FY2018, and FY2019 completion numbers. The high growth in enrollment achieved by most projects during this period partly explains the higher completion numbers projects reached in FY2018 and FY2019. For example, the high enrollment numbers achieved by Bridges Guatemala in FY2019 translated into higher completion numbers. Even as enrollment ramped up from FY2017 to FY2019, projects maintained the same enrollment criteria and were able to meet or come near their yearly completion targets, with projects reaching 97 percent of their overall FY2019 completion target. Additionally, youth enrolled in longer duration programs in earlier fiscal years completed their training in later fiscal years. In FY2019, both TVET-SAY Nicaragua and Advance Regional had beneficiaries who graduated from two- to three-year technical career tracks.

Figure III.5. FY2017 to FY2019 completion actual numbers, by project



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

* Bridges Guatemala and Advance Regional did not start working with beneficiaries until FY2018. EF Honduras and Advance Regional did not have any completers until FY2018 and FY2019, respectively.

** Bridges El Salvador also had completers in FY2016 (not shown in this figure).

*** EFS Nicaragua's completion numbers for both TVET and basic education cover its last expansion phase (FY2017 to FY2020).

Based on the data and the experience of the projects, many of the non-completers reported having left the program to return to education or work. As beneficiaries progress through the training program, some may decide to end their participation for various reasons. Participants may decide to drop out to return to school or because they obtain employment, often referred to as positive dropout. They may also drop out of the training without continuing on a pathway of improved education or gainful employment, referred to as non-positive dropout. Not all projects collect dropout data and it is important to note that when we report completion rates, we are counting as non-completers youth currently enrolled in trainings that will not end until FY2020 or later. As a result, dropout rates should not be inferred from the reported completion rates. In FY2019, Bridges El Salvador, EFS Nicaragua, and TVET-SAY Nicaragua had dropout rates from technical/vocation training of 15 percent, 14 percent and 18 percent, respectively.

Only a few projects collect additional data on those who leave the training programs before completion; therefore, the current data do not allow us to group program leavers into the two dropout categories (positive, non-positive). However, some projects may collect additional data on those not completing their programs through surveys they conduct. For example, EFS Nicaragua and TVET-SAY Nicaragua are following up with nongraduates to understand the reasons for non-completion. In 2019, USAID/ El Salvador conducted a study to determine why Bridges beneficiaries dropped out of courses in FY2019. The study found that a little over half of the 228 dropouts or family members surveyed were categorized as positive dropout (employment or continuing education), 2 percent dropped out due to migration, while the rest were categorized as dropouts due to health problems, family care, etc. (USAID MEL Initiative 2019). In FY2018, EF Honduras contacted 282 beneficiaries in Tegucigalpa who dropped out between the first and second phase of training and offered them to return to training in FY2019, 18 percent did not want to return to training because they were employed or studying (Banyan Global 2018b).

Throughout their implementation, projects have adopted a variety of complementary activities or strategies to mitigate dropout risks. Given that projects work in areas with high crime and/or high unemployment and that they are working with very vulnerable youth, dropout rates for enrolled youth are naturally higher than in other contexts. To mitigate the risk of dropout, strong retention strategies are critical. These strategies can vary but include the following:

- **Psychosocial support.** As in previous years, EFS Nicaragua offered youth psychosocial counseling and TVET-SAY Nicaragua facilitated individual and group counseling sessions. Both Advance Regional and Bridges El Salvador continued to refer youth to psychosocial services when needed. In FY2019, Bridges El Salvador developed a resource toolbox containing a psychosocial assistance protocol and five reference guides to offer communities and institutions key information to help link youth to the necessary psychosocial assistance. EF Honduras also integrated cognitive behavior therapy elements throughout training. This type of psychosocial support is even more critical for returning migrant populations that are highly vulnerable.
- **Early warning dropout alert systems.** TVET-SAY's early warning dropout alert system relied on group counseling sessions to identify youth at risk of dropping out. Project volunteers tasked with monitoring these sessions identified youth at risk of dropping out, such as those with frequent absences, and often followed up with them through home visits. The dropout alert system also involved communicating and following up with youth through WhatsApp groups.
- **Mentoring.** In FY2019, three projects continued their mentoring services to support and encourage youth throughout their WFD training. EFS Nicaragua worked with its existing youth mentors as part of its peer mentorship strategy for supporting soft skills development. TVET-SAY Nicaragua's Youth Advisory Council also continued to serve as mentors for beneficiaries. In Honduras, the EF project mentoring program relied on community mentors to support and encourage youth throughout their

training. In FY2019, EF Honduras started training mentors in cognitive behavior therapy technique to better support youth.

- **Home visits.** Bridges Guatemala, TVET-SAY Nicaragua, and EFS Nicaragua continued to rely on volunteers or project staff to conduct home visits with youth at risk of dropping out to encourage them to continue participating in their training programs.
- **Tutoring.** Bridges Guatemala and EFS Nicaragua continued to offer beneficiaries tutoring support in FY2019 to help them succeed in their programs. Advance Regional monitors youth to identify those that are struggling academically and refer them to tutoring services and peer-to-peer support.
- **Guaranteed Employment.** EF Honduras and Bridges El Salvador began creating customized trainings for businesses that would guarantee employment to graduates. By ensuring program participants that they will have a job if they complete the course, the projects were able to reduce non-completion.

Table III.3 provides a snapshot of the cumulative completion rates achieved and the barrier reduction mechanisms and dropout mitigation strategies projects implemented. Overall, it appears that projects with more barrier reduction mechanisms and/or dropout mitigation strategies have the highest cumulative completion rates. Stipends, vouchers, or cash transfers may play a role in increasing completion rates. For example, although we are unable to make any causal attributions, EF Honduras, which works with some of the most at-risk and troubled youth, had the lowest completion rate of projects and was only able to offer barrier reduction funds to very limited cohort of youth. However, it is important to note that based on many of the strategies mentioned above, EF Honduras has demonstrated an improvement in dropout rates and is targeting a dropout rate of around 37.5 percent.

Table III.3. Key barrier reduction mechanisms and dropout mitigation strategies implemented by projects and their cumulative completion rates

	Bridges Guatemala	EF Honduras	Advance Regional	Bridges El Salvador	TVET-SAY Nicaragua	EFS Nicaragua
Cumulative completion rate	63%	45%	5%*	76%	63%	100% (basic education) 87% (TVET)
Scholarships	X		X		X	X
Stipends, or cash transfers	X	limited	X	X		
Psychosocial support		X	X	X	X	X
Mentoring		X			X	X
Early warning dropout alert system					X	
Home visits	X				X	X
Tutoring	X		X	X		X
Guaranteed employment		X		X		

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

*In future years, Advance Regional expects to have completion rates close to 50 percent when a second cohort of youth as well as youth who took longer than expected to complete their technical degree programs graduate. It is also important to note that Advance training takes two to three years to complete, which also explains the lower completion rate compared to the other projects.

Throughout the course of implementation, most projects offered integrated courses that combined technical and soft or life skills training. Bridges El Salvador and EF Honduras initially planned to offer separate technical and life skills tracks, but decided to combine the offering in most cases (because of the value of the soft skills component and also to streamline the training program). Since dropout was highest when youth were transitioning through each of the different components of the training, EF Honduras increased the number of fully integrated programs, meaning that rather than a one- to two-week break between each of the training components, the training would be offered without interruption to minimize dropout. Advance Regional, EFS Nicaragua and TVET-SAY Nicaragua provided integrated trainings from the beginning. For Bridges Guatemala where youth are first offered a life skills course, they are then encouraged to continue on to a technical track. The final performance evaluation for Bridges El Salvador also revealed that the majority of employed youth had received both technical and life skills training combined. This maps to our analysis that the private sector listed both hard and soft skills as preferable qualities when hiring youth (see Chapter IV).



Lessons learned

- **To overcome barriers to enrollment and completion, at-risk youth require financial support. Support may come in the form of scholarships, stipends, cash transfers, and or coverage of transport and meal costs.** Completion rates appear higher in instances where youth receive financial support to help reduce some of the barriers to access.
- **Strong retention strategies are important to prevent dropout.** Projects need to actively work to make sure youth continue to participate in training, given the challenges these youth face inherent to their communities (mobility limitations, high rates of violence, poverty, child care needs, discrimination). Successful retention strategies employed by projects include tutoring, psychosocial support, mentoring, home visits, and early warning dropout systems.
- **Projects should offer integrated training programs that provide both technical/vocational and soft skills training combined; this responds to private sector labor demands.** Those projects that offered separate tracks for technical/vocational skills and soft skills components often ended up integrating both into one training program.

C. Labor bridging

One of the inherent challenges that projects face is the goal of youth employment in a context where jobs and internships are already limited. Given that WFD projects have little control over how many jobs are available, in FY2019, projects provided a variety of services focused on helping youth find jobs, or labor-bridging activities, in order to prepare youth for available positions. Projects with a year or less left in implementation ramped up labor-bridging activities—in addition to their training programs—in an effort to increase the number of youth employed. Labor-bridging activities included trying to connect youth to possible employers as well as preparing them to perform well during interviews. All projects offer some level of career services and employment preparation, job fairs or events and on-the-job training and internships opportunities. Below is a summary of the types of activities projects provided.

Career services and employment preparation. All projects offered career services to youth beneficiaries to provide them with improved tools and skills for employability. Most projects offered personalized and on-demand career services that ranged from resume and interview preparation for youth applying to jobs, to workforce readiness and job preparation courses for youth preparing to enter a job. The projects used existing project networks and structures to enhance career services and employment preparation offerings. For example, Advance Regional and TVET-SAY Nicaragua beneficiaries had access to the career services of the tertiary education institutions that train project beneficiaries. Advance Regional offered soft skill development and help honing interview skills among other supports, Nicaragua EFS offered CV writing support and practice for job interviews, and TVET-SAY Nicaragua offered soft skills bootcamps and employability workshops through its Youth Employment Clubs. The training centers working with EF Honduras, Bridges El Salvador, and Bridges Guatemala assigned beneficiaries to job placement specialists or career counselors to help them find and maintain employment. In FY2019, EF Honduras trained job placement specialists in cognitive behavioral therapy to better support youth and also created job resource centers where youth could work on resumes and receive personalized assistance. In FY2019, Bridges El Salvador continued to offer youth career advice through job preparation circuits¹⁴ and a new workforce readiness course.¹⁵ Bridges Guatemala offered 40-hour employment workshops and training related to developing resumes, interview skills, self-esteem, and values.

Job fairs or events. In addition to activities aimed at preparing youth for eventual employment, projects also funded activities aimed at connecting youth with employers through job fairs and promotional events. In FY2019 all projects offered youth the opportunity to participate in job fairs or events that allowed them to meet with employers, learn about openings, and/or apply to jobs. For example, Advance Regional organized and implemented several career and job fairs and 28 practice-based guided visits to potential employers with 667 students. EF Honduras organized four job fairs in four cities, reaching at least 600 youth and involving over 30 businesses. The project leveraged job fairs to facilitate interviews for youth who were pre-qualified for specific employers.

On-the-job training and internships. All six WFD projects helped their beneficiaries secure short internships (two to six months) or longer on-the-job training opportunities (up to one year) primarily through their alliances with the private sector. These unpaid or paid opportunities had two purposes: (1) allow projects to facilitate job placement; and (2) allow youth to determine their interest in a given sector, learn from experts, and improve their skills. Advance Regional rolled out its internship program in FY2019, which are part of the universities' curriculum plan for technical degree programs, and offered short internships with local female business owners in Guatemala. Bridges El Salvador established alliances with specific private sector companies where youth needed to complete internships in order to complete the training program. In FY2019, beneficiaries from EF Honduras completed on-the-job training with a company in their preferred occupational field or sector. For example, as part of the training program, youth could enroll in on-the-job training with a company that would register them as employees and pay them a salary.

¹⁴ Job preparation circuits provide youth with personalized attention from human resources experts as they pass through different circuits focused on (1) quick tips for applying to jobs, (2) resume preparation and strengthening, (3) mock interviews, and (4) group simulations.

¹⁵ The workforce readiness course provides youth with labor orientation, tips on job search strategies and resume preparation, interview practice, and a better understanding of the technical and psychometric tests that are often applied during the selection process.



Bridges Guatemala partnered with the pharmacy company *Corporación Batres* to place eight youth in two-month internships. Out of the eight youth, six went on to full-time jobs at the company. Ervic Urizar, human resources manager for *Corporación Batres*, said that the youth were well trained and full of potential, which led the company to consider them for open positions.

Overall, labor bridging activities to have promoted youth employment. A few projects that were behind their annual targets, such as EF Honduras and Bridges El Salvador, ended up ramping up activities focused on helping youth find jobs to address lower than expected employment numbers. Because of the absence of a counterfactual, we cannot assess whether the youth found jobs because of job placement activities. However, a review of Bridges El Salvador employment data shows that once the project placed more emphasis on labor bridging and ensured that all beneficiaries received job placement support, youth found employment about 2 months faster than when job placement services were provided in an ad-hoc manner. Representatives from EF Honduras also reported that their focus on job placement also resulted in an increase of job insertion rates.

D. Employment

A key measure of success for the six WFD projects is securing new or better income-generating opportunities for youth who have completed program training. All projects report whether beneficiaries obtain new or better employment using the standard USAID indicator: “E.G.6-1: Number of individuals with new or better employment following completion of USG-assisted workforce development programs.”¹⁶ “New employment” is based on a change in status from no employment to employment. “Better employment” is based on the beneficiary’s perception that the employment is better. As part of this standard indicator, all projects consider work for pay, profit, or family gain as employment.¹⁷ Further, employment can include formal and informal employment, farm and off-farm, full-time, part-time, and self-employment. Advance Regional requires that the new or better employment be within the beneficiaries degree program sector. EF Honduras added another requirement to their E.G.6-1 employment indicator. Namely, this project can only count youth as employed if they complete a minimum number of work hours or days during a set period of time within 12 months of training completion.¹⁸ In practical terms, this has meant that even if graduates found a job, EF Honduras could not report employment numbers per their indicator definition until months afterwards when the more stringent criterion was met, creating a lag in data. To obtain more timely and comparable information about the status of graduates, EF Honduras also began reporting the number of beneficiaries who have

¹⁶ USAID is currently phasing out the E.G.6-1 indicator in favor of new, better-defined indicators. However, the six WFD projects covered in this report will continue to use the E.G.6-1 indicator.

¹⁷ EF Honduras, Bridges El Salvador, TVET-SAY Nicaragua, and EFS Nicaragua also consider work for in-kind payment. Paid internships or paid volunteer work qualify as employment for Bridges El Salvador and TVET-SAY Nicaragua.

¹⁸ Youth are considered employed if at any time during the 12 months following training completion they meet any of the following criteria: (a) currently employed with an indefinite or temporary period contract for two to three months and working at least 5 hours a day during that period; (b) employed on an hourly basis, but with a minimum of 10 hours per week for a three-month period; (c) employed for 60 calendar days during a continuous two- to three-month period, working on average one day per week; (d) employed for 45 days during a continuous two- to three-month period, working on average three days per week; or (e) self-employed full time or part time in a formal or informal legitimate business income-generating activity that meets the minimum hourly standards.

obtained jobs. This new “jobs obtained” indicator matches how other projects count employment through their E.G.6-1 indicator.

The six WFD projects collect employment data at different points after training completion, but we aggregate the data irrespective of when they are reported. For most projects, employment is measured when youth find employment within 12 months of training completion.¹⁹ Bridges Guatemala and Bridges El Salvador record employment once, meaning that once youth are employed, the projects do not conduct additional follow-up. For youth who remain unemployed, both projects follow up with youth continually, with Bridges Guatemala following up for up to 12 months and Bridges El Salvador following up continually until they find employment. EF Honduras, TVET-SAY Nicaragua, and EFS Nicaragua all collect employment at least twice after training completion. To calculate its employment indicator, EF Honduras follows up with all completers and updates their employment information monthly for 12 months after completion, but it reports employment numbers only quarterly. TVET-SAY Nicaragua records employment at completion and follows up approximately two years later. EFS Nicaragua records employment at completion and conducts a follow-up survey of a subsample of beneficiaries within six months after completion. Advance Regional follows up with all completers three to six months after completion to assess their employment status. Table III.4 details how each project collects employment data.

Table III.4. Points at which projects collect and report employment data

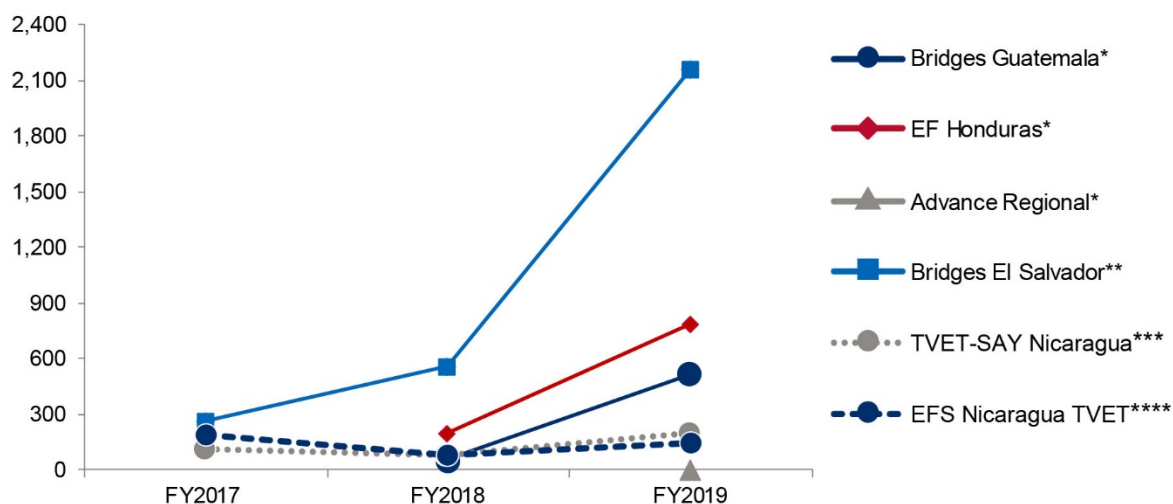
	Bridges Guatemala	EF Honduras	Advance Regional	Bridges El Salvador	TVET-SAY Nicaragua	EFS Nicaragua
Record employment once	X		X	X		
Collect employment at a minimum of two points		X			X	X
Number of months after training completion	Within 12 months	Follow up with all completers and update their employment information monthly for 12 months but report employment quarterly	Within 3 to 6 months	Follow up beyond any specific timeframe	At completion and follow up approximately 2 years after (timeframe can vary)	At completion and follow-up with a sample within 6 months of completion

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

¹⁹ As discussed in Section III.C, many projects offer unemployed completers additional assistance in finding job opportunities.

In FY2019, the six projects reported a four-fold increase from FY2018 in employment numbers, with 3,816 employed youth.²⁰ In Figure III.6, we present a separate trend line for each project connecting their FY2017, FY2018, and FY2019 employment numbers. The sharp increase in employment numbers in FY2019 is partly the result of the project efforts from prior years to enroll, train, and graduate youth. However, as detailed in Section III.C, in FY2019 most projects worked to better align their labor-bridging support with the knowledge, skills, and experience necessary for youth to successfully navigate the employment process, which contributed to the overall improvements in the employment indicator.

Figure III.6. FY2017 to FY2019 employment numbers, by project



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

* Bridges Guatemala and EF Honduras did not have any employment data until FY2018 and Advance Regional until FY2019.

** Bridges El Salvador had completers with employment in FY2016 (not shown in this figure).

*** TVET-SAY Nicaragua does not track employment outcomes for partial scholarship recipients although they are included in our numbers for enrollment and completion.

**** EFS Nicaragua does not track employment outcomes for basic education beneficiaries since they are not expected to find employment. EFS Nicaragua's employment numbers only cover its last expansion phase (FY2017 to FY2020).

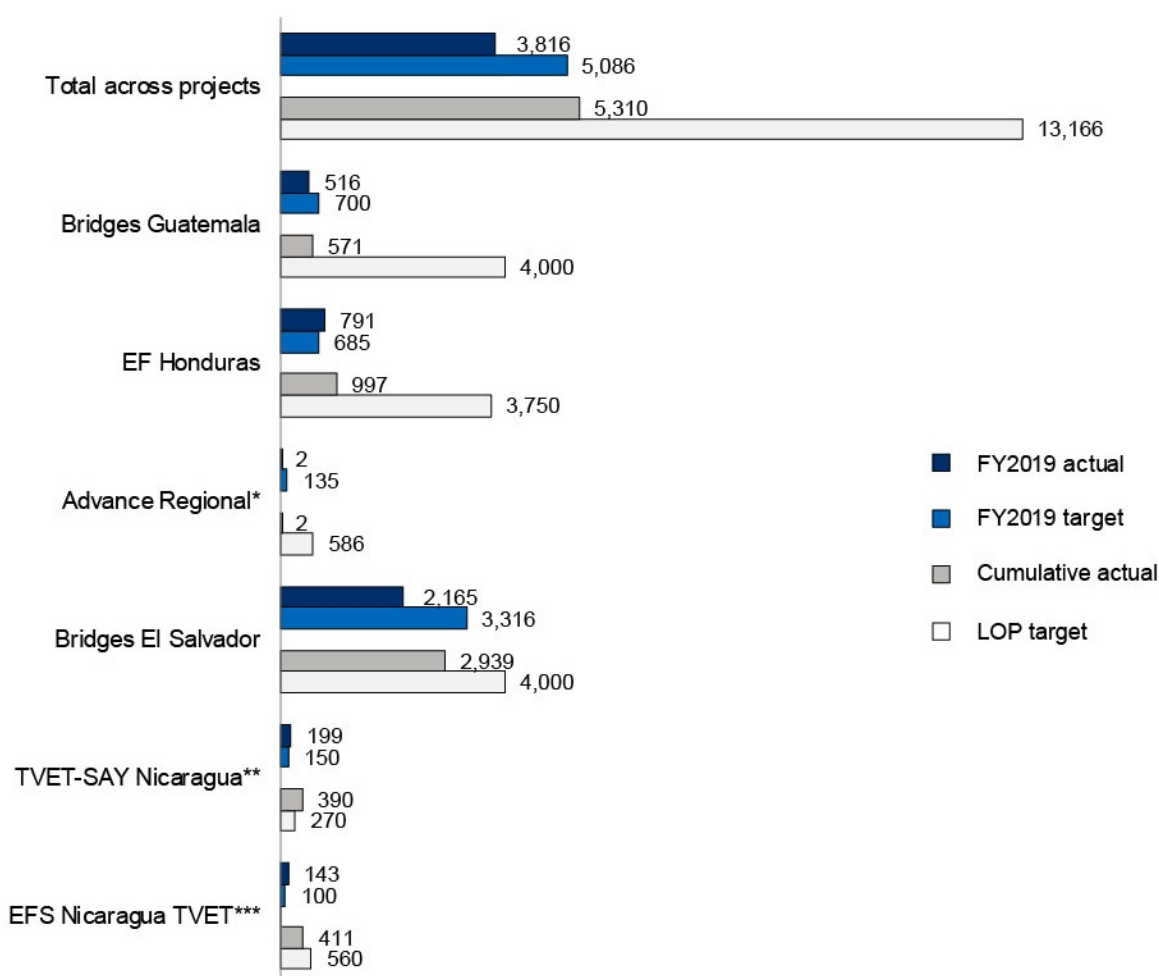


22-year-old Carlos completed the life skills, basic labor competencies, and barista technical training in 2018. After he was referred for an interview by project staff, he was selected from among more than 50 candidates for a job as a barista. Despite workforce reductions, Carlos has been able to find other barista jobs quickly with the help of the EF Honduras job insertion advisor. Carlos is thankful for the opportunities the program has given him and says, "If it had not been for the opportunities provided by USAID's *Empleando Futuros*, I would have been in the caravan headed towards the United States."

²⁰ The employment numbers reported for FY2019 may underestimate actual employment numbers because WFD service providers update employment numbers continually as they track youth, and there is often a delay in this information reaching WFD projects.

The 3,816 youth employed in FY2019 represent 75 percent of the target for the year, since the total FY2019 target was 5,086 youth (Figure III.7). When we add EF Honduras' numbers of jobs obtained (the new indicator the project created as a proxy for employment after training) and the three Advance Regional beneficiaries who found employment outside their degree program sector, we can report that as a result of these six WFD projects, a total of 4,326 youth obtained some degree of employment in FY2019 and projects reached 85 percent of their FY2019 targets.

Figure III.7. Employment numbers: FY2019 actuals, FY2019 targets, cumulative actuals, and LOP targets



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

* Advance Regional reported 116 completers in FY2019 but only 16 were within three to six months of training completion and thus eligible to participate in Advance's employment survey. In FY2020, Advance expects to have updated information on the employment status of the other 100 completers who were not surveyed in FY2019.

** TVET-SAY Nicaragua does not track employment outcomes for partial scholarship recipients although they are included in our numbers for enrollment and completion.

*** EFS Nicaragua does not track employment outcomes for basic education beneficiaries since they are not expected to find employment. EFS Nicaragua's LOP target is for its last expansion phase, covering FY2017 to FY2020.

Below we provide some additional detail on the progress projects have made:

- Bridges El Salvador increased its employment numbers from 558 in FY2018 to 2,165 in FY2019, 65 percent of its FY2019 target. The project achieved this sharp jump in employment numbers with the help of a job placement strategy focused on expanding its labor-bridging work by having training centers work more directly on improving the employability of youth beneficiaries, offering job search resources, and helping open opportunities with employers.
- EF Honduras exceeded its FY2019 employment target by 15 percent, increasing its employment numbers from 203 in FY2018 to 791 in FY2019. The number of youth employed in FY2019 increases to 1,298 when we add the number reported under the project's "jobs obtained" indicator. The lack of funding in FY2019 required the project to focus on labor-bridging activities over training new groups. The project conducted multiple job-insertion activities as profiled in Section III.C. In FY2019, EF Honduras also made formal agreements with companies to hire specific amounts of graduates from trainings customized to each company's needs.
- The two Nicaragua projects had the added challenge of matching their beneficiaries with employment opportunities in FY2019 during the continued economic downturn caused by the political crisis. In FY2019, TVET-SAY Nicaragua reached 199 employed youth, exceeding its FY2019 target by 33 percent, through a focused private sector engagement approach aimed at aligning coursework with private sector needs and linking beneficiaries with internship and employment opportunities. EFS Nicaragua reported 143 employed youth in FY2019, surpassing its target for the year by 43 percent, but the economic downturn and ongoing socio-political risks within the country limited the project's ability to reach the job placement numbers achieved in earlier years.
- Bridges Guatemala, in its second year of working with beneficiaries, reached 516 employed youth in FY2019 (74 percent of its target for the year), through a variety of labor-bridging activities as well as self-employment and entrepreneurship support. The project design allows youth who complete the *Diplomado* to select one of three paths for their next phase of participation in the project: education (including vocational training), employment or entrepreneurship. Youth who select vocational training or employment then receive additional training. Once the training is complete, the project supports them in seeking employment opportunities. Bridges Guatemala beneficiaries who found employment include some of the 1,884 completers of the *Diplomado* who also went on to complete a technical/vocational training program that offered them individual technical support, mentorship, or internships in different companies or entrepreneurial initiatives.
- Advance Regional, also in its second year of working with beneficiaries, had 116 completers in FY2019 and only 16 were within three to six months of training completion and thus eligible to participate in the project's employment survey. Out of the 16 completers surveyed, 2 reported new or better employment (one percent of the project's target for the year). The number of youth employed in FY2019 increases to 5 when we add 3 youth who were also reported as working but outside their degree program sector. In FY2020, Advance Regional expects to have updated information on the employment status of the other 100 completers who were not surveyed in FY2019.



Marta Henríquez became the sole breadwinner of the family after her brother migrated to Mexico. Despite the lack of available jobs and not having a higher education degree, she enrolled in a Bridges El Salvador technical degree in electrics to become a Category 4 level electrician, a traditionally male-dominated profession. Thanks to the support of the project, she now has the required credentials, and began formal employment with SISMA, a contractor for the Salvadoran electrical distribution company DELSUR.

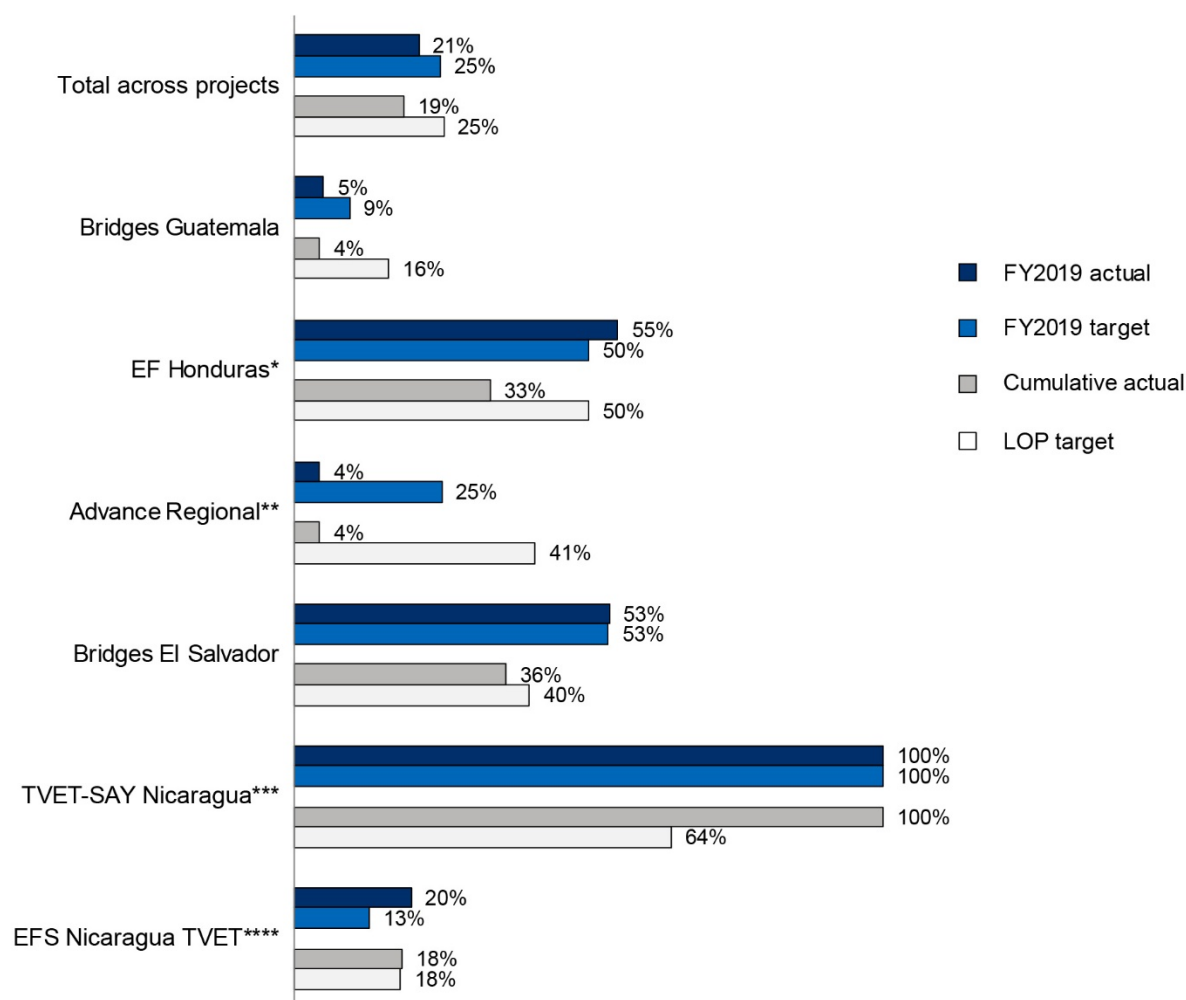
Overall, in FY2019, the four projects nearing their end date—Bridges El Salvador, EF Honduras, TVET-SAY Nicaragua, and EFS Nicaragua—linked 42 percent of completers with employment opportunities. However, employment rates varied significantly across the six WFD projects, ranging from 100 percent for TVET-SAY Nicaragua to 2 percent for Advance Regional (Figure III.8).²¹ It is not surprising that FY2019 employment rates varied so much across projects, given the differences in the numbers of years working with beneficiaries.

- TVET-SAY Nicaragua, which achieved 100 percent employment in FY2019, has been training youth since FY2016. Youth beneficiaries participate in two- to three-year technical/vocational training or two to four month short-term blended learning courses (first offered in FY2018) combining in-person and online technical/vocational training.
- In FY2019, Bridges El Salvador achieved an employment rate of 53 percent and EF Honduras reported a job placement rate of 55 percent for its new job placement indicator. Both of these projects have been working with beneficiaries since FY2017 or earlier and offer trainings of mixed durations customized to the needs of private sector companies.
- EFS Nicaragua achieved an employment rate of 21 percent in FY2019; while it has been enrolling new cohorts of youth beneficiaries each year since FY2010, employment opportunities are more limited in the Caribbean Coast region than in other areas in Nicaragua and the economic downturn has further limited opportunities.
- Bridges Guatemala and Advance Regional have only been working with beneficiaries for two full years. Bridges Guatemala has a lower employment rate than most of the other projects because the number expected to find employment is derived from the total number who complete the *Diplomado* (25,000), which requires a few hours of participation in soft skills training per week to complete the curriculum in 1.5 to 6 months, depending on each beneficiary's time commitment. To reach its LOP employment target, the project has revised its strategy for linking youth with employment in several ways, including linking *Diplomado* completers who have also completed vocational training with entrepreneurship training and support, actively promoting internships with local businesses, and offering *Diplomado* completers short customer service/sales courses so that they can be placed more readily into a job. Advance Regional's FY2019 employment rate was impacted by the lower-than-anticipated number of graduates from the full-time technical degree programs, which should be

²¹ In this report, we estimate FY2019 employment rates as the number of completers reported as employed in FY2019 over the number of completers during the previous 12 months. The employment rate calculations exclude TVET-SAY Nicaragua partial scholarship recipients and EFS Nicaragua basic education beneficiaries because the projects do not track these beneficiaries after they complete training. The employment rate for Advance Regional is likely and underestimate of the overall employment rate since only 16 out of the 116 completers were within three to six months of training completion and thus eligible to participate in Advance's employment survey. In FY2020, Advance expects to have updated information on the employment status of the other 100 completers who were not surveyed in FY2019.

completed within two to three years depending on the specific requirements of technical degree programs but are taking some beneficiaries longer to complete. Advance expects this number to increase significantly as more students graduate.

Figure III.8. Employment rates: FY2019 actuals, FY2019 targets, cumulative actuals, and LOP targets



Notes: Source materials from World Vision, Banyan Global, FHI 360, DAI, Creative Associates, and FADCANIC. As of the writing of this report, the authors did not have confirmation of target and actual employment rates for Bridges Guatemala, EF Honduras, and TVET-SAY Nicaragua.

* EF Honduras's FY2019 actual employment rate is based on its job placement indicator measuring the job placement rate by organizations providing job-insertion activities.

** Advance Regional's FY2019 actual employment rate includes 2 youth reported as having new or better employment and 3 youth reported as working. In FY2019, Advance reported 116 completers but only 16 were within three to six months of training completion and thus eligible to participate in Advance's employment survey. In FY2020, Advance expects to have updated information on the employment status of the other 100 completers who were not surveyed in FY2019.

*** TVET-SAY Nicaragua does not track employment outcomes for partial scholarship recipients, although they are included in our numbers for enrollment and completion.

**** EFS Nicaragua does not track employment outcomes for basic education beneficiaries since they are not expected to find employment. EFS Nicaragua's LOP target is for its last expansion phase, covering FY2017 to FY2020.

From project start to the end of FY2019, the six WFD projects overall have facilitated new or better employment for 5,310 youth, and four projects—Bridges El Salvador, EF Honduras, TVET-SAY Nicaragua, and EFS Nicaragua—have achieved a cumulative employment rate of 32 percent for their beneficiaries (Figures III.7 and III.8).²² TVET-SAY Nicaragua has connected 100 percent of scholarship beneficiaries who have completed training to employment. Bridges El Salvador and EF Honduras both have reported employment for slightly over 30 percent of training completers. EFS Nicaragua has reported 14 percent of TVET beneficiary completers as employed. In their second full year of working with youth beneficiaries, Bridges Guatemala and Advance Regional have achieved cumulative employment rates of 5 and 4 percent, respectively. Bridges Guatemala currently expects to employ 4,000 youth (16 percent of *Diplomado* completers) by the end of FY2020 and Advance Regional expects to employ 586 youth (50 percent of technical career track completers) by FY2022.

Although project rates for employment may appear low, they accurately represent the demographics of beneficiaries and contextual regional information. For example, in El Salvador the unemployment rate is 13.6 percent among active youth ages 16 to 24 (DIGESTYC 2018). Bridges El Salvador is helping many vulnerable youth access their first job. In addition, many of the WFD projects work in rural communities facing challenging economic conditions, with considerably higher unemployment rates. In Guatemala, while the unemployment rate for youth ages 15 to 24 is 64.3 for males and 54.5 percent for females, we suspect youth in the Western Highlands have a higher rate of unemployment since rural overall unemployment rates are 23 percent higher than in urban areas (INE 2019; MSPAS and INE 2015). Additionally, in Guatemala, 59 percent of households were living below the national poverty line in 2015, and over half of these households were from indigenous areas, where Bridges Guatemala and Advance Regional are implemented (World Bank 2019b). Both TVET-SAY Nicaragua and EFS Nicaragua work in the South Caribbean Coast Autonomous Region (RACCS) and the North Caribbean Coast Autonomous Region (RACCN), where over half of the population lives in extreme poverty (National Development Information Institute 2014). Beyond the situational factors, the projects are also working with disadvantaged populations, and specifically at-risk youth. Results from labor market assessments (LMAs) in Honduras and El Salvador show that companies are reluctant to hire youth if they come from dangerous neighborhoods. This can be due to a concern about a youth's possible connection with gang members, or their ability to get to and from work safely on public or company-provided transportation, or because companies doubt a candidate's fitness for a job, in terms of both physical appearance and perceived skill (for more information on country context, see Appendix C, and for more information on LMA results, see Appendix F).

All six WFD projects also supported youth in finding self-employment opportunities in the formal and or informal sector in FY2019, given the formal employment obstacles at-risk youth face. For example, EF Honduras piloted a new entrepreneurship program for youth with a criminal record. Bridges El Salvador updated an Entrepreneur Assistance Model and Toolbox developed to help entrepreneurs develop their businesses. Due to the limited number of private sector jobs in the Western Highlands, Bridges Guatemala built on its entrepreneurship support from previous years by offering two new types of

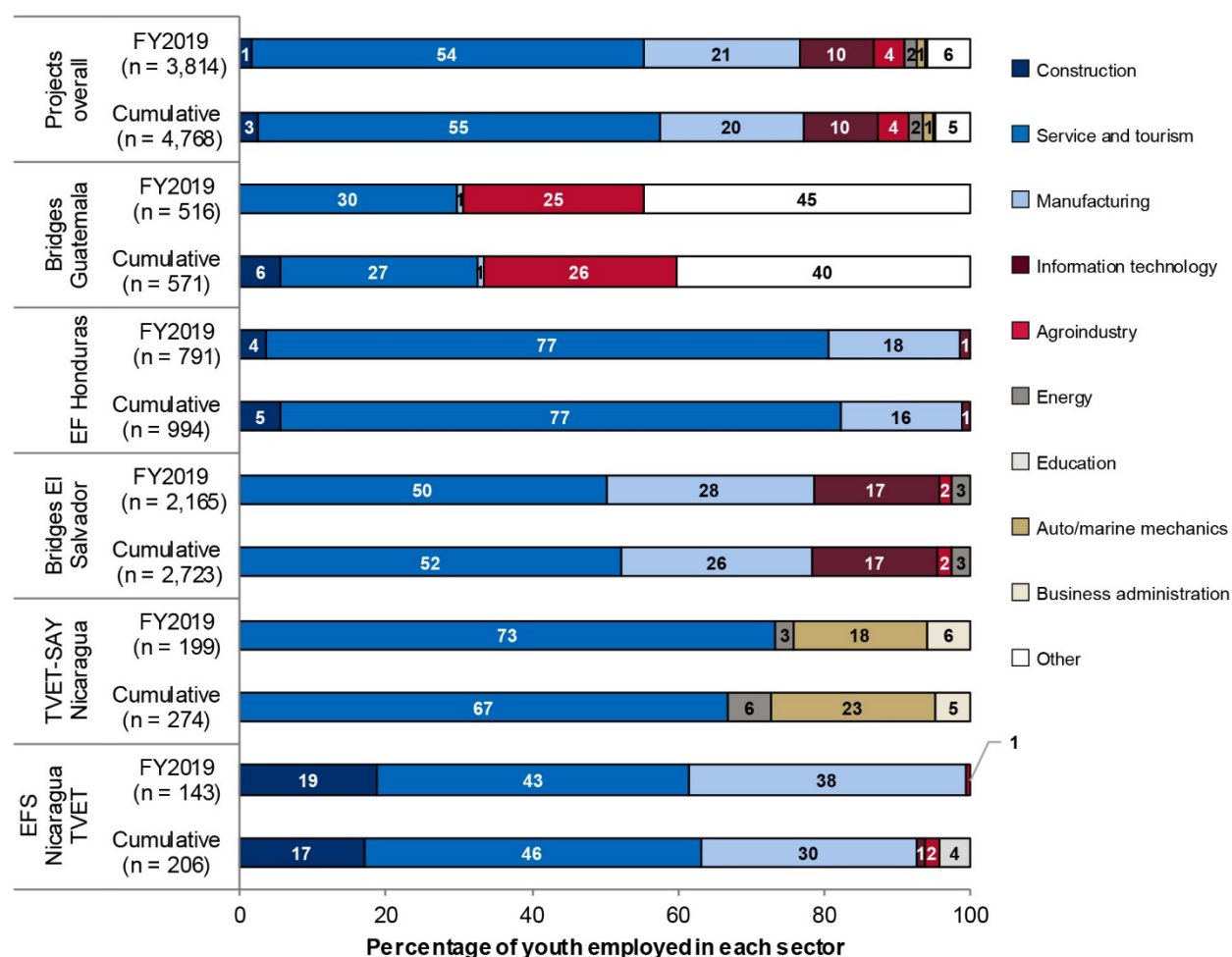
²² In this report, we estimate cumulative employment rates as the cumulative number of completers reported as employed over the cumulative number of completers. The employment rate calculations exclude TVET-SAY Nicaragua partial scholarship recipients and EFS Nicaragua basic education beneficiaries because the projects do not track these beneficiaries after they complete training. The employment rate for Advance Regional is likely and underestimate of the overall employment rate since only 16 out of the 116 completers were within three to six months of training completion and thus eligible to participate in Advance's employment survey. In FY2020, Advance expects to have updated information on the employment status of the other 100 completers who were not surveyed in FY2019.

entrepreneurship workshops in FY2019 focused on the skills entrepreneurs need to ensure their business succeeds. Advance Regional is also working with higher education institutions to provide youth with entrepreneurship skills training and support so that beneficiaries can pursue self-employment opportunities. During the continued period of economic downturn in Nicaragua, TVET-SAY launched the Youth Self-Employment Initiative (YSEI), training youth in entrepreneurship within TVET centers. EFS Nicaragua implemented an employability workshop with 14 youth who established businesses in FY2018 and provided eligible youth with extra funding for consolidating and expanding their businesses.



Eunice Cristel Marroquín studies in the Hotel Management and Gastronomy technical program at the Rafael Landívar University (URL) in Guatemala, thanks to a scholarship from Advance Regional. With the help of seed funding and her family, Cristel founded her own micro-enterprise, Sweet Moments Bakery. Through her course at the university, Cristel has learned strategies to improve her business, including product diversification and how to increase publicity. Now that her dreams have become a reality, she is looking forward to growing her business even further.

Project beneficiaries found employment in FY2019 in a variety of sectors, across projects, although 54 percent of completers found employment opportunities in the service and tourism sector (Figure III.9). Many projects identified the service and tourism sector as one of priority employment and have had the highest success rate in building alliances with companies in this sector. The service and tourism sector is also popular among youth beneficiaries since more jobs are available in this sector and trainings are shorter than trainings for more technical occupations. Project beneficiaries working in this sector found jobs as waiters, cashiers, sales assistants, product promoters, and restaurant servers, among other jobs. The service sector requires a customer service orientation and strong soft skills are in high demand. Manufacturing was another sector with high beneficiary employment across projects. In FY2019, 21 percent of completers found employment in this sector, which includes opportunities in textiles, apparel, and plastics. Since trainings for manufacturing and information technology are of longer duration, Bridges El Salvador, EF Honduras, and Advance Regional expect to have more graduates with employment in these sectors in FY2020.

Figure III.9. FY2019 and cumulative employment percentages by sector


Notes: Source materials from World Vision, Banyan Global, FHI 360, DAI, Creative Associates, and FADCANIC. Cumulative numbers include only FY2018 and FY2019 employment numbers since the authors did not obtain FY2017 employment by sector from projects. For Bridges Guatemala, other includes 168 youth linked with self-employment through the development of individual and collective entrepreneurship (project unable to confirm sectors), 45 linked with self-employment through the development of non-agricultural entrepreneurship (project unable to confirm sectors), and 17 youth working in other sectors. Advance Regional employment numbers (5 employed in FY2019, including 2 with new or better employment) are not shown in this figure.



Lessons learned

- **WFD projects need to have a strong focus on not just training youth in technical/vocational and soft skills, but also helping youth find employment through labor-bridging strategies.** Strategies often require multiple support activities such as career counseling, mentoring, soft skills training focused on employability skills, labor orientation, job fairs, and access to spaces with infrastructure and resources for applying to jobs.
- **Training and support for entrepreneurship and self-employment are important complements to formal sector job training and support when working in an environment with a stagnated or underdeveloped private sector or with at-risk youth who have a criminal record.** Entrepreneurship and self-employment training and support can include workshops or courses, business development support, seed funding, and toolboxes or guidebooks.
- **WFD projects working with at-risk youth in markets with a large private sector can expect to see youth employment rates between 30 and 50 percent.** Employment rates within this range serve as a benchmark for success since they take into consideration the challenges in enrolling, graduating, and employing at-risk youth.

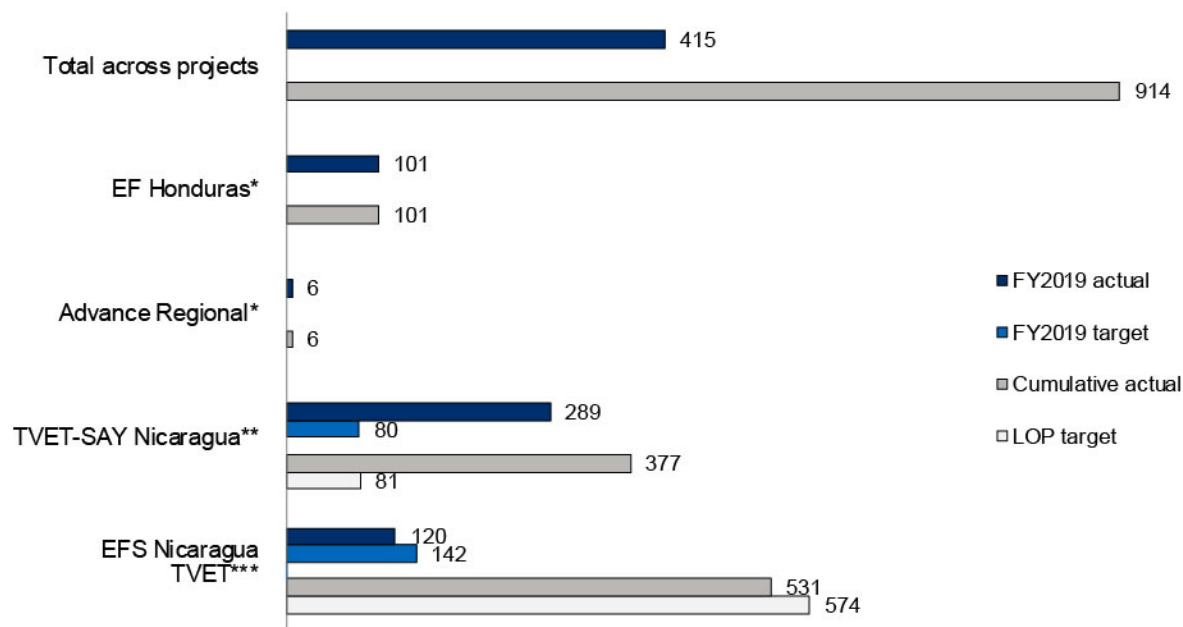
E. Investing in employability through education

At the time of follow-up with beneficiaries, several projects also track whether youth are pursuing additional formal or informal education programs; such a pursuit would be considered a positive outcome—investing in employability—and an alternate pathway to employment. TVET- SAY and EFS Nicaragua have been tracking this outcome since project inception, and in FY2019 EF Honduras and Advance Regional started tracking this outcome for youth who completed training. TVET-SAY Nicaragua and EFS Nicaragua set specific targets for enrollment in other formal or informal education programs, which in FY2019 were 80 and 142 beneficiaries, respectively (Figure III.10).

In FY2019, the two Nicaragua projects, EF Honduras, and Advance Regional reported 415 completers enrolled in education programs outside of the project, thereby increasing the cumulative number of beneficiaries continuing their education after training completion to 914 youth. Of the 837 TVET-SAY Nicaragua completers, 289 furthered their education or received other training. This number was higher than in previous years because the socio-political situation and reduction of job opportunities in Nicaragua increased the number of students choosing to continue their studies. Of the 722 TVET graduates supported by EFS Nicaragua, after training completion, 120 completers were enrolled in secondary education, technical secondary education, in a university, or in a technical school (46 11, 40, and 23 respectively). After training completion, 101 of EFS Honduras' 2,360 completers in FY2019 were enrolled in a formal education degree, certification, or diploma program. Of the 16 completers Advance Regional surveyed, 6 were enrolled in a university. In FY2020, Advance Regional expects to have updated information on the education status of the other 100 completers who were not surveyed in FY2019.

If we combine the outcomes of employment and investing in employment for the four projects that track this, in FY2019 we find that 100 percent of TVET-SAY Nicaragua completers, 39 percent of EFS Nicaragua TVET completers, 38 percent of EF Honduras completers, and 7 percent of Advance Regional completers were either employed or enrolled in other education programs, indicating positive outcomes for these completers.

Figure III.10. Enrollment in other education programs: FY2019 actuals, FY2019 targets, cumulative actuals, and LOP targets



Notes: Source materials from World Vision, Banyan Global, FHI 360, DAI, Creative Associates, and FADCANIC. Bridges El Salvador and Bridges Guatemala do not track whether project completers enroll in other education programs.

* EF Honduras and Advance Regional began tracking education outcomes for completers in FY2019. They do not have a target for the number of training completers enrolled in other education programs. The actual numbers for Advance Regional are for the 16 out of 116 completers surveyed, the remaining 100 completers will be surveyed in FY2020.

** TVET-SAY Nicaragua does not track education outcomes for partial scholarship recipients although they are included in our numbers for enrollment and completion.

*** EFS Nicaragua does not track education outcomes for basic education beneficiaries. EFS Nicaragua's LOP target is for its last expansion phase, covering FY2017 to FY2020.



Lessons learned

- **WFD projects should track whether youth are engaged in further education or training after training completion since it is also a measure of success.** After training completion, some youth may opt to further invest in their education instead of entering the job market. Enrollment in other education opportunities represents productive engagement and a further investment in employment, which may increase youth's chances of obtaining better employment in the future.

F. Beneficiary outcomes disaggregated by sex and age group

Enrollment in WFD training programs, completion, and subsequent employment differ by sex and age groups. In Figures III.11 and III.12, we present the cumulative beneficiary enrollment, completion, and employment numbers that projects achieved, disaggregated by sex and age groups. In Appendix E, we present disaggregated findings by sex and age groups for FY2019, which are similar to the cumulative findings.

Across projects, 6 percent more females than males enrolled in WFD trainings through the end of FY2019 and 4 percent more females completed trainings (Figure III.11). Out of the 48,041 beneficiaries²³ projects enrolled, 51 percent were female and 49 percent were male.

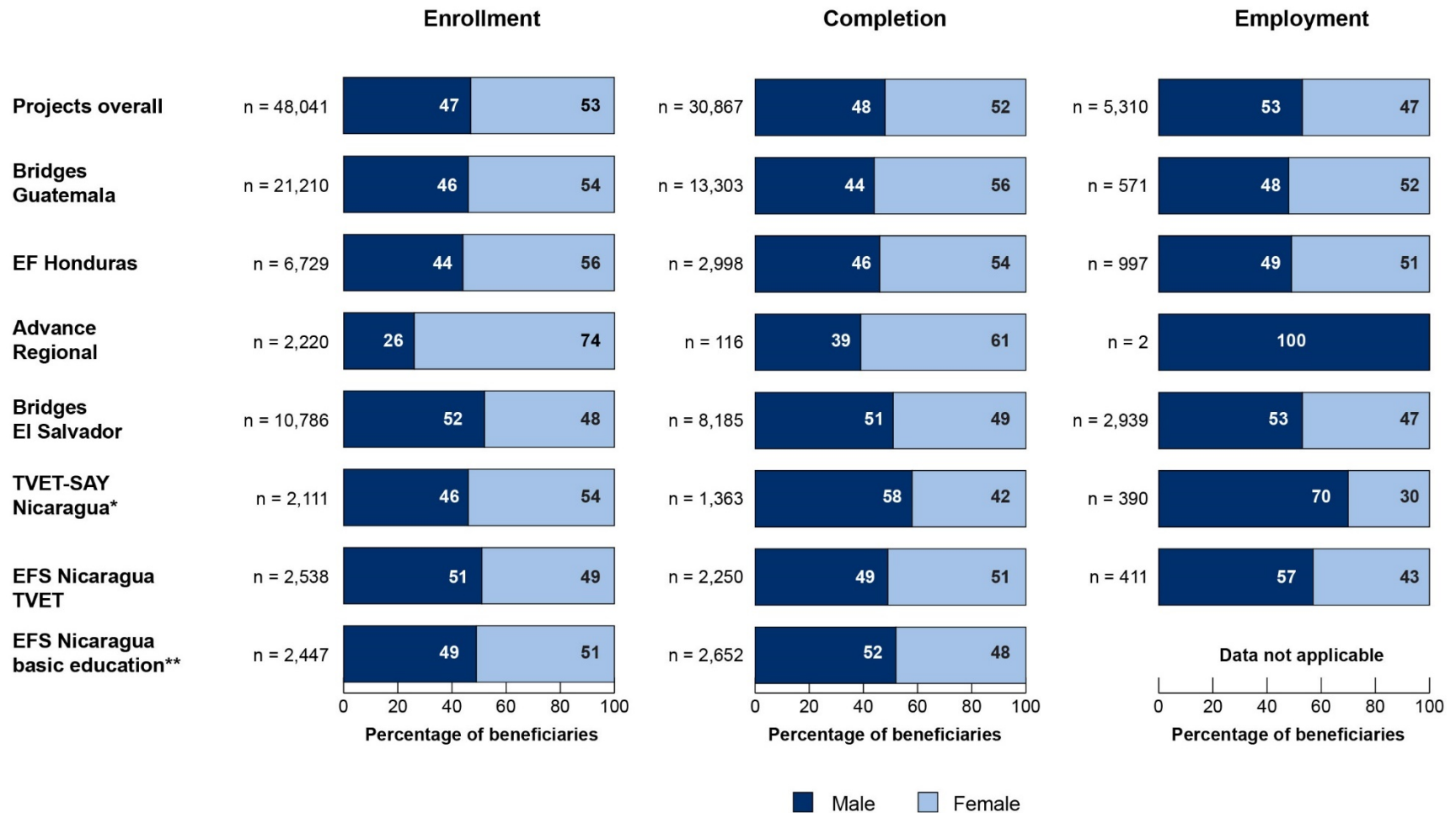
- Five projects—Bridges Guatemala, Advance Regional, Bridges El Salvador, EFS Nicaragua, and TVET SAY Nicaragua—targeted enrolling equal numbers of female and male participants.²⁴ Four of these projects reached this target, while Bridges El Salvador came close to it. Bridges El Salvador made a concerted effort with training centers to include more females in traditionally male-dominated industries, such as IT and electricity, and worked with instructors to encourage females to enroll in and complete training.
- EF Honduras targeted 60 percent male enrollment because males are the most at risk of being perpetrators of violence; however, only 46 percent of enrollees were male. The project implemented several activities aimed at reaching the targets for males, including greater use of male volunteers in recruitment and offering additional occupations that are traditionally more attractive to males.

Although overall more females completed training, 6 percent more males than females were employed after training completion (Figure III.11). The projects reported various reasons why fewer females than males found employment, including traditionally female family obligations, such as child care, and employment discrimination, especially in sectors traditionally dominated by males, such as construction. However, Bridges Guatemala and EF Honduras have enrolled, completed, and employed more females than males, with 4 and 2 percent more females employed, respectively.

²³ Altogether, projects enrolled 48,149 youth but data disaggregated by sex are only available for 48,041 beneficiaries.

²⁴ According to the World Bank, females in Latin American make up two thirds of the “not in education, employment, or training” (NEET) population (De Hoyos et al. 2016).

Figure III.11. Cumulative beneficiary enrollment, completion, and employment disaggregated by sex



Notes: Source materials from World Vision, Banyan Global, FHI 360, DAI, Creative Associates, and FADCANIC. Due to rounding the share numbers for some bars may not sum to 100.

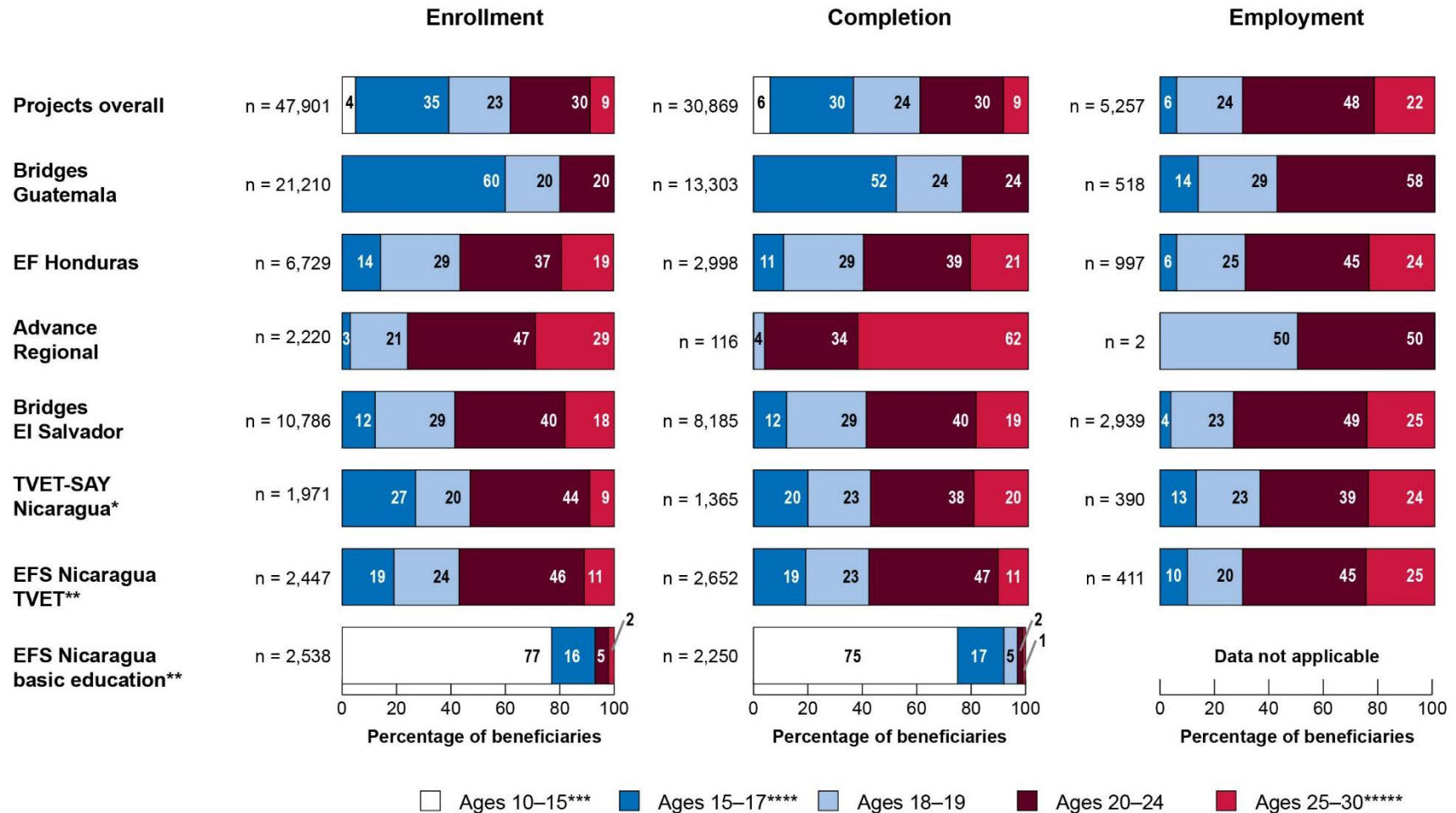
* TVET-SAY Nicaragua does not track employment outcomes for partial scholarship recipients, although they are included in our numbers for enrollment and completion.

** EFS Nicaragua does not track employment outcomes for basic education beneficiaries since they are not expected to find employment given that the majority of the beneficiaries are under 15 years old.

Cumulative program enrollment and completion were highest for youth in the 20 to 24 age range for all projects except Bridges Guatemala and Advance Regional. Employment rates were also highest in the 20 to 24 age range for all projects, except Advance Regional (Figure III.12). While more youth ages 15 to 17 enrolled in and completed Bridges Guatemala's core skills-focused *Diplomado*, the project reported that more youth ages 20 to 24 went on to enroll and complete technical/vocational skills training. Across projects, the age group of 20 to 24 included 30 percent of enrollees, 30 percent of completers, and 48 percent of employed youth. Only 6 percent of completers ages 15 to 17 found new or better employment opportunities; one reason for this may be that potential employers are required—or prefer—to hire youth ages 18 and above.²⁵ Bridges Guatemala gives youth the option of continuing their middle or high school education through alternative education programs. Many youth in the 15 to 17 age range choose this option rather than pursuing employment. EF Honduras has focused its recruitment strategies on older youth because experience has demonstrated that they are more likely to find employment. Bridges El Salvador has encouraged youth under age 18 to participate in formal education opportunities, such as flexible high school education modalities and technical high school programs offered by the project.

²⁵ According to the U.S. Department of Labor, the legal working age is similar across the region. In Guatemala, Nicaragua, Honduras, and El Salvador, the minimum working age is 14. However, there are additional legal limits to these legal working ages. For example, children under 16 often require parental permission and supervision from the Ministry of Labor in order to work. In addition, some countries such as Honduras restrict the number of hours per day children can work. For example, children ages 14 and 15 can work no more than four hours per day, and children ages 16 and 17 can work no more than six hours per day. For all countries, children under 18 cannot engage in work that interferes with their schooling or that is hazardous. Hazardous occupations include mining, manufacturing, construction, domestic labor, agriculture, and working in establishments where alcoholic beverages are served. This considerably restricts the opportunities for youth to obtain employment before age 18 (US DOL 2019).

Figure III.12. Cumulative beneficiary enrollment, completion, and employment disaggregated by age group



Notes: Source materials from World Vision, Banyan Global, FHI 360, DAI, Creative Associates, and FADCANIC. . Due to rounding the share numbers for some bars may not sum to 100..

* TVET-SAY Nicaragua does not track employment outcomes for partial scholarship recipients, although they are included in our numbers for enrollment and completion.

** EFS Nicaragua does not track employment outcomes for basic education beneficiaries since they are not expected to find employment given that the majority of the beneficiaries are under 15 years old.

*** The ages 10–15 group is only applicable for EFS Nicaragua basic education beneficiaries.

**** The ages 15–17 group only includes beneficiaries ages 16–17 for EF Honduras and Bridges El Salvador and only beneficiaries age 17 for Advance Regional.

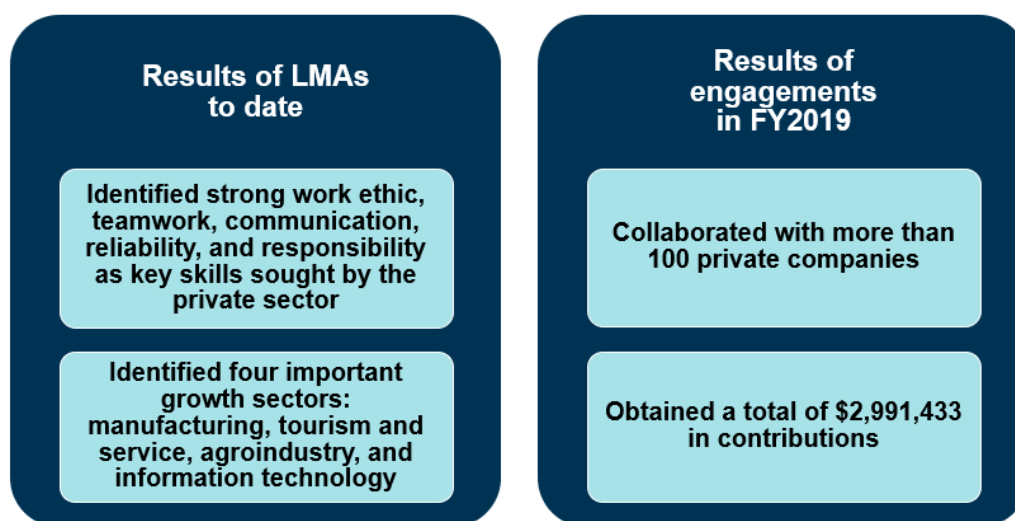
***** The ages 25–30 group only includes beneficiaries ages 25–29 for Bridges El Salvador, TVET-SAY Nicaragua, and EFS Nicaragua. For Advance Regional this age group includes 313 enrolled students over age 30.

IV. UNDERSTANDING AND ENGAGING WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR

Developing and training youth in areas of interest to employers, growth industries, and competitive sectors has been an important focus of the WFD projects profiled in this report. As detailed in our first and second annual reports, the projects' work in FY2017 and FY2018 was instrumental in assessing each country's labor market to tailor their training programs appropriately and begin building relationships with the private sector. Labor market assessments (LMAs) provided information on key sectors in each country and the skills demanded by potential employers, as well as employers' perceptions of gaps in existing training programs. In addition to generating valuable information, these assessments led to the development of links and partnerships with the private sector. These links, in turn, led to job placements for youth or additional sources of funds for projects.

In FY2019, the projects focused on converting the relationships and time invested reaching out to the private sector into possible employment opportunities for youth by assessing LMA results, solidifying strategies for engagement, and securing partnerships with the private sector. The private sector also contributed monetarily to projects, indicating a shared investment in the goals of their activities. Figure IV.1 summarizes some of the FY2019 projects' accomplishments related to their engagement with the private sector and other actors in the labor market.

Figure IV.1. Private sector engagement at a glance



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

A. Understanding labor market needs

LMAs or other assessments of private sector demand for labor have been used across USAID projects, including the WFD projects, to generate evidence for tailoring them to local conditions. Typically conducted within the first year of project implementation, LMAs provided projects with important prevailing local economic, sector, and labor information. They also allow projects to start outreach to companies by understanding private sector needs, which varies by country. As of the end of FY2019, all projects had either completed or updated these assessments. Table IV.1 summarizes the sectors the

projects prioritized as a result of their LMAs. In Appendix F, we provide details on LMA methodologies and cumulative findings, as well as FY2019 activities.

Table IV.1. Growth sectors identified for each country based on results of completed and updated LMAs (cumulative)

	Sectors
EF Honduras	Information technology, service industry (tourism), manufacturing, construction
Bridges Guatemala	Agroindustry, service industry (tourism), information technology, and textiles
Bridges El Salvador	Commerce and tourism, agroindustry, manufacturing, information technology, and energy
TVET-SAY Nicaragua	Service industry (tourism, transportation, sales), financial services, agroindustry (particularly coffee and cocoa), information technology
EFS Nicaragua	Agroindustry, service industry (tourism, traditional trades), renewable energy, textiles
Advance Regional: Guatemala	Agroindustry (processed foods, non-alcoholic beverages, vegetables and legumes), textiles, service industry (tourism), health services
Advance Regional: Honduras	Agroindustry (coffee), textiles, service industry (tourism), health, logistics and transportation

Notes: Source materials from World Vision, Banyan Global, FHI 360, DAI, Creative Associates, and FADCANIC. Results are cumulative, reflecting all sectors identified from the projects' initial LMAs as well as any updates.

B. Collaboration and engagement with the private sector

Projects used LMA findings to tailor private sector engagement strategies to project needs and develop links leading to alliances and partnerships. As a result of studying the labor market, projects identified companies that would be willing and have the capacity to hire at-risk youth and forged alliances with companies in the sectors.

Although projects were successful in engaging with the private sector and creating alliances, this process does not come without challenges. Below are some of the challenges of engaging with the private sector:

- Companies can be wary of hiring vulnerable or at-risk youth from a project that they do not know about, which makes it particularly difficult establishing trust with companies
- Projects need to be able to articulate the value proposition of collaboration in order to convince companies to partner with projects. It is important to understand and be able to articulate what the private sector can gain from collaboration with donor funded projects. The benefit from collaborating with a project could be a reduction in operating costs or the benefits to the brand from being aligned to USAID-funded work
- Companies within the same sector require very different approaches, so a “one-size-fits all” approach does not work when engaging with the private sector. The interventions need to be tailored to the unique needs of each private sector partner
- The private sector traditionally operates at a faster pace and shorter time horizon. It may have immediate employment needs that may not match the planned training schedule of WFD service providers

Overcoming these challenges is difficult and involves testing and adjusting strategies over time. Projects drew on the LMA results to make concrete changes to their private sector engagement strategies and developed multidimensional strategies which we profile below.

- **Trainings around engaging and understanding the private sector.** To effectively partner with the private sector, many projects trained their own staff or service providers on ways to better understand the needs of and engage with the private sector. TVET-SAY Nicaragua, Bridges El Salvador, EF Honduras, and Advance Regional helped train implementers and stakeholders to better understand the private sector landscape and use information from LMAs. TVET-SAY trained TVET centers on low-cost, rapid LMAs to help create and strengthen relationships with the private sector. The *Red Nicaragüense para la Educación Técnica (RENET)* also conducted a labor demand study following training for RENET staff on private sector engagement. Bridges El Salvador held monthly training workshops to help job placement managers understand the key skills most valued by companies. Advance Regional trained 127 faculty and university staff in private sector engagement techniques based on the USAID Private Sector Engagement Policy.²⁶
- **Customized communication.** EF Honduras, TVET-SAY Nicaragua, and Bridges El Salvador created strategies and platforms to customize how they interact with the private sector depending on the individual needs of each employer. EF Honduras assigns one staff member as the project's chief liaison for each company to avoid duplication of contacts and increase the confidence and trust of the private sector in the training programs. The project has also focused on cultivating relationships at multiple levels within the company (such as with human resources specialists and executives) to improve the chances of youth getting employed. Bridges El Salvador has also fostered relationships at multiple levels within companies and keeps track of all communications in a private sector engagement tracker. TVET-SAY Nicaragua has started developing a job-connection platform for FY2020, which will help match youth to employment based on companies' needs.
- **Meetings.** Bridges El Salvador, Advance Regional, EF Honduras, Bridges Guatemala, and TVET-SAY Nicaragua organized meetings and activities with the private sector to discuss inclusivity, sustainability, and socially responsible action with the private sector. These meetings, including private sector events, roundtables, and one-on-one meetings, often served as an opportunity for project staff to market the project and continue to build trust and opportunities between projects and companies.

Once projects cultivated the trust of companies and private sector engagement strategies were put in place, projects established relationships with the private sector. In FY2019, most of the projects forged new alliances with companies from sectors highlighted in the LMAs from previous years (see Table IV.2).

²⁶ The USAID Private Sector Engagement Policy is a shift towards enterprise-driven and sustainable development within USAID's Journey to Self-Reliance approach (USAID 2020).

Table IV.2. Alliances with specific sectors forged by projects in FY2019

	Sectors
EF Honduras	Manufacturing, services, and tourism
Bridges Guatemala	Manufacturing, services, agroindustry
Bridges El Salvador	Manufacturing, information technology, tourism, agroindustry, and energy
TVET-SAY Nicaragua	Services, manufacturing, agroindustry, and textiles
EFS Nicaragua	N/A
Advance Regional	Financial services, tourism, and logistics

Notes: Source materials from World Vision, Banyan Global, FHI 360, DAI, Creative Associates, and FADCANIC. Although EFS Nicaragua did not forge alliances with sectors, the project did connect youth to small businesses, which led to employment.

N/A = not applicable.

These alliances and engagements are mutually beneficial for projects and the private sector, since they work together to update hiring policies and practices to be more amenable to hiring youth and create or update courses that may lead to employment.

- **Updating hiring policies and practices.** Bridges Guatemala and Bridges El Salvador worked to modify private sector firms' internal human resources practices, such as incorporating inclusive hiring practices that would facilitate youth recruitment and employment. In addition, Bridges El Salvador assisted companies by identifying company recruitment, hiring, employment, and retention strategies and helped create improvement plans to make policies more inclusive for vulnerable youth. These plans are helping companies be more open to recruiting and training at-risk youth, including youth who are from high-crime areas or have disabilities. In an effort to create more jobs, Bridges Guatemala identified a series of companies that could receive business acceleration assistance. The project selected companies based on criteria including potential for market growth and ability to generate employment opportunities for youth. The project is hoping to support 17 businesses through a tailored approach based on a self-evaluation of strengths and weaknesses, and hopes that changing practices to improve their profitability will enable these companies to hire youth.
- **Creating or updating curricula.** By forging new alliances with sectors identified in the LMA, the projects also adopted and created new courses, both technical/vocational and soft skills-related, to respond to labor market needs. In FY2019, Advance Regional, Nicaragua TVET-SAY, Bridges El Salvador, and EF Honduras worked closely with companies to match training curricula to their needs with the goal of increasing employment opportunities. For example, Nicaragua TVET-SAY partnered with Chiles de Nicaragua to update an existing curriculum focused on agronomy. Advance Regional also collaborated with the private sector to build a logistics, transportation, and port operations degree program and EF Honduras created a customized sales training program focused on customer service with Grupo Monge. More information on new and adapted training courses is provided in Chapter V.
- **On-the-job training and internships.** As noted in Section III.C, all projects worked with the private sector to place youth in on-the-job training and internships. Although it takes time for projects to build trust with companies, placement in these internships connect youth to employers and may increase their chances for employment.



TVET-SAY Nicaragua partnered with Chiles de Nicaragua, S.A. to train youth in tabasco chili crop production. The course was developed in coordination with TVET-SAY Nicaragua and Chiles de Nicaragua and combined practical and classroom training in agricultural and soft skills with on-farm management skills. At the end of the training program, Chiles de Nicaragua and the project facilitated 26 farming contracts for youth, securing a long-term partnership within the tabasco export value chain.

C. Links to employment by sector

These alliances and private sector engagement strategies may also lead to employment in similar sectors (see Figure III.9 in the beneficiary findings section). When projects invested resources, time, and effort in the identified sectors, and were flexible based on company needs, it facilitated partnerships and helped lead youth to employment in those sectors. For example, EF Honduras and Bridges El Salvador employment closely maps to the sectors identified in the LMA. Table IV.3. highlights the links between sectors identified in the LMAs and youth employment.

Table IV.3. Youth employed in sectors identified in LMAs by projects in FY2019

	Bridges Guatemala	EF Honduras	Bridges El Salvador	TVET-SAY Nicaragua	EFS Nicaragua
Sectors identified in LMAs	Agroindustry, service industry (tourism), information technology, and textiles	Information technology, service industry (tourism), manufacturing, construction	Commerce and tourism, agroindustry, manufacturing, information technology, and energy	Service industry (tourism, transportation, sales), financial services, agroindustry (particularly coffee and cocoa), information technology	Agroindustry, service industry (tourism, traditional trades), renewable energy, textiles
Number of youth employed in sectors identified in LMAs	470	791	2,165	146	116
Percentage of youth employed in sectors identified in LMAs	91%	100%	100%	73%	81%

Notes: Source materials from World Vision, Banyan Global, FHI 360, DAI, Creative Associates, and FADCANIC. Advance Regional and TVET-SAY Nicaragua did not have available data for employment by sector.

As noted previously, it is particularly difficult to find employment for youth, especially given that employment is sometimes scarce in the countries where the projects operate. Even if projects create engagement strategies and forge alliances, there is no guarantee of finding employment. However, over time, projects demonstrated that youth graduating from the training programs were well prepared, supported, and committed to employment plans.

D. Monetary and in-kind contributions received by projects

Cooperation with the private sector underpins all six of the WFD learning agenda projects. In addition to providing valuable qualitative and quantitative data that inform program design, and offering hands-on experience to youth via internships, private sector and other collaborators also provide cash or in-kind contributions to the projects. The projects have worked to obtain funds by disseminating the potential benefits the program brings to the private and public sectors.

In FY2019, projects overall reported \$2,991,433 cash and in-kind contributions from both public and private sector entities, with the majority of funds reported by Bridges El Salvador. All projects reporting contributions received a variety of cash and in-kind contributions from public and private sector entities. Table IV.4 summarizes the funds contributed²⁷ to each of the projects in FY2019 against their targets and provides the total amount contributed to projects since they launched their activities. For most projects, the majority of contributions received from the private sector were in-kind.

- Of the \$2.4 million that Bridges El Salvador leveraged in FY2019, more than 92 percent was directly from the private sector. All private sector contributions were in kind, including venues for events and training materials. A firm in the textile business also donated sewing machines so that Puentes students could practice taking them apart. Based on its contributions to date, Bridges El Salvador has surpassed its target of \$5,000,000.
- TVET-SAY Nicaragua's contributions in FY2019 increased significantly compared to FY2018 despite already surpassing its LOP target (over \$188,000). Around 98.5 percent of contributions made to the TVET-SAY project were in-kind contributions, for a total value of \$161,297. Companies were more likely to provide in-kind contributions, given the effect of the political crisis on the Nicaraguan economy.
- In FY2019, EFS Nicaragua received a little under \$80,000 in contributions, a significant share (99 percent) of which in kind, which is in line with previous years.
- EF Honduras, despite not having an official indicator tracking contributions until FY2018, was able to leverage over \$100,000 in kind from the private sector.
- Bridges Guatemala received mostly in-kind donations through partnerships with private businesses and public sector organizations. The project has set a high LOP target and expects to increase the number of monetary and in-kind contributions received in FY2020.
- To date, Advance Regional has more than \$2.5 million in counterpart commitments; its current LOP target for cost-sharing is more than \$6 million. The project is currently in the process of being extended to 2022, which would allow time for additional cost-sharing activities.

²⁷ Note: "contribution" refers to both leveraged funds and cost-sharing.

Table IV.4. FY2019 monetary and in-kind contributions received against cumulative numbers and project targets, by private and public sectors

Time frame	Bridges Guatemala	EF Honduras	Advance Regional	Bridges EI Salvador	TVET-SAY Nicaragua	EFS Nicaragua
FY2019	\$71,000	\$106,325	\$106,023	\$2,439,989	\$188,915	\$79,181
Cumulative	\$99,318	\$205,317	\$2,669,224	\$5,198,161	\$769,804	\$372,042
LOP targets	\$4,754,000	NA	\$6,170,000	\$5,000,000	\$529,250	\$230,000

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

Advance Regional currently does not have a funds-leveraged indicator. EF Honduras added a funds-leveraged indicator late in FY2017 but has not set an LOP target. EFS Nicaragua has used this indicator only since FY2015. Cumulative and LOP targets are for FY2017, FY2018, and FY2019 only.

LOP = life of project; NA = not available.



Lessons learned

- **Assessing the labor market demand both early on and during the life of the project helps projects identify priority sectors as well as the needs of the private sector.** This information allows projects to tailor training courses to the needs of employers.
- **Projects may find it easier to receive in-kind rather than cash contributions from the private sector.** Often, these in-kind contributions represent the monetized value of the time the private sector spends advising or working with the projects. This time spent together is valuable to enhancing organizational strengthening and labor-bridging efforts.
- **Cultivating and maintaining alliances and relationships with the private sector through a multi-level and personalized approach helps create the trust needed for increased hiring.** This process is often time and resource intensive because there are many challenges engaging with the private sector due to difficulties building trust and tailoring strategies to meet private sector needs, among other things. However, the time and effort put into engaging with the private sector is worthwhile and can help overcome the challenges of engagement, given the access to youth employment and contributions.

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V. WFD SYSTEM STRENGTHENING: IMPROVING THE WFD ENABLING ENVIRONMENT AND SERVICE DELIVERY

Effective workforce development programs that train youth and facilitate their employment are needed to create strong and sustainable WFD systems. We define the WFD system as both the enabling environment for WFD and the main private or public players that develop future labor market participants. WFD system-strengthening activities can involve increasing the capacity of the system itself or of service providers within the system to deliver relevant and high quality support that helps youth develop the skills needed for future success in the workforce. In this report, we call activities focused on strengthening the system as a whole *strengthening of the enabling environment*;²⁸ we call those focused on improving the delivery of training and job placement services by providers *service provider strengthening* (USG 2018).

WFD activities focused on the enabling environment typically aim to create systemic and institutional change through policy reforms, capacity-development support to government institutions overseeing the WFD system within a country, and/or public-private partnerships. The service providers strengthened by WFD activities may include vocational schools or training centers that offer technical/vocational or soft skills training, or universities. WFD service provider-strengthening activities often include making curricula more demand driven, pedagogical improvements, physical or operational adjustments to the organization, or specialized training. Because all of the projects in this report use existing local organizations to deliver WFD training, making improvements to these organizations is critical to the beneficiary-level achievements presented in Chapter III. Finally, successful interventions to improve the enabling environment and strengthen organizations contribute to the long-term sustainability of the countries' WFD system, as part of each project's Journey to Self-Reliance (USAID 2019).

In Table V.1, we show the different activities each project is undertaking with the aim of strengthening the WFD ecosystem.

²⁸ Some of the literature also uses *policy and systems strengthening*.

Table V.1. WFD system strengthening activities, by type and project

Type of organizational-strengthening activity	Bridges Guatemala	EF Honduras	Advance Regional	Bridges El Salvador	TVET-SAY Nicaragua	EFS Nicaragua
Enabling environment						
1. National WFD policy						
Assessing policy constraints to determine support				X		
Revising, updating, or creating new policies				X	X	
2. National WFD institutions						
Assessing capacity and needs to determine support		X			X	
Other strengthening activities for national institutions (developing skills and improving systems)		X		X	X	
Service providers						
Conducting organizational capacity assessments to determine support			X	X	X	X*
Revising, updating, or creating new programs	X	X	X	X	X	X
Other strengthening activities (developing skills and improving systems)	X	X	X	X	X	X

Notes: Source materials from World Vision, Banyan Global, DAI, FHI360, Creative Associates, and FADCANIC.
An X Indicates the project is engaging or has engaged in the activity.

* EFS Nicaragua assessed organizational capacities of FADCANIC only at the onset of the project.

A. Enabling environment strengthening

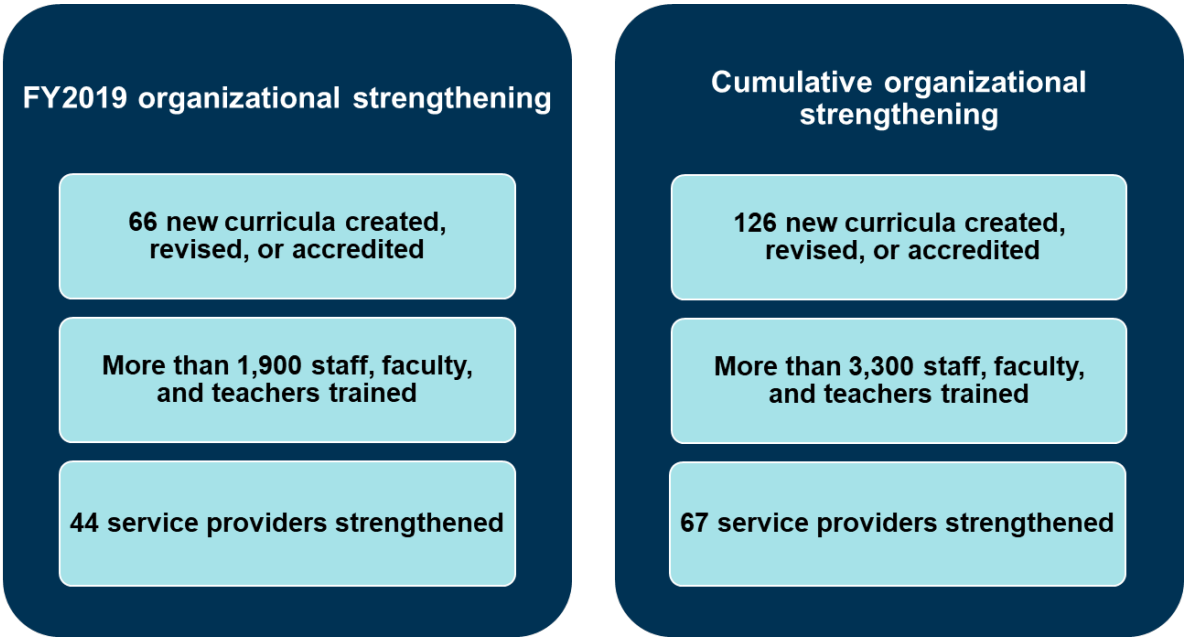
Since their inception, three projects have worked to improve the WFD system by supporting new policies or strengthening institutions that advocate for youth and WFD initiatives. Bridges El Salvador conducted a policy assessment in FY2017 that has guided some of its support in strengthening the enabling environment for youth, such as engaging with new government officials and supporting the development of municipal youth policies in five local governments. In FY2019, the project also assisted the *Instituto Nacional de la Juventud* (INJUVE) in completing a new institutional policy for assisting youth with disabilities. TVET-SAY Nicaragua created RENET, a national technical/vocational education network, in the early years of implementation as a way to convene private sector chambers, private TVET centers, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and advocate for a stronger WFD enabling environment. In FY2019, the project trained RENET members on assessing the capacity of TVET centers, improving and standardizing curricula for technical/vocational courses, and creating a financial sustainability strategy. EF Honduras continued strengthening the *Instituto Nacional de Formación Profesional* (INFOP) by conducting an annual review of the institution's progress towards becoming more market driven, training INFOP instructors, and supporting the creation of new market-aligned curricula. To track progress of EF Honduras' strengthening activities, the project assessed institutional capabilities annually. Although the institutional capacity score improved in FY2018, the score decreased slightly in FY2019. Several factors may have contributed to this lower score, including the fact that INFOP was closed for a few months in

FY2019 and that there were fewer interactions between the institution and the project due to the funding freezes. Appendix G provides additional details on how projects assessed and strengthened their enabling environments.

B. Service provider strengthening: universities and training centers

All projects deliver their WFD training through existing local organizations, which makes the capacity of these service providers instrumental to the success and sustainability of the projects’ activities. Although the capacity needs of each of these organizations vary, all projects have worked to improve curricula, training and management capacity, administrative processes, and in some cases physical upgrades. In FY2019, many of the strengthening activities focused on ensuring these organizations were more responsive to market demands by revising or adding new curricula (as summarized in the previous chapter) and incorporating more labor-bridging activities, to try and ensure that they continue to train youth in skills demanded by employers. Figure V.1 provides a summary of key project accomplishments in strengthening service providers, both in FY2019 and cumulative. For more information on other service provider-strengthening activities, please see Appendix G.

Figure V.1. Service provider strengthening activities, FY2019 and cumulative



Notes: EFS Nicaragua because the project does not have a contractual agreement to strengthen service providers.

Assessing capacity and/or needs through organizational capacity assessments (OCAs). Three projects (Advance Regional, TVET-SAY Nicaragua, and Bridges El Salvador) measure service providers’ capacity and needs using an organizational capacity assessment tool (USAID 2016). The findings of these assessments provided projects with a roadmap for the specific strengthening interventions that were needed for each targeted service provider. These interventions included revising and creating new curricula, training teachers, updating management systems, providing physical upgrades, and creating links to employers. Two projects, TVET-SAY Nicaragua and Bridges El Salvador, monitored each organization’s improvement by carrying out these assessments at baseline and endline. Advance Regional does not plan to conduct an endline assessment, but has validated improvement at institutions through

direct observation and conversations. TVET-SAY Nicaragua evaluated the capacity of six training centers using the Organizational Capacity Assessment Tool (OCAT). The results of these assessments show that service providers demonstrated significant improvements by creating financial sustainability plans, creating stronger alliances with the private sector, training technical staff, and strengthening self-evaluation processes. The assessment also outlined several recommendations for improvement, including enhancing job placement processes and developing a system to track and identify private sector partners. TVET-SAY Nicaragua has shown consistent improvement in scores for all six TVET centers assessed yearly since 2016, with an average improvement of 34.5 percent across all six centers. Training centers improved the most in the financial management, organizational management, and program management dimensions assessed using the Technical Vocational Education and Training Capacity Assessment Tool (TVET CAT). Appendix G provides additional details on OCA methodology and findings, as well as a summary of the progress to date around strengthening programs and service providers.

Revising, updating, or creating new WFD programs. All programs continued to revise, update, or create new WFD programs for service providers. Table V.2 summarizes project results for this indicator. In FY2019, much of the training focused on helping service providers serve the dual role of both training youth in market-demanded skills and helping youth enter the labor market. The projects helped design new technical/vocational and soft skills curricula tailored to the needs of employers based on LMA results and recommendations made directly by the private sector. EF Honduras developed a Leaders for Workforce Development Change program to expose WFD stakeholders (representatives from INFOP, Ministry of Education, and service provider leaders) to strategies to develop market-driven WFD activities. In FY2019, the majority of the participants in this program were certified in a course entitled “Macro-Competency in Management of Market-Driven Workforce Development Programs” through the Central American Technological University, and completed projects that could inform INFOP’s restructuring process. This program is designed to be scaled up within Honduras to make all service providers more market driven. Bridges El Salvador held monthly training workshops with job placement managers working for the service providers to build their capacity to engage with the private sector and help youth find jobs. Based on feedback from the private sector, the project also updated its soft skills curriculum with new training modules focused on (1) self-control and (2) critical, creative, and innovative thinking. Projects such as Bridges Guatemala have also updated existing WFD programs so that they are more accessible to vulnerable youth, for example, by creating radio or virtual courses. To foster sustainability, Bridges Guatemala coordinated with the Ministry of Education (MINEDUC) to upload the content of the *Diplomado* onto a virtual platform used by MINEDUC, so that more youth can access the training. Advance Regional also worked with universities to make degree programs more market-driven.

Table V.2. FY2019 new, revised, or accredited programs against cumulative numbers and project targets

Progress to date (FY2019 numbers compared to targets)	Bridges Guatemala	EF Honduras	Advance Regional	Bridges EI Salvador	TVET-SAY Nicaragua	EFS Nicaragua
Number of new, revised, or accredited programs ^a (FY2019)	35	9	9	5	8	NA
Number of new, revised, or accredited programs (cumulative)	41	25	14	23	23	NA
Target number of new, revised, or accredited programs	18	NA	21	24	32	NA

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

^a This indicator varies by project. For Bridges Guatemala, it is “number of technical courses developed.” For EF Honduras, it is “number of new or revised training curricula (with market relevance) developed with USG support.” For Advance Regional, it is “number of USG-supported tertiary programs with curricula revised with private and/or public sector employers’ input or on the basis of market research.” For Bridges EI Salvador, it is “number of new industry-recognized certifications and/or accreditations developed.” Note that EF Honduras does not have an official indicator measuring the programs created, which is why it does not have an associated target.

NA = not applicable; TBD = to be determined.

Other strengthening activities for service providers. Many of the projects provide ongoing technical assistance to service providers throughout the project life cycle. This assistance includes developing skills through professional development for staff and faculty, and enhancing systems by improving infrastructure, operations and administration, communications, and financial and data management. Together, these activities have helped strengthen 53 service providers to date. See Table V.3 for more information on the numbers of service providers strengthened.

Table V.3. FY2019, cumulative, and project targets for service providers strengthened

Number of providers strengthened	Bridges Guatemala	EF Honduras	Advance Regional	Bridges EI Salvador	TVET-SAY Nicaragua	EFS Nicaragua
FY2019 numbers of providers strengthened ^a	7	NA	9	6	22	NA
Cumulative numbers of providers strengthened ^a	18	NA	9	18	22	NA
Target numbers of providers strengthened	25	NA	9	20	8	NA

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

^a This indicator varies by project. For Bridges Guatemala, it corresponds to “number of education service providers trained by Puentes Project.” For Bridges EI Salvador, this indicator maps to “workforce development service providers strengthened by USG effort.” For TVET-SAY Nicaragua, this indicator is tracked by number of TVETs supported.

NA = not available; TBD = to be determined.

Projects have strengthened WFD organizations to make them more sustainable. Through productive conversations and alliances with both the private sector and national institutions, projects have strengthened service providers. As projects are approaching the end of their contracts, some are working and will continue to work on institutionalizing the curriculum revision process, toolkits, and manuals for specific courses to help standardize processes for project sustainability. Bridges El Salvador has started doing so by developing an entrepreneurship manual that will be adopted by the National Council on Small Businesses (CONAMYPE) and will print and disseminate the Life Skills Integration Manual for technical training instructors on how to incorporate relevant life skills themes into their training in FY2020. In Nicaragua, TVET-SAY partnered with a local foundation to launch a fundraising campaign with international donors and large Nicaraguan companies to guarantee continuing operations of their new job matching platform. The project is also working on training staff and teachers to use electronic tools for blended courses. EFS Nicaragua will enhance program execution by providing staff with coaching on a day-to-day basis, strengthening cooperation links between FACANIC and potential partners, and seeking new and diverse funding opportunities. EF Honduras trained TVET center staff members on developing institutional sustainability strategies. In FY2020, the project will offer workshops to the organizations involved with implementation and INFOP to formally transfer tools, manuals, and methodologies. In FY2020, Advance Regional will begin formally transferring processes and curriculum revisions into University's standard course offerings to foster sustainability.



Lessons learned

- **Systems strengthening for both the enabling environment and service providers is very resource intensive and takes time.** Assessing the capacity and needs of training centers or tertiary institutions in the early years of implementation and tailoring supports to the assessments are needed to ensure the sustainability of improvements in enrollment, completion, and employment numbers after the projects end. Overall, projects likely will not reach many measurable outcomes in the first two years of implementation. In that case, it may be useful for projects to identify parallel activities to conduct before systems and organizations are fully set up.
- **Creating alliances that link WFD organizations to the private sector and to national institutions and governments helps create a collaboration feedback cycle, which may be key to sustainability of training centers in the future.**

VI. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS & IMPLICATIONS

Summary of findings

Each of the six projects on which this report focuses works in challenging environments where insecurity is rampant and opportunities for employment are hard to come by. In addition, the target beneficiaries often have limited skills and education attainment levels. Despite these obstacles, to date, the six WFD projects have designed multi-component programs that successfully train youth in skills the private sector demands. Projects are continually updating their training programs to increase their retention numbers and ensure that beneficiaries graduate with the necessary job-readiness skills.

As of the end of FY2019, over 48,149 youth had enrolled in USAID-funded WFD programs across the six projects profiled in this report. Additionally, 30,869 had completed the training, and many more were expected to complete the multi-disciplinary programs in the next few years. In parallel to training at-risk youth, projects are working closely with the private sector to influence the design of these training programs, provide internship or other job training opportunities, and serve as ultimate employers for these youth. As of FY2019, 5,310 youth found employment in a variety of sectors and we anticipate that this number will continue to grow as projects invest more in labor-bridging activities and employers realize that youth trained through these WFD programs are employment ready. Table VI.1 below summarizes the many features and results of each project.

Table VI.1. Cumulative accomplishments of 6 WFD projects

Project	Years training youth (inclusive FY2019)	Required training for completion	Intensity of required program	Cumulative enrollment	Cumulative completion	Cumulative employment	Cumulative positive outcome (employment or further education)
Bridges Guatemala	2	<i>Diplomado</i> soft skills training Beneficiaries are also offered TVET courses	112 hours over the course of 4 to 6 months	21,210	13,303	571	N/A
EF Honduras	3	Technical/vocational and soft skills training program	Minimum of 237 hours	6,729	2,998	997	1,098
Advance Regional*	2	Tertiary education degree	2 to 3 years (varies by program)	2,220	116	2	8
Bridges El Salvador	4	Technical/vocational and/or soft skills training program + internship	Most courses last between 8 and 12 weeks.	10,786	8,185	2,939	N/A
TVET-SAY Nicaragua**	4+	Technical/vocational and soft skills training program	Scholarships for technical careers last 2.5 to 3 years Short-term trainings last 2 weeks to 4 months	2,172	1,365	390	767
EFS Nicaragua***	4	Technical/vocational and soft skills training program	Varies. Can be up to 3 years	2,585 (TVET) 2,447 (basic education)	2,250(TVET) 2,652 (basic education)	411 (TVET)	942 (TVET)

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

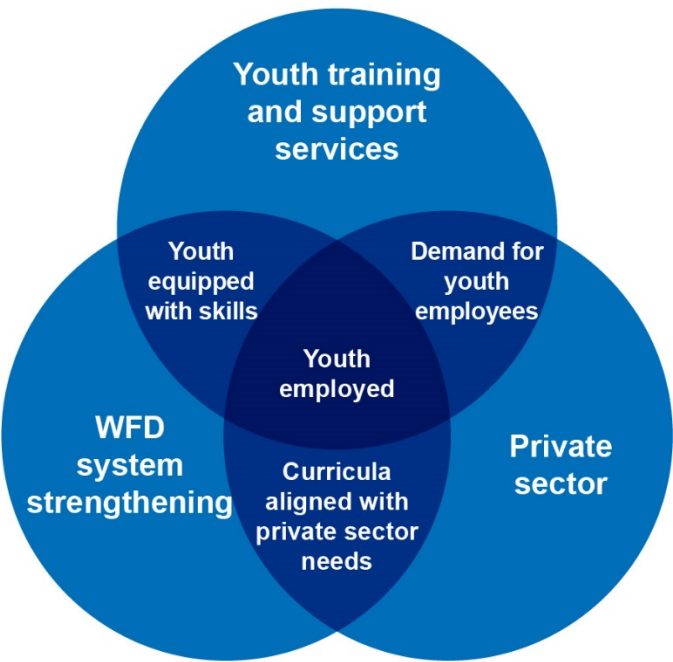
* Advance Regional's cumulative employment and positive outcome numbers are based on a survey of 16 out of 116 completers who were within three to six months of training completion and thus eligible to participate in the survey. Advance will survey the remaining 100 completers in FY2020. The project reported 5 employed youth, including 2 with better or new employment. **TVET-SAY Nicaragua does not track employment outcomes for partial scholarship recipients . although they are included in our numbers for enrollment and completion.

*** EFS Nicaragua has been working with beneficiaries since 2010, but we focus on its work during its last expansion phase (FY2017 to FY2020). For basic education beneficiaries, the cumulative completion number is higher than the cumulative enrollment number since it includes more youth who enrolled prior to FY2017 but did not complete their training until FY2017 or later.

N/A = not applicable.

As the WFD projects have progressed in their implementation, the synergies of the focus areas highlighted in this report have become clear. The engagement between the WFD system and youth is key to equipping youth with skills; the WFD system has to engage with the private sector regularly to ensure that curricula are designed with the needs of the labor market; and the engagement between private sector and at-risk youth helps make companies more open to hiring at-risk youth. These focus areas must interact to facilitate the ultimate outcome of these projects—employment of at-risk youth. Figure VI.1 depicts how the intersection of these focus areas is important to enable youth to find employment.

Figure VI.1. Linking focus areas



Note: This figure is adapted from a figure created by Bridges El Salvador.



Lessons learned and implications

- Many of these projects fell short of their targets in their first year for the outcomes (enrollment, completion, and employment) but this is unsurprising given the time and effort needed to (1) recruit and vet youth who are most likely to benefit from and complete the training; (2) understand private sector employment needs and build alliances for internships, job training programs, or job placement; and (3) identify and train local service providers to offer high quality trainings that respond to the private sector needs. When future WFD projects set targets, they should take into consideration that projects may not see large numbers of youth trained within the first year of implementation.
- All projects provided youth with both technical/vocational and soft skills trainings and employers viewed this combination favorably. Integrating technical/vocation with soft skills training appears to have been the model that most projects ended up adopting. However, the modality and structure of the trainings should be tailored to the specific circumstances in each country. Most projects that started with very structured programs ended up creating more flexible versions of the programs to minimize dropout and maximize completion. Projects should also consider at project outset using blended modalities for training programs (such as in person, online, radio, and/or on-the job) to maximize participation. Flexible programs can help meet the needs of larger groups of beneficiaries and also help respond to political, economic, or natural threats (which all of these projects confronted).
- Projects reported that a focus on labor bridging seemed to have facilitated much of the increase in employment numbers seen in these projects in FY2019. WFD projects should begin offering labor-bridging services when training programs start. In fact, WFD projects should consider working with vulnerable youth who need training and labor-bridging support, as well as those who have prior training but need labor-bridging support only. This shift in strategy could yield higher employment for youth.
- Collaborating with the private sector throughout the life of the project is pivotal for the success of WFD projects that have employment as a key outcome measure. In the first years, partnerships with the private sector help WFD projects tailor the trainings to what employers are seeking. Once training begins, strong collaborations with the private sector can help provide youth with job training or internship opportunities. These opportunities provide youth with valuable skills that help them find employment. Finally, when private sector employers trust WFD projects, they are more likely to recruit graduates from the WFD programs, thereby leading to increases in employment numbers.
- The activities needed to strengthen the WFD system are time- and resource-intensive. These activities are key to future WFD projects and align with USAID's Journey to Self-Reliance. Unfortunately, due to the timing of this report, we were not able to assess the long-term effects of WFD system-strengthening efforts. It might be important for USAID to consider evaluating these efforts after the projects end, to see if project activities are sustainable. This type of evaluation might provide USAID with information on which strengthening activities future WFD projects should prioritize.

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APPENDIX A:

LITERATURE

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In this appendix, we summarize the link between human capital and security and how WFD development interventions can affect human capital accumulation, employment and poverty.

A. Link between human capital and security

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

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

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

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

The current literature on WFD programs examines the effects of multicomponent programs. A review of 54 studies published between 2001 and 2012 found positive results from performance evaluations of specific multicomponent vocational training programs, especially for countries from Latin America and the Caribbean, echoing findings from the World Bank (Almeida et al. 2012) that integrated programs

combining on-the-job training, classroom components, skills training, and counseling are the most effective (Olenik 2013). This section provides a summary of the evidence on these different components.

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

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

Technical/vocational skills training. Technical/vocational skills training is a core component of most WFD programs. Aside from formal primary and secondary schooling, these types of training commonly incorporate programming to facilitate cognitive skills development. The trainings typically attempt to compensate for low-quality or incomplete formal education, and teach trade-specific skills. The evidence indicates that employers pay high premiums to contract workers with higher academic skills (Tyler 2004). However, the literature has only found positive results for classroom-based technical/vocational skills trainings alone in very specific cases. In the U.S., Schochet and colleagues (2001 and 2008) conducted a randomized evaluation of Jobs Corps, a national training program providing general education, social skills, and parenting and health education, along with vocational training. They found improvements in educational attainment, employment rates, and earnings; however, results for most participants faded after the first few years. While, the evaluation of Job Corps also found reductions in arrests, convictions, and incarceration time, rigorous evaluations of two similar programs, the National Guard Youth Challenge and YouthBuild, did not find any effects on violence and crime outcomes (Millenky et al. 2011 and Miller et al. 2018). Maitra and Mani's (2017) study of a vocational education program for young women in India found slightly positive effects on employment (wage and self-employment and earnings). Most recently, McKenzie (2017) reviewed 12 studies on the impact of vocational training program. The review found that only three studies (out of nine) saw a statistically significant impact on employment and two studies (out of nine) found a statistically significant impact on earnings. There is also mixed evidence on the effects of providing training vouchers on employment outcomes, with results varying by the program's target populations (Huber et al. 2018; Görlitz and Tamm 2016; Kaplan et al. 2015).

On-the-job training. The most promising technical/vocational skills training programs are combined with on-the-job training components (Bertrand et al. 2017). Technical/vocational training programs with apprenticeships or internships had some positive effects on employment, but it is unclear which program component or combination of components is responsible for the positive effects. A randomized evaluation of Jóvenes en Acción in Colombia found that three months of classroom training followed by a three-month apprenticeship increased the probability of employment and led to higher wages (Attanasio et al. 2011). In the Dominican Republic, a randomized evaluation of the Juventud y Empleo program found that job training combined with a short-term internship had positive impacts on wages one year after the training, but no effects on employment (Card et al. 2011). A modified version of the Juventud y Empleo program that provided better internship placement support found increases in the probability of men working in the formal sector (Ibarraran et al. 2014). Existing evidence also suggests the more successful

programs are those that involve the private sector in curriculum and training-methods development or in providing internships or apprenticeships (Hirshleifer et al. 2014; Chakravarty et al. 2016).

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

Cognitive behavior therapy (CBT). In addition to life or soft skills training, WFD programs often also include cognitive behavior therapy (CBT). Most of the evidence on the effects of CBT interventions arises from observational and non-experimental studies and the outcomes are mostly confined to behavioral indicators or reported behavior, therefore additional research is needed in order to understand the effect of CBT as a part of WFD programming. Below we summarize the rigorous evidence showing CBT’s positive effects on behavior outcomes. Hoffman et al. (2012) define modern CBT as “a family of interventions that combine a variety of cognitive, behavioral, and emotion-focused techniques.” CBT has been effective for the treatment of anxiety disorders, somatoform disorders, bulimia, anger and control problems, general stress disorders, and criminal behaviors (Hofmann et al. 2012). In the case of developing countries, Blattman and Ralston (2015) have argued that CBT has potential as a tool to improve employment outcomes, particularly when coupled with technical/vocational and soft skills training. One rigorous evaluation of an eight-week CBT intervention in Liberia found that those receiving the therapy experienced a reduction in antisocial behaviors, but only those who received both therapy and a \$200 cash grant had a persistent reduction (Blattman et al. 2015). Cook et al. (2014) implemented a randomized evaluation of a Chicago Public Schools program offering academic and social-cognitive training to disadvantaged male youth. The study found significant increases in math test scores, higher expected graduation rates, and a large (but not statistically significant) reduction in criminal behavior during the program year (Cook et al. 2014). The Job Corps and ChalleNGe residential programs for at-risk youth in the United States also included social and character skills components, but their evaluations found only short-term effects on crime and earnings (Schochet et al. 2008; Millenky et al. 2012).

Self-employment interventions. WFD programs often also offer interventions intended to help youth obtain self-employment, either in the formal or informal sector. Cash or credit programs combined with training have been shown to be effective, although usually only in the short term. Self-employment interventions are important in Central America given the prevalence of small businesses (*microempresas*) and the high rates of employment in the informal sector. These interventions include entrepreneurship and business skills training, as well as the provision of initial capital to start a business. Blattman et al. (2016) looked at the impact of providing vocational training and seed capital to groups of poor, unemployed youths in rural Uganda to help them become self-employed artisans. Compared to youth in the control

group, grant recipients were twice as likely to be engaged in a skilled trade as nonrecipients were, and had substantially higher earnings (38 percent) and work hours (17 percent). Blattman and Ralston (2015) review found that “capital-centric” programs, defined as interventions providing “hand-outs” such as start-up grants, cash infusions, and in-kind capital transfers, can cost-effectively stimulate self-employment and relieve credit constraints, sometimes in combination with skills training, mentoring, or other services (Banerjee et al. 2015; Bandiera et al. 2013; Fafchamps et al. 2011).

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

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

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

APPENDIX B:

REPORT FOCUS AREAS

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In this appendix, we summarize the four focus areas important to WFD programming that can facilitate learning across projects and contribute to learning for future WFD investments. These areas are (1) beneficiary participation, (2) beneficiary employment or investment in employability, (3) engagement with the private sector and other actors in the labor market, and (4) WFD system strengthening.

A. Youth training and support services

At the core of these projects' interventions are the training and support services they provide to youth. For youth to participate, they must first be made aware of the program and meet the eligibility criteria. After that, they enroll in the training program, complete the program, and hopefully continue on with employment or additional education.

Beneficiary participation. This focus area includes information on the participation of youth beneficiaries in WFD activities ranging from program recruitment to completion and includes two indicators. The first indicator measures the number or percentage of beneficiaries enrolled in the WFD program or activity. The second measures the number or percentage of beneficiaries completing the WFD program and/or activity. The length and composition of each WFD training varies by project; therefore, targets for each indicator vary significantly across projects.

Beneficiary employment or investment in employability. This focus area captures information on beneficiaries after WFD program completion. It captures whether program completers are employed or investing in their employability by continuing their education. This area relates to the Central America Strategy's focus on helping youth in the region find employment opportunities, so they are less susceptible to recruitment by gangs or other criminal organizations and less likely to emigrate. The first indicator measures the number or percentage of beneficiaries with new or better employment. The second measures the number or percentage of beneficiaries that continue to invest in their employability through enrollment in formal or nonformal education programs. While all projects follow up with youth who complete the WFD interventions to report on employment status and collect different information related to investing in employability, only four projects (TVET-SAY Nicaragua, EFS Nicaragua, EF Honduras, and Advance Regional) currently track and report through custom indicators whether training completers are investing in employability by enrolling in formal or informal education programs outside of their projects. Measuring whether beneficiaries are continuing their education is important because it demonstrates that they are investing in themselves to increase the likelihood that they may be employed in the future.

B. Engagement with private sector and other actors in labor market

This focus area includes information on the alignment of WFD programs to the private sector's labor needs. The Central America Strategy's efforts also focus on developing partnerships between academia and the private sector, and improving the linkages between education and labor market needs.²⁹ This focus area includes two different indicators. The first covers learnings from the LMAs conducted by projects to understand labor market needs. The second captures information on the funds from the private sector and international donors that projects have been able to generate or obtain through cost-share or other private sector collaboration programs.

C. WFD system strengthening

This focus area captures improvements in the WFD system by improving either the enabling environment for WFD or the capacity of WFD organizations. These organizational improvements relate to the Central America Strategy's efforts to facilitate access to quality education and is also directly aligned with USAID's Journey to Self-Reliance, USAID's strategy focused on strengthening host country governments and partners. This focus area includes three different indicators. The first indicator measures the number of service providers strengthened by the project. The second includes information on the organizational capacity assessments conducted by projects with providers. The third measures the number of WFD programs created or revised by projects. Many of these programs are then adopted by host governments or local organizations, furthering the sustainability efforts of these WFD programs.

²⁹ Engagement with the private sector is featured prominently in USAID's Journey to Self-Reliance approach (USAID 2019a).

APPENDIX C:

CONTEXT IN WHICH THE SIX WFD PROJECTS ARE WORKING

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In this appendix, we describe the socio-economic context of the Central American countries where the six WFD projects covered in this report are working— El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua.

A. Socio-economic context of WFD project countries

El Salvador. El Salvador has a human development index (HDI) of 0.667 and is considered a “medium human development” country, ranking 124th in the world out of 189 countries (UNDP). El Salvador has historically enjoyed healthy levels of growth, but in the last five years, annual GDP growth averaged 2.3 percent, making it one of the countries with the lowest growth in Central America (World Bank 2019a). Although poverty levels have decreased since 2007, El Salvador reflects modest poverty reduction and high rural poverty. In 2017, 29 percent of households were living below the national poverty line. In education, youth ages 15 to 24 completed an average of 9.4 years of schooling in 2018 (ECLAC). The lower secondary school completion rate was 77.4 percent in 2018 and the upper secondary school completion rate was just 29.6 percent in 2017 for adults ages 25 and older (World Bank 2017a, 2018a). Out of 192 countries, El Salvador has the highest intentional homicide rate (unlawful death purposefully inflicted on a person by another person), at 62 per 100,000 inhabitants in 2017 (World Bank 2017b). Overall unemployment is 4.3 percent and youth unemployment is 9.7 percent (World Bank 2019e, 2019f). In 2019, El Salvador had 1,601,000 emigrants, representing 25 percent of its population (slightly higher than the 2015 percentage) (UNDESA 2019; World Bank 2018b).

Guatemala. Guatemala is a “medium human development” country with an HDI of 0.651 and it ranks 126th in the world out of 189 countries (UNDP). The country is the largest economy in Central America and has experienced one of the strongest economic performances in the region, with 2.8 percent growth in 2017, and 3.1 percent growth in 2018. In spite of this, the country has some of the highest levels of inequality in the region. In 2015, 59 percent of households were living below the national poverty line; over half of these poor households were from indigenous areas (World Bank 2019b). Educational attainment for youth averaged only 7.2 years in 2014 (ECLAC). The completion rate was 56.4 percent in lower secondary school in 2018 and 26.6 percent in upper secondary for adults ages 25 and older in 2014 (World Bank 2017a, 2018a). Guatemala also faces significant crime and violence levels, with 26 intentional homicides per 100,000 inhabitants in 2017 (ranking 16th globally) (World Bank 2017b). Overall unemployment in the country stood at 2.7 percent in 2019, and youth unemployment was at 5.6 percent in 2019 (World Bank 2019e, 2019f). Guatemala’s emigrant population in 2019 was 1,206,000, which is approximately 7 percent of its population (slightly higher than the 2015 percentage) (UNDESA 2019; World Bank 2018b).

Honduras. Honduras has an HDI of 0.623 and is also considered a “medium human development” country, with a world rank of 132 out of 189 countries (UNDP). Honduras’ economy grew by 4.8 percent in 2017 and by 3.7 percent in 2018. Despite this favorable growth, poverty levels remain a major challenge in the country, with 61.9 percent of households living in poverty in 2018 (World Bank 2019c). Another challenge is educational attainment, which in 2018 averaged 8.3 years for youth ages 15 to 24 (ECLAC). Secondary completion also remains low, at 45.8 percent in 2016 for lower secondary and 23.1 percent for upper secondary among adults ages 25 and older in 2018 (World Bank 2017a, 2018a). The country has one of the highest homicide rates in the world, with 42 intentional homicides per 100,000 inhabitants in 2017 (ranking 5th globally) (World Bank 2017b). Overall unemployment was 4.1 percent in 2019, and youth unemployment was 7.9 percent in 2019 (World Bank 2019e, 2019f). In 2019, Honduras had 801,000 emigrants, representing 8 percent of its population (slightly higher than the 2015 percentage) (UNDESA 2019; World Bank 2018b).

Nicaragua. Nicaragua has an HDI of 0.651 and is considered a “medium human development” country, with a world rank of 126 of 189 countries (UNDP). Although economic growth in Nicaragua is among the highest in Central America, with 4.7 percent in 2017, the country suffered a contraction of 3.8 percent in 2018 due to social and political unrest, and is expected to fall to -5.0 percent in 2019. The socio-political crisis which has had lasting implications, has affected all aspects of society, including an increase in migration. Although the country has made progress in decreasing poverty levels, close to 25 percent of the population lived in poverty (World Bank 2019d). Nicaragua’s RACCN and RACCS are its poorest regions, with more than half of their populations living in extreme poverty (National Development Information Institute 2014). In 2014, Nicaraguan youth averaged 8.2 years of schooling (ECLAC). The lower secondary school completion rate was 90 percent in 2015 (World Bank 2018a). Compared to other Central American countries, Nicaragua has a lower homicide rate, with 7.4 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants in 2016 (ranking 50th globally) (World Bank 2017b). However, homicides rates at the sub-national level vary significantly. For example, the RACCS and RACCN had 29 and 18 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants, respectively, in 2019 (OSAC 2019). Overall unemployment was 4.9 percent in 2019, and youth unemployment went up to 9.2 percent in 2019 (World Bank 2019e, World Bank 2019f). In 2019, Nicaragua had 683,000 emigrants, 11 percent of its population (slightly higher than the 2015 percentage) (UNDESA 2019; World Bank 2018b).

APPENDIX D:

WFD PROJECT DESCRIPTIONS

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A. WFD projects support the Central America Strategy

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

USAID's WFD activities also support the Central America Strategy's security pillar by aiming to improve citizen security in Central America. To achieve this goal, many WFD activities in Central America target youth who are susceptible to violence and crime. Most of the WFD projects included in this report target youth at risk of violence and/or living in high crime areas. Through WFD training, at-risk youth can improve their technical/vocational and soft skills to help find new or better employment. New or better employment opportunities can reduce at-risk youth's susceptibility to violence and criminal behavior (Jacob and Lefgren 2003 and Lochner and Moretti 2004). Moreover, the soft skill trainings offered by WFD projects can also contribute to increases in protective behaviors, such as volunteering and involvement in politics or local community activities (Miller et al. 2018).

B. Project locations and activities

Within each country, the WFD projects prioritize interventions in areas that USAID has indicated are target geographies. Below is a summary of where each of the interventions take place.

Proyecto Puentes (Bridges Guatemala) is implemented in the Western Highlands of Guatemala within the following five departments: Quetzaltenango, Huehuetenango, Totonicapán, Quiché, and San Marcos—due to high poverty and high rates of migration.

In Honduras, the *Empleando Futuros* or Employing Futures Project (EF Honduras) targets high-crime areas in the following seven municipalities: Tegucigalpa, San Pedro Sula, Choloma, La Ceiba, Tela, Villanueva, and La Lima.

The LAC Regional Workforce Development Program called *Avanza* (Advance Regional) is working with universities in Guatemala, Honduras, and Jamaica. In Guatemala, Advance Regional is prioritizing the same departments as Bridges Guatemala. In Honduras, it is targeting the same areas as EF Honduras, as well as the following six departments: Ocotepeque, Copan, Santa Barbara, Lempira, Intibuca, and La Paz.

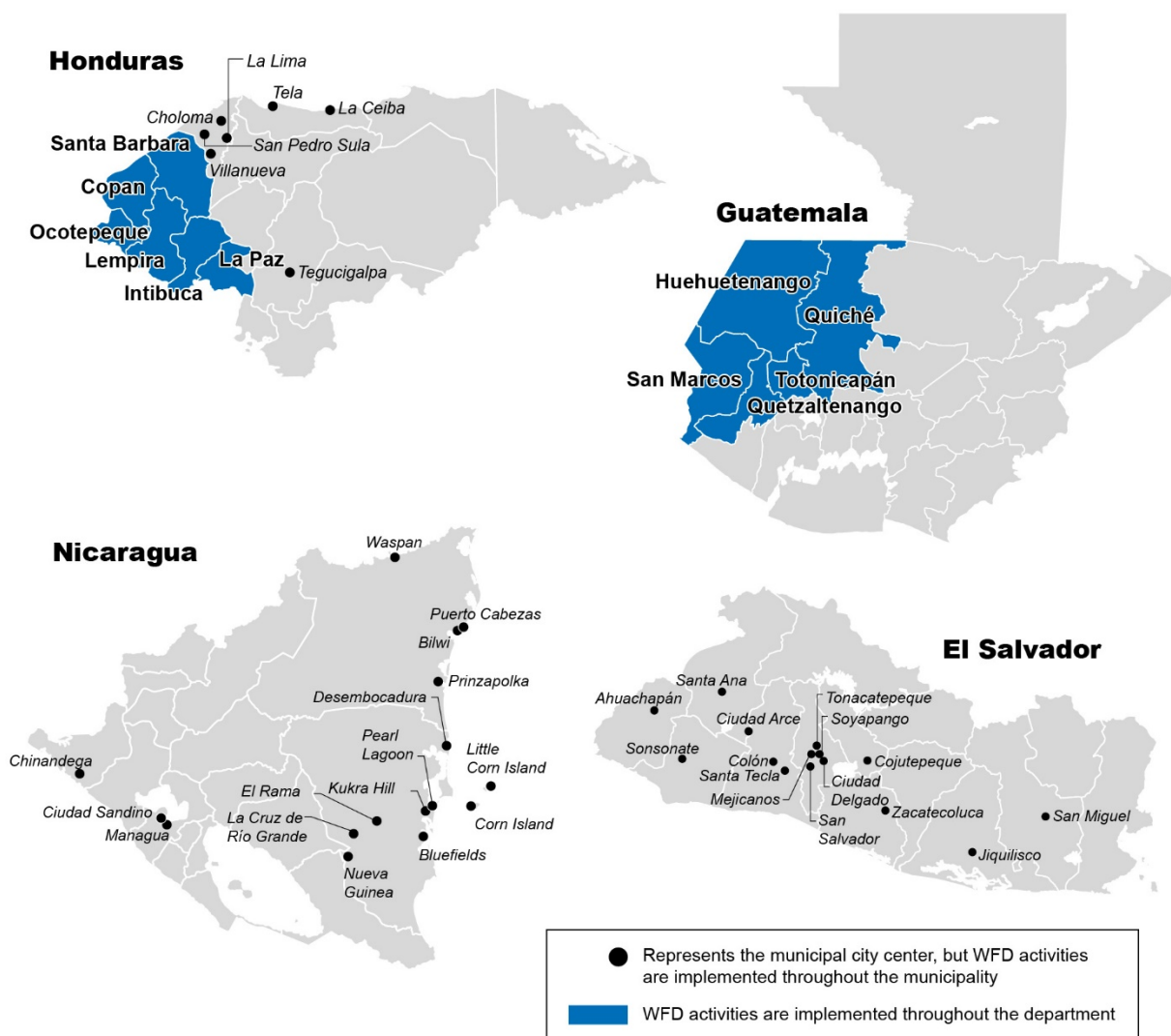
In El Salvador, the *Puentes para el Empleo* or Bridges to Employment Project (Bridges El Salvador) is being implemented with special emphasis within the following 15 high-crime municipalities: Ahuachapán, Ciudad Arce, Ciudad Delgado, Cojutepeque, Colón, Jiquilisco, Mejicanos, San Miguel, San Salvador, Santa Ana, Santa Tecla, Sonsonate, Soyapango, Tonacatepeque, and Zacatecoluca.

In Nicaragua, *Proyecto Aprendo y Emprendo* or the Technical Vocational Education Strengthening for At-Risk Youth project (TVET-SAY Nicaragua) is working in five municipalities of Nicaragua's RACCS — Bluefields, Corn Island, Little Corn Island, Nueva Guinea, and El Rama; two municipalities in

Nicaragua's RACCN —Waspan and Bilwi; and three municipalities in the Pacific region—Managua, Ciudad Sandino, and Chinandega. These are the municipalities where crime and violence are the highest.

The *Educación para el Éxito* or Education for Success Project in Nicaragua (EFS Nicaragua) was originally implemented in three municipalities of Nicaragua's RACCS region —Bluefields, Kukra Hill, and Pearl Lagoon—from 2010 to 2013. During its second phase (2013 to 2016), the project expanded to two additional municipalities in the region (Corn Island and Desembocadura de Río Grande), and in its third phase (2017 to 2020), it expanded to three more municipalities (Puerto Cabezas, Prinzapolka, and Waspan) in Nicaragua's RACCN region. Like TVET-SAY Nicaragua, these are the municipalities where crime and violence are the highest.

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



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

C. Profile of targeted beneficiaries

Although each project has a specific definition for youth targeted, all projects focus on supporting at-risk or disadvantaged youth. Table D.1 includes details on the beneficiaries targeted by each project.

Beneficiaries can be considered at-risk because of the high levels of crime in the communities, or disadvantaged for a variety of socio-economic reasons. Projects focus on vulnerable populations such as women, Lesbian Gay Bisexual Trans Intersex (LGBTI) youth, indigenous and afro-descendant youth, and youth with disabilities. These populations were targeted for recruitment, and projects make an effort to create new curricula and improve outreach to these populations to ensure that activities were more inclusive.

In Guatemala, the Bridges project is working with beneficiaries in more than 100 communities located in 25 Western Highland municipalities. All youth ages 15 to 24 living in the Western Highlands are eligible to participate in Bridges. The project considers youth from the Western Highlands disadvantaged because of their high rates of poverty and lack of educational achievement, and because there are limited services and opportunities available for youth.

In Honduras, the EF project continued serving youth in six communities and expanded to 35 new communities within all of the seven target municipalities.³⁰ The target population is out-of-school youth (primarily young men) between the ages of 16 to 30 who live in areas with high levels of violence. The project considers all youth living within target communities at-risk and categorizes each beneficiaries' level of risk as primary, secondary, and tertiary based on their degree of exposure to violence and crime.

The Advance Regional project identified youth as eligible for participation based on the specific criteria that it developed in FY2017 for disadvantaged youth ages 17 to 30, including the following: limited economic resources, living in communities with high indices of delinquency or violence, from indigenous communities, or marginalized. In addition to meeting at least one of the disadvantaged criteria, youth must have completed secondary education.

In El Salvador, the Bridges project continued working with youth in eight prioritized municipalities and expanded to the remaining 7 of the 15 high-crime municipalities originally selected.³¹ Bridges works with vulnerable youth ages 16 to 29 who are “in need of technical training, education, psychosocial support, or related assistance to complete their education or to find, keep, and/or improve employment” (DAI 2016).

In Nicaragua, the TVET-SAY and EFS projects both work with at-risk youth from the Caribbean Coast in 12 municipalities and from the Pacific Region in three municipalities. TVET-SAY's beneficiaries are at-risk youth ages 14 to 29 and EFS' beneficiaries are at-risk youth ages 10 to 29.

³⁰ The EF Honduras project works in the municipalities of Tegucigalpa, San Pedro Sula, Tela, Choloma, La Ceiba, Villanueva and La Lima.

³¹ Bridges El Salvador works with special emphasis in the following municipalities: Ahuachapán, Ciudad Arce, Ciudad Delgado, Cojutepeque, Colón, Jiquilisco, Mejicanos, San Miguel, San Salvador, Santa Ana, Santa Tecla, Sonsonate, Soyapango, Tonacatepeque, and Zacatecoluca.

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

Bridges Guatemala	EF Honduras	Advance Regional	Bridges El Salvador	TVET-SAY Nicaragua	EFS Nicaragua
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ages 15 to 24 and from the Western Highlands • Includes LGBTI youth and youth with disabilities • Assume 60 percent of youth will be out of school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ages 16 to 30 from targeted high-crime communities • Out of school • Youth at primary, secondary, or tertiary risk • Includes LGBTI youth and youth with disabilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ages 17 to 30 • Completed secondary education • Limited economic resources • Living in communities with high indices of delinquency or violence • From indigenous and Garifuna communities • Marginalized due to their ethnic origin, gender, religion, disabilities, or sexual orientation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ages 16 to 29 from targeted high-crime municipalities • In school or out of school, with a 9th-grade education • Need support to either complete high school or find employment • Demonstrate a commitment to their own development and the time and effort required to search for and maintain employment • Includes young women, LGBTI youth, and youth with disabilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ages 14 to 29 from the Caribbean Coast • At-risk youth living in unsafe neighborhoods or communities; or traditionally excluded youth including those from marginalized indigenous or afro-descendant communities, the disabled, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or intersex • Out of school and unemployed, but having passed the minimum grade required by the TVET courses • Extremely poor • Demonstrated vocation for the career selected • Potential personal leadership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At-risk youth, from high crime and violent areas in Nicaragua; youth that are particularly at risk, falling into criminal/gang activity or drug and alcohol abuse; youth with little schooling whose further employability options are severely curtailed; youth from marginalized indigenous and afro-descendant communities. • Primary scholarship recipients: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ages 10 to 16 • Only completed 3rd grade or the first cycle of accelerated primary education • Secondary scholarship recipients: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ages 14 to 24 • Only completed 6th grade or accelerated primary school • TVET training: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ages 16 to 29 • Only completed 6th grade or accelerated primary school

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

D. Description of youth training and support services

The six projects covered in this report follow an integrated approach to WFD. Each project is implementing a package of diverse activities. Many of the activities across the projects have similar features, but they are all tailored to the context and needs of their target population. In this report, we group the different types of beneficiary-level activities implemented by projects into activity categories. We use these activity categories to report on the number of beneficiaries that receive different types of activities across projects.

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

E. Overview of each project's goals, objectives, activities, and implementation status

This section provides an overview of the project goals and implementation status. Table D.2. summarizes each project's activities.

Table D.2. Summary of each project's activities to support youth

WFD activity categories	Bridges Guatemala	EF Honduras	Advance Regional	Bridges El Salvador	TVET-SAY Nicaragua	EFS Nicaragua
Eligibility screening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diplomado eligibility requirements: youth ages 15-24 and from targeted geographic areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Violence Involved Persons Risk Assessment (VIP-RA) to determine program services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scholarship eligibility of program enrollees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Psychometric test or interview to assess eligibility to participate in the program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Form A-1 of Comprehensive Positive Assessment Tool (COMPAS-T), interview, and remedial course grade to assess eligibility to participate in the program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scholarship eligibility of program enrollees
Technical/vocational skills training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technical/vocational modules Entrepreneurship vocational module In-person ICT course 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technical/vocational skills Soft skills training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technical/vocational training skills Labor bridging soft skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technical skills training Soft skills training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Career tracks with innovative soft skills training Entrepreneurship training Blended courses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technical/vocational training Soft skills training Integrated scholarship package
Soft skills training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Core skills curriculum (known as the Diplomado) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technical/vocational skills Soft skills training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technical/vocational training skills Labor bridging soft skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technical skills training Soft skills training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Career tracks with innovative soft skills training Entrepreneurship training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technical/vocational training Soft skills training Integrated scholarship package
Duration of training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 112 hours over the course of 4 to 6 months for Diplomado. Duration of vocational modules varies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimum 237 hours completed in a period of six months 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Full-time technical degree programs last 2 to 3 years (varies by degree) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Varies by course. Most courses last between 8 and 12 weeks. Specialty courses last 6 to 9 months 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scholarships for technical careers last 2.5 to 3 years Short-term trainings last 2 weeks to 4 months 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technical/vocational training lasts 150 hours to 3 years
Mentoring and counseling for soft skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mentoring Volunteer tutors at youth meeting spaces 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individual Integrated Development Plan (IIDP) Community and peer mentors Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> N/A 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mentoring Psychosocial assistance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collective counseling Individual and group psycho-social counseling Tutors for flexible education programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Peer mentoring Individual and group psycho-social counseling After-school tutoring and homework clubs
On-the-job training, labor bridging, and internships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internships and apprenticeships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internships and job shadowing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mentorship Internships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internships Job-readiness sessions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Roundtables with private sector Internships and apprenticeships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internships
Financial and in-kind support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vouchers Conditional cash transfers Seed funds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> N/A 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local and U.S. academic scholarship programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial support for WFD training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grants/scholarships for technical/vocational training Entrepreneur seed capital 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primary and secondary school scholarships Technical/vocational training scholarships Entrepreneurial seed funds

Note: All projects except for Bridges Guatemala have integrated technical/vocational skills and soft skills training.

N/A = not applicable.

1. Bridges Guatemala

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

Activities offered. Bridges Guatemala is conducting several activities including (1) building the capacity of WFD service providers; (2) working with WFD service providers so that 25,000 youth can finalize the core skills curriculum training in soft skills that are in demand by employers; and (3) working with youth in job placement and with employers to engage youth. As a part of the training, youth beneficiaries will participate approximately six hours a week for six months in a core soft skills training curriculum, called the *Diplomado Emprender con Éxito*, which is 112 hours and can be completed in a period of 4 to 6 months. After completing the core skills curriculum, beneficiaries can choose to enroll in technical courses offered by the project's implementing partners. The training program can range from 40 hours to 2 years depending on the course. Beneficiaries may also choose to continue their primary, middle, or high school education after completing the core skills curriculum (World Vision 2017a, 2017b).

Implementation status. The Bridges Guatemala project began in FY2017 and is now working with over 100 communities in 25 municipalities. In 23 of these municipalities, a Municipal Youth Center has been established where project training activities are held. In FY2019, the project expanded into 10 new municipalities. In FY2019, it focused on implementing the *Diplomado* with both in-person and radio modalities. As of the end of FY2019, the second and third cohorts of the in-person modality and the second cohort of the radio modality had graduated. The project also completed the validation of the virtual modality of the *Diplomado*, which will be housed on the Ministry of Education platform. In FY2019, Bridges Guatemala also focused on delivering several specialized courses in agriculture, information technology, and services, to name a few, to provide additional technical/vocational training opportunities to *Diplomado* graduates. The project continued consolidating relationships with the public and private sectors and equipping and establishing Municipal Youth Centers, which serve as safe places for youth to take the *Diplomado* and receive additional support. To help strengthen the capacity of youth who complete the *Diplomado*, Bridges solidified its Strategy for Youth Networks (*Redes Juveniles*), which promotes the active participation of youth who have graduated from the program by connecting them to additional training and leadership opportunities (World Vision 2019).

2. Employing Futures Honduras

Goals and objectives. The overall goal of EF Honduras is to increase employment and protective factors for at-risk youth ages 16 to 30. EF Honduras has three specific project objectives: (1) provide youth at primary, secondary, and tertiary risk³² with comprehensive WFD services with improved job placement

³² Youth at primary risk are those who, despite living in areas with high levels of violence, exhibit few signs in thoughts or actions related to violent behavior, or who have a large number of protective assets, such as a strong family or positive peer group. Youth at secondary risk are those who exhibit signs in either thoughts or actions related to violent behavior, or who do not have protective assets. Youth at tertiary risk are those who have already engaged in criminal or violent behavior. See Guzman et al. (2017) for a detailed description.

and self-employment rates; (2) strengthen the institutional capacity of the national TVET institution, INFOP,³³ to provide quality technical/vocational training and governance and to effectively align training and governance with private sector needs; and (3) provide youth at tertiary risk with services that lead to improved legal income generation (Banyan Global 2016a).

Activities offered. To achieve its project objectives, EF Honduras is conducting several different activities including (1) strengthening the institutional capacity of INFOP; (2) partnering with local service providers to offer comprehensive WFD services to the project's youth beneficiaries (with the following key components: (a) soft skills training, (b) technical skills, (c) basic labor competencies, and (d) cognitive behavioral therapy elements offered throughout training); (3) offering youth at tertiary risk individualized components through an integrated development plan³⁴; (4) providing post-training entrepreneurship support to youth at tertiary risk; and (5) implementing a labor bridging strategy (with the following components: (a) internships, apprenticeships, on-the-job training, job shadowing, or some other form of supervised practical experience; (b) continued mentoring or accompaniment; (c) involvement in youth support groups; (d) career counseling and job placement services; and (e) follow-on support offered beyond employment, including on-site visits and continued access to career services. The approximate duration of the comprehensive WFD training program is a minimum of 237 hours or 240 to 500 hours depending on the occupation for specialized courses; the project aims to have 7,500 youth complete the training (Banyan Global 2019a).

Implementation status. EF Honduras began in FY2016, and has now graduated its second cohort of trainees and expanded into two new municipalities to address the pressing migrant issue. The political crisis that started in November 2017 and the withholding of funding in FY2019 significantly impacted the project and caused delays and suspensions of certain training programs. The project had to scale back the number of youth trained and cancel numerous INFOP support activities. Despite this, in FY2019 the job placement rate reached 55 percent. At least 50 percent of youth who received services from the activity will have obtained new or improved employment, including self-employment. In response to new priorities, the project added two indicators for migration and worked with the private sector and government agencies to better understand returning migrants and how to provide them with employment. The project also conducted an assessment of INFOP to gauge its progress towards becoming a more market-driven institution, and it took additional steps to train INFOP staff and support the creation of new curricula that align with labor market needs (Banyan Global 2019b).

3. Advance Regional

Goals and objectives. The project's goal is to increase employment opportunities among disadvantaged youth ages 17 to 30. To achieve this goal, the project focuses on (1) improving the quality of technical skills training at the tertiary education level and (2) facilitating access to tertiary education in Honduras, Guatemala, and Jamaica (FHI 360 2016, 2017a).³⁵

Activities offered. Advance Regional focuses on strengthening the institutional capacity of select technical tertiary institutions in Honduras, Guatemala, and Jamaica. Youth beneficiaries of Advance

³³ INFOP is an autonomous institution tasked with governing and regulating non-formal technical/vocational training in Honduras. INFOP also runs several training centers throughout the country.

³⁴ EF Honduras is using the Violence Involved Persons Risk Assessment (VIP-RA) to help determine which interventions each beneficiary should receive.

³⁵ Advance Regional is similar to other WFD projects in that it focuses on disadvantaged youth as beneficiaries; the primary difference is the focus on postsecondary technical degrees.

Regional receive services through these educational institutions, with a focus on disadvantaged youth. The project's core activities include (1) working with institutions to update curriculum and pedagogy for two- and three-year technical training programs to better respond to local labor market demands; (2) providing enhanced professional development opportunities and training for faculty and non-academic staff; (3) strengthening labor bridging activities within partner institutions, including career service offerings for students and partnerships with private sector businesses; (4) improving access to target degree programs by strengthening recruitment, admissions, and student services (including academic and non-academic supports like mentoring programs), and (5) providing a subset of disadvantaged youth beneficiaries with scholarships to attend selected degree programs. Scholarships for full-time technical degree programs last two to three years (FHI 360 2016, 2017a).

Implementation status. This project is unique in that all training programs are offered through universities (as opposed to TVET centers) and training programs are multi-year academic programs. In FY2019, the Advance Regional project was in its fourth year of implementation, and started training its second cohort of Full Program Intervention (FPI) beneficiaries—youth who enrolled in 2019 and benefit from new and revised curriculum, improved institutional processes, and scholarships. The project continued improving the quality and relevance of curriculum design and pedagogy and implementing cost-sharing plans by working closely with partner institutions. The project also worked with public and private sector representatives based on newly implemented private sector strategies in all countries. Advance Regional also continued offering a scholarships program, which covers tuition, food, lodging, and transportation for selected students. As of writing this report, Advance Regional was expecting a project extension through 2022 (FHI 360 2019).

4. Bridges to Employment El Salvador

Goals and objectives. The central goal of the Bridges El Salvador project is to increase and improve employment of vulnerable youth ages 16 to 29 living in the country's high-crime municipalities. The project has three objectives: (1) improve the enabling environment for youth WFD and employment through better laws and hiring practices, (2) improve the quality of WFD services that effectively respond to market demand to insert vulnerable youth into targeted economic sectors, and (3) improve workforce readiness of targeted at-risk youth. The project focuses on working with employers and developing youth skills needed for the high-growth sectors of agroindustry, manufacturing, information communications technology (ICT), tourism, and renewable energy (DAI 2018a, 2018b).

Activities offered. Bridges El Salvador is implementing a variety of activities to achieve its project objectives including (1) engaging the private sector by supporting private firms in the development of internal policy improvement plans intended to increase youth hiring and working with employers and associations to establish, identify, and/or improve training programs that cover the needs of the four high-growth sectors; (2) contracting with WFD service providers to implement employment training programs that include both classroom and real-world experience through an internship; (3) improving soft skills curricula and training service providers in adopting and applying them; (4) facilitating access to career counseling and mentoring services for beneficiaries including (a) providing a brochure on career opportunities, (b) developing “business cafes” for sharing knowledge and creating peer networks, and (c) holding job orientation sessions that will include counseling on labor market demand, mentoring with recruitment managers, and registering on online job databases; (5) selecting and developing some service providers as “one-stop shop” activity hubs to coordinate WFD services, including additional training,

information on job fairs, resume writing, interview preparation, among others³⁶; and (6) training tutors for flexible education programs that allow youth to complete their high school education through a flexible modality. With the exception of some specialty courses that may last six to nine months, all other technical/vocational and soft trainings last 8 to 12 weeks. Bridges El Salvador hopes to graduate 14,400 youth before the program ends in FY2020. Most youth participating in technical/vocational and soft skills trainings receive stipends (\$5 per day) to be used for transportation, food, and child care (DAI 2018a, 2018b).

Implementation status. In FY2019, the Bridges El Salvador project was in its fourth implementation year and third year of training beneficiaries and placing them in jobs. In its first three years of implementation, Bridges El Salvador focused on designing a training program that responded to the needs of the formal labor market, recruiting specialized training centers able to deliver the training that Bridges designed, and building a network of private sector partners that could not only provide feedback into the design of the training program, but also serve as possible future employers. In FY2019, the project continued strengthening its links to the private sector by co-hosting a major private sector conference, consolidating alliances with key stakeholders, and supporting companies in strengthening corporate policies and practices. Bridges El Salvador also supported eight local governments in developing or improving youth policies and worked with CSO partners on ways to improve assistance to returned youth migrants. The Stakeholder Advisory group, a group of private and public sector stakeholders who advise Puentes activities, also helped to support returned migrants by increasing options for job placement (DAI 2019a, 2019b).

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

Goals and objectives. The project's main objective is to expand opportunities in technical/vocational training, entrepreneurship, soft skills training for strengthening resilience and violence prevention, and job placement for at-risk youth ages 14 to 29 living in the Caribbean Coast. The project's activities focus on (1) improving collaboration and information sharing among centers by establishing or strengthening a network of training centers, (2) strengthening private TVET centers, (3) improving perceptions of TVET programs through public awareness campaigns, and (4) providing integrated attention to at-risk youth from the Caribbean Coast by expanding opportunities in technical/vocational training, entrepreneurship, resilience strengthening, soft skills, individual psycho-social counseling, violence prevention, and job placement (Creative Associates 2017, 2019a).

Activities offered. To achieve its main objective, TVET-SAY Nicaragua is implementing several different activities including (1) strengthening the capacity of ten private TVET centers, including expanding course offerings, integrating in the curricula an innovative soft skills training approach, and improving the quality of trainings and career services to facilitate job placement³⁷; (2) providing at-risk youth with scholarships to participate in 2.5- to 3-year technical careers offered by the eight private TVET centers or 2- to 4-month blended learning courses combining in-person and online technical

³⁶ Each service provider is evaluated on an ongoing basis through the technical/vocational education and training capacity assessment tool (TVET-CAT). The project used results from the initial TVET-CAT to develop a customized capacity-building plan for each service provider.

³⁷ TVET-SAY Nicaragua adjusted the USAID OCA tool to include the evaluation of vocational centers and their engagement with the demand side, leading to the organizational capacity assessment tool (OCA-T). The OCA-T is designed to measure and strengthen the capacity of TVETs to provide WFD services tailored to the critical needs of at-risk youth. The project used results from a baseline OCA-T to create individualized action plans for each center, and will update the capacity assessments annually.

training; (3) establishing private sector alliances to offer scholarship funding for participation in the eight centers, help the centers better align their course offerings with youth labor market demand, and provide employment opportunities; and (4) improving collaboration and exchange amongst training centers through the establishment of national, regional, and sectoral networks. TVET-SAY Nicaragua worked with USAID to develop the Comprehensive Positive Assessment Tool (COMPAS-T) to identify at-risk youth to be offered scholarships and to measure their level of risk before and after participating in trainings.³⁸ They hope to graduate over 1,000 scholarship beneficiaries from technical careers by the end of the project (Creative Associates 2017, 2019a).

Implementation status. In FY2019, the TVET-SAY Nicaragua project was in its fourth implementation year and in its third full year working with beneficiaries. Despite the continued socio-political crisis in the country, TVET-SAY Nicaragua continued awarding scholarships for technical/vocational training in 18 municipalities. To strengthen the enabling environment for TVET, the project also helped create RENET in 2016, a network of technical education stakeholders including CSOs, private sector companies, universities, and TVET centers. In FY2019, the project continued providing technical assistance to RENET by training members on organizational capacity assessments and standardizing curricula, and supporting the organization to expand its influence in Nicaragua. The political and societal unrest that started in April 2018 in response to government reforms significantly impacted TVET-SAY's implementation plans, especially given the contraction of private sector investment. Despite this, TVET-SAY Nicaragua has continued to work with businesses and created mitigation strategies with youth self-employment initiatives and new online blended courses that correspond to market demands. The project is also working on creating a job matching platform to improve linkages between TVET centers and local companies. The project developed mitigation strategies to be able to continue working with affected beneficiaries, such as creating a blended course approach that included in-person and online training for those who could not attend training in person, as well as providing options for shorter training courses. As of writing this report, TVET-SAY Nicaragua received a no-cost extension through September 2020 (Creative Associates 2019b).

6. Education for Success Nicaragua

Goals and objectives. The project's goal is to assist at-risk youth ages 10 to 29 through an integrated program that helps them develop and use educational and soft skills needed for a productive life of work, service, and professional development. EFS Nicaragua provides support through the formal education system as well as through technical/vocational training institutions (FADCANIC 2014a, 2016a).

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

³⁸ The COMPAS-T measures 12 risk factors and five protective factors. TVET-SAY administers the COMPAS-T to beneficiaries, before and after training completion, as well as six months after completion. The tool includes an early warning system useful for identifying beneficiaries who need individual counseling.

complement the technical trainings; (5) providing selected youth in the technical/vocational programs psychological counseling; (6) offering EFS youth entrepreneurial seed funding to selected youth who have completed technical/vocational training; (7) training parents, teachers, and community volunteers to support program beneficiaries; (8) creating links with the private sector to identify employment opportunities for youth who have completed technical/vocational skills training; and (9) strengthening the institutional capacity of FADCANIC (FADCANIC 2014, 2016a).

Implementation status. The EFS Nicaragua project began in 2010 and is now working with beneficiaries in eight municipalities in Nicaragua's RACCS and RACCN, after several rounds of regional expansion. The political crisis that started in April 2018 significantly impacted the project, making it harder to engage with the private sector and find employment for youth. FADCANIC has also been publicly accused by the government of mishandling funds, which has affected the institution's relationship with public institutions. Despite this, in FY2019 EFS Nicaragua continued training primary and secondary learners, strengthening individual counseling, and improving community support for youth enrolled in the program. The project also established new alliances with the private sector outside of the geographical area of implementation to gain access to internships and employment. EFS Nicaragua had an anticipated completion date of March 2019, but received a 21-month extension in spring 2019 (FADCANIC 2019).

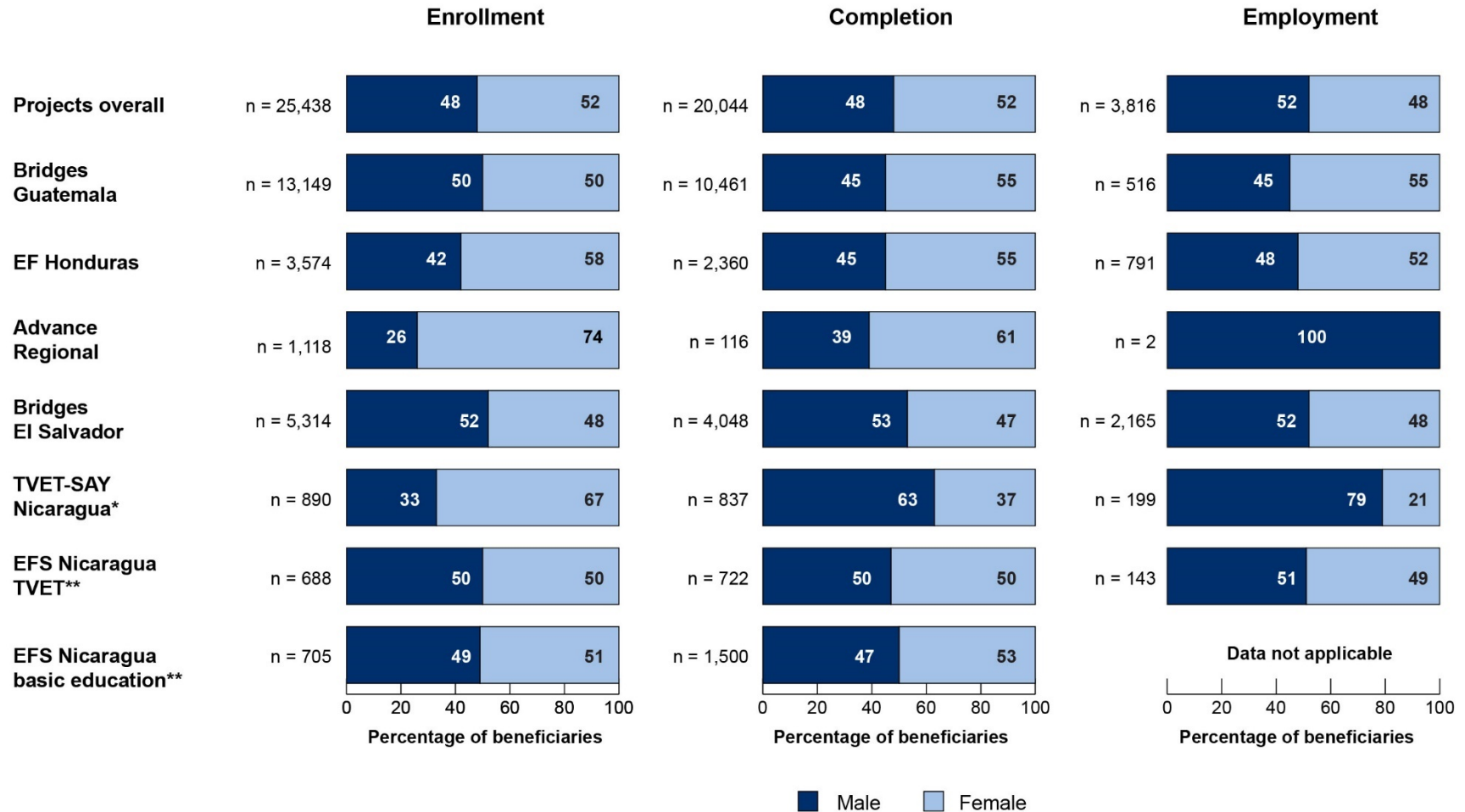
APPENDIX E:

DISAGGREGATED FINDINGS

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In this appendix we provide additional information on our sub-group analysis. In Figures E.1 and E.2, we present differences by sex and age groups in WFD training program enrollment, completion, and subsequent employment for FY2019. Section III.F. of the report outlines cumulative differences by sex and age groups.

Figure E.1. FY2019 beneficiary enrollment, completion, and employment disaggregated by sex

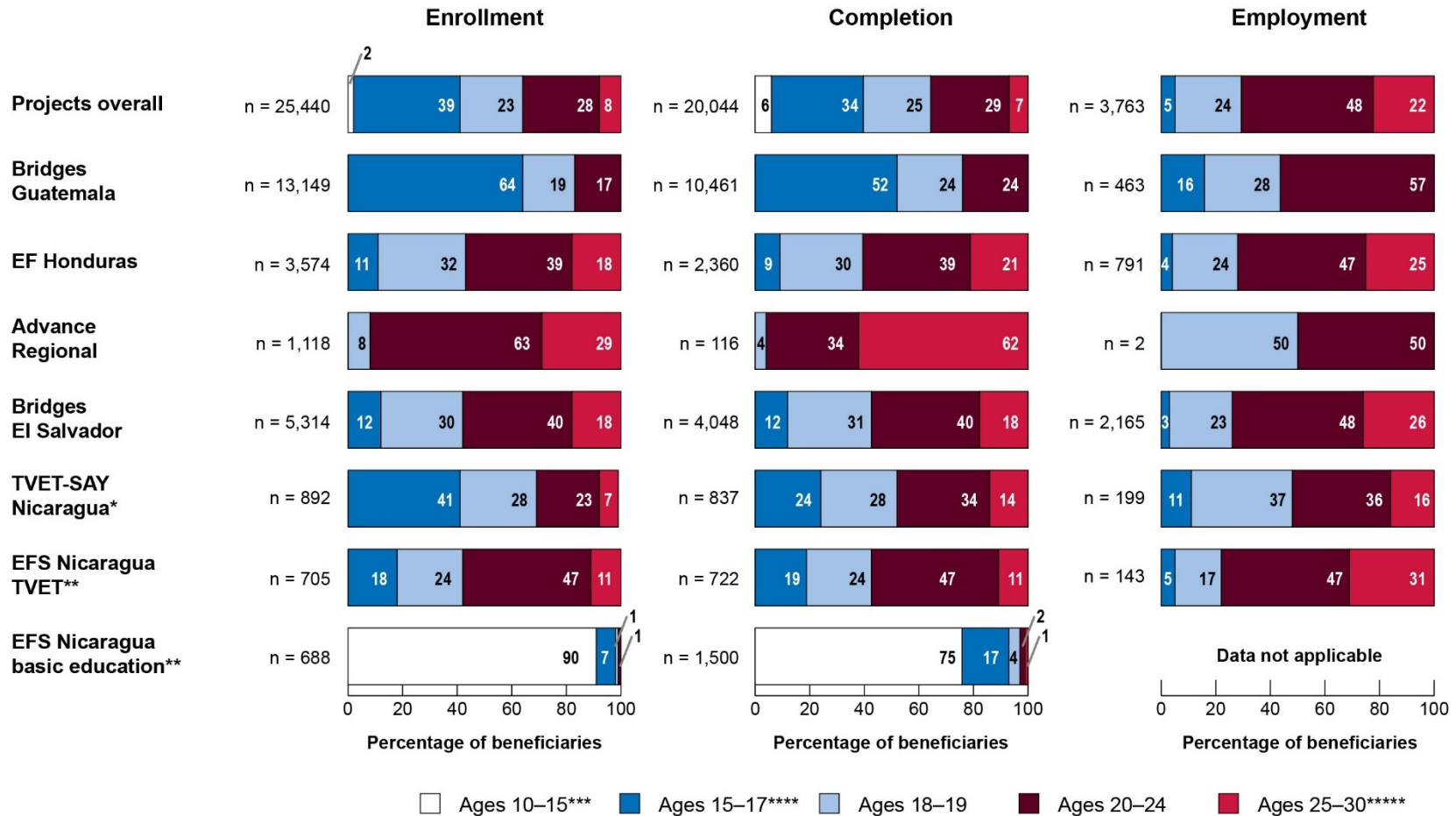


Notes: Source materials from World Vision, Banyan Global, FHI 360, DAI, Creative Associates, and FADCANIC. Due to rounding the share numbers for some bars may not sum to 100.

* TVET-SAY Nicaragua does not track employment outcomes for partial scholarship recipients, although they are included in our numbers for enrollment and completion.

** EFS Nicaragua does not track employment outcomes for basic education beneficiaries since they are not expected to find employment given that the majority of the beneficiaries are under 15 years old.

Figure E.2. FY2019 beneficiary enrollment, completion, and employment disaggregated by age group



Notes: Source materials from World Vision, Banyan Global, FHI 360, DAI, Creative Associates, and FADCANIC. Due to rounding the share numbers for some bars may not sum to 100.

* TVET-SAY Nicaragua does not track employment outcomes for partial scholarship recipients.

** EFS Nicaragua does not track employment outcomes for basic education beneficiaries since they are not expected to find employment.

*** The ages 10–15 group is only applicable for EFS Nicaragua basic education beneficiaries.

**** The ages 15–17 group only includes beneficiaries ages 16–17 for EF Honduras and Bridges El Salvador and only beneficiaries age 17 for Advance Regional.

***** The ages 25–30 group only includes beneficiaries ages 25–29 for Bridges El Salvador, TVET-SAY Nicaragua, and EFS Nicaragua. For Advance Regional this age group includes 313 enrolled students over age 30.

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APPENDIX F:

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON FY2019 FINDINGS RELATED TO
UNDERSTANDING LABOR MARKET NEEDS

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This appendix has more information about the LMAs performed by each project, including assessment details and findings.

Table F.1 summarizes the LMAs conducted by the projects since we began reporting. All the study projects have conducted LMAs to better understand the skills sought by employers and the sectors that offer the most growth potential. Through various LMA exercises, all WFD projects had surveyed or interviewed more than 700 firms to get their key observations on recruitment and employment trends and preferences. EF Honduras conducted its first LMA in FY2018. Bridges Guatemala conducted a market study in 15 municipalities in FY2018. The Bridges El Salvador project completed its LMA in FY2017 and conducted interviews to update it in FY2019 (though results are not yet available). EFS Nicaragua completed a study on the local labor market in FY2014 that focused on identifying possible partnerships with the private sector. In FY2016, TVET-SAY Nicaragua conducted a Labor Demand and Entrepreneurship Study that was similar in nature to other LMAs, and updated it in FY2017 and FY2018. Advance Regional has conducted a distinct LMA in each of its focus countries—Honduras, Jamaica, and Guatemala.

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

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

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

	Bridges Guatemala	EF Honduras	Advance Regional	Bridges El Salvador	TVET-SAY Nicaragua	EFS Nicaragua
Name of assessment	Departmental Business Diagnostics	Labor Market Assessment	LMAs in three countries: Jamaica, Guatemala, Honduras	Labor Market Assessment	Labor Demand and Entrepreneurship Study	Public-Private Partnership Strategy
Completion date	FY2018	FY2018	FY2017, with updates in FY2018	FY2017, with updates in FY2019	FY2016, with updates in FY2017, FY2018, FY2019	FY2015
Geographic scope	15 municipalities in 5 departments	5 municipalities	Focus on Western Highlands in Guatemala; national in Jamaica and Honduras	Only in municipalities of interest to the project given set criteria	Caribbean Coast	Caribbean Coast
Methodology	Desktop review, key informant interviews (KIIs) with private sector and local government, focus groups with local actors; total of 250 people participated	Desktop review, KIIs with unions and business chambers, focus groups with microentrepreneurs, survey of 300 firms	Desktop and quantitative analysis of data, sector selection, subsector analysis, and KIIs with representatives of organizations in subsectors (29 companies in Guatemala, 47 in Honduras, 41 in Jamaica)	Desktop review, stakeholder interviews, enterprise survey of 206 companies, focus groups with microenterprises	KIIs, existing national survey, enterprise survey of firms along Caribbean Coast; survey included information across 6 competency areas from 40 companies in the Caribbean Coast ^a	Desktop review, KIIs, and rapid survey of approximately 40 stakeholders (businesses and some local non-governmental organizations)

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

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

Table F.2. Summary of LMA findings across WFD projects through FY2019

	Advance Regional: Guatemala LMA	Advance Regional: Honduras LMA	Advance Regional: Jamaica LMA	Bridges El Salvador	TVET-SAY Nicaragua	EFS Nicaragua	Bridges Guatemala	EF Honduras
Sectors under review	Textiles and apparel, processed food and non-alcoholic beverages, and tourism	Coffee, textiles, tourism, and health	Tourism, agribusiness, creative industries	Tourism, agroindustry, manufacturing, information technology	Tourism, transportation, sales, administration, financial services, coffee, cocoa, telecommunications	Agroforestry, tourism, renewable energy, textiles/clothing manufacture, traditional trades/services	Agroindustry, tourism, health services, technology, and textiles	Business services, agroindustry, tourism, intermediate manufacturing, textiles
Key constraints/limitations identified by employers	Specific technical skills missing for key growth sectors as well as specific tertiary education programs. In textiles and apparel, training and education opportunities do not satisfy demand.	Specific technical skills missing for key growth sectors (high-quality coffee), soft skills (especially for tourism).	Specific technical skills missing for key growth sectors (ecotourism and health tourism).	Deficiencies in basic skills, such as oral and written communication and numeracy. Weaknesses in communication, soft skills, and self-esteem. Mobility constraints due to violent neighborhoods. Limited specialized skills in environmental management, agricultural processes, and quality control in the agroprocessing sector.	Socio-emotional skills, specialized technical skills.	Limited employment opportunities. Technical skills are needed, but overall impression that entrepreneurship along the Caribbean Coast would lead to better opportunities for youth.	Limited infrastructure to access market, security concerns, and involvement/support of local government in promoting competition and access to the market. ^a	Soft skills, professional training specific to the sector, education level, issues with citizen security and candidates' physical appearance.

Appendix F: Additional information on FY2019 findings related to understanding labor market needs

	Advance Regional: Guatemala LMA	Advance Regional: Honduras LMA	Advance Regional: Jamaica LMA	Bridges EI Salvador	TVET-SAY Nicaragua	EFS Nicaragua	Bridges Guatemala	EF Honduras
Skills demanded by employers	Soft skills, innovation and creativity (for textiles), business and sales skills.	Soft skills (strong work ethic). In the tourism sector, technical skills in demand varied, with multiple employers preferring youth who can be trained in-house.	More practical education and hands-on experience; more specialized training	Hard and soft skills, interpersonal skills (honesty, creativity, teamwork, communication, reliability, and responsibility). For service sector, how youth look and relationship to gangs are important. The plastics industry seeks very specialized technical skills.	Hard (depending on type of employment) and life and soft skills (responsibility, honesty, teamwork, and punctuality).	Hard skills (depending on type of employment)	N/A	Basic skills (reading and writing), interpersonal skills (teamwork, communication, proactivity, work under pressure, verbal and written communication, honesty, and responsibility), and intrapersonal skills (reliability, problem-solving, self-teaching, and leadership).

Note: Based on source materials from FHI360 2017b, 2017c, 2017d; DAI 2017a; Creative Associates 2017, 2019c; FADCANIC 2014a, 2014b; *Fundación Nicaragüense para el Desarrollo Económico y Social* 2016, World Vision 2018, Banyan Global 2018a.

^a Bridges Guatemala did not determine key constraints and limitations identified by employers, and instead focused on key constraints and limitations to the business climate in each municipality.

N/A = Not applicable.

Key observations and findings on project LMAs

In Honduras, EF finalized its LMA in FY2018. The assessment focused on identifying high-growth sectors (agribusiness, information technology, manufacturing, textiles, and tourism) to ensure alignment with the Honduran government's Plan 20/20. The assessment also described employment opportunities for at-risk youth, provided data on the number of jobs that could be created, identified constraints to hiring youth, discussed entrepreneurial opportunities and barriers, and made recommendations about the current EF training curriculum. While the LMA was carried out, the project held 14 meetings with industry associations and chambers of commerce representatives to validate some of its market-driven training programs. These preliminary findings helped the EF project focus its first round of vocational training grants on the tourism, manufacturing, services, construction, and IT sectors.

Some of the findings from the Honduras LMA revealed that (1) companies are reluctant to hire youth if they come from dangerous neighborhoods, (2) the preferred way to recruit youth is through personal contacts and networks, (3) opportunities exist for youth to find internships and apprenticeships in the key sectors that were identified, and (4) companies continue to perceive soft skills (such as interpersonal skills) as key to recruiting top candidates. The agroindustry and business services sectors have the highest hiring rate of at-risk youth. However, the country's security conditions have made some companies reluctant to hire youth from specific areas. Over 27 percent of companies stated that they would not consider an applicant who lives in an area that is considered very dangerous. In addition, 56 percent of companies said physical appearance could be a cause for rejecting a candidate. Most companies said they required a high school academic level for skilled positions, whereas unskilled positions usually required a basic-level education. The agroindustry and business services sector reported the greatest need for tertiary or postsecondary education. Overall, all sectors anticipate hiring for 3,290 new positions, most of which could be filled by youth with appropriate skills. The business services sector plans on generating the most jobs in FY2019.

In terms of labor bridging, companies are interested in giving qualified youth internships, but there are not many internships available, and the conversion rate from intern to full-time employee is never above 27 percent. Once youth are employed, companies sometimes notice gaps in the basic skills, interpersonal skills, and intrapersonal skills of at-risk youth. Employers noted that these skills were sometimes more valued than technical/vocational skills, and that technical programs should focus on strengthening soft skills. The main causes for dismissing staff include irresponsibility in task performance and a lack of preparation for the position.

The report made four main recommendations. First, programs should develop training and activities to strengthen soft skills. Second, Bridges should help youth strengthen their professional networks. Even if youth have the required skills for employment, they may find it difficult to be hired without a network. Third, the project should prioritize working with sectors that have a high demand for at-risk youth such as the manufacturing, textiles, and business services sectors. Finally, the project should partner with the private sector and vocational centers to identify relevant and effective technical/vocational training required for job placement.

During the launch of the LMA, the project organized workshops with human resources leaders on how to successfully leverage opportunities with the project. Since publishing their LMA, EF Honduras technical/vocational training has focused on information technology, tourism, services, manufacturing, and construction (Banyan Global 2018a).

The **Bridges Guatemala** project conducted a market study in the 15 municipalities where it is intervening in Phase II in FY2018. This study was different from the other LMAs because it did not seek information on attributes the private sector looks for in the youth it employs. Instead, the study made a macroeconomic assessment of each municipality, outlining barriers to and facilitators of growth. Overall, the study revealed that more and more youth seek employment in their municipalities, and often emigrate if they cannot find employment. The study included an analysis of economic data and businesses to identify economic sectors with potential to grow and businesses with potential for acceleration and expansion that can employ youth as a result. Although the study determined the top two sectors with potential in each municipality, the following sectors were identified as having the most potential: agroindustry, tourism, health services, technology, and textiles. Overall, there is promising potential for three or four municipalities that have the opportunity to develop high-level industry. Smaller municipalities need more attention in order to expand market access and accelerate currently slow growth.

The market study also scored each municipality on a 100-point scale using seven indicators to determine the condition of the business climate. This exercise helped highlight weaknesses and suggest how to improve them to ultimately attract investments and generate employment. Some of the areas for improvement included (1) promote public policies at the local government level to improve competition and relationships with businesses, (2) improve infrastructure to facilitate access to markets, and (3) enhance perception of security. The report suggests that each municipality create an annual work plan so that local governments and the private sector can work to bridge the gaps and improve the overall business climate.

Based on the market study, Bridges Guatemala started identifying companies in the sectors with potential to try and create courses tailored for their needs. The project also identified micro-companies in communities to expand employment opportunities for vulnerable youth. Additionally, the project has started creating videos to inform youth about the results of the market study, especially about the sectors of growth so that youth could see where potential employment opportunities might exist (World Vision 2018).

Bridges El Salvador interviewed 206 businesses in FY2017 and found that many of the business associations representing employers expressed concern about entry-level applicants' skills, as there is a mismatch between the skills and abilities employers look for in entry-level applicants, and the skills and abilities vulnerable youth have. In addition, Salvadoran youth seem to lack skills-based competencies that can help them respond to industry demands. Associations expressed an interest in having youth gain more technical knowledge and practical skills to prepare them for opportunities. In the service industry, though, employers emphasized the need for soft skills; the perception is that youth with strong soft skills will be easier to train than those without soft skills. Because Bridges works with municipalities with high levels of violence, the LMAs also provided information on how violence or the perception of violence affected youth. Employers had concerns about youth's ability to transport themselves safely in or out of gang-affected areas, which could compromise their ability to regularly report to work. In addition, employers said they made assumptions about candidates' fitness for jobs based on where they lived. Applicants from more violent neighborhoods were perceived as being more violent themselves, based purely on where they lived. Violence, insecurity, and extortion payments were factors that affected microenterprises and entrepreneurs. With limited funds in the start-up phase, many small business owners said that it was hard to expand their businesses when they needed funds to cover security costs and extortion payments.

Bridges El Salvador also explored youth employment opportunities in value chains it considered to have exhibited growth characteristics, based on economic and trade data and the experiences of other USAID projects in the LMA. Starting from an original list of 17 possible sectors, Bridges narrowed the focus

sectors to the following 5: tourism, agroindustry, manufacturing, information technology, and renewable energy.³⁹ The sugar, dairy, bakery, pharmaceutical, and plastics industries are tradable goods industries that create jobs and contribute to the Salvadoran economy. The LMA for El Salvador included value chain analyses identifying possible entry opportunities for youth in sales, marketing, and distribution in these sectors. The information from this assessment equipped Bridges with key information to help service providers modify some of their trainings to be more responsive to labor market demand and private sector workforce needs. To disseminate the findings from the LMA, Bridges El Salvador held a forum with 374 representatives of government, private sector, academia, donors and civil society in July 2017.

In FY2019, the project updated its LMA. The updated information helped Bridges create a job placement strategy that includes (1) supporting institutional strengthening of training centers by creating strong and long-term alliances with employers, (2) building the capacity of job placement managers, (3) creating One-Stop Shops, or places where youth can receive personalized assistance and support, (4) fostering more engagement with the private sector, (5) strengthening alliances between training centers and private sector companies by designing and updating training curricula to respond to labor market needs and coordinating internships, and (6) improving the job readiness and employability of vulnerable youth (DAI 2017a, 2017b).

In **Nicaragua, EFS and TVET-SAY** conducted separate assessments of the labor market on the Caribbean Coast. EFS' assessment of the labor market in 2014 summarized the capabilities required by the private sector in RACCN and RACCS (FADCANIC 2014b). The assessment revealed that the private sector along the Caribbean Coast is characterized by family-owned microenterprises with limited growth and employment potential. The most promising employment opportunities found at the time included seafood processing in Corn Island, an agribusiness in Kukra Hill, and some larger businesses in Bluefields. The information on skills demanded by employers helped EFS adapt its courses to private-sector demand. For example, because of the growth of the seafood processing industry in the Corn Islands, EFS trained youth on seafood processing, and to repair engines in small boats (outboard motors repair). The necessity of continued training in both soft skills and entrepreneurship was another important finding because these skills could help youth develop their own microenterprises to make up for the limited employment opportunities. Since 2014, the EFS project has also been using the findings from the LMA conducted by TVET-SAY Nicaragua.

TVET-SAY Nicaragua conducted an analysis of private sector demand for employment in 2016 and updated it in 2017, 2018, and 2019. The report focused on companies along the Caribbean Coast of Nicaragua, but also drew on a national report produced by *Fundación Nicaragüense para el Desarrollo Económico y Social* (FUNIDES). In FY2016, the report focused on specific sectors including agriculture (cocoa and banana/plantains), mining, fisheries, and commerce. TVET-SAY's LMA revealed the following findings about the Caribbean Coast: over half of the firms surveyed by TVET-SAY responded that they had difficulty recruiting youth because they lacked skills, especially socio-emotional skills: a skills gap exists between skilled labor and employment prospects that the project could bridge, especially around soft skills training. The report also noted difficulties in securing internships for youth mostly due to lack of coordination with training centers and the fact that candidates' skills did not match the competencies required. However, the report did help identify positions open to youth based on specific training offered by the projects, particularly in the agriculture and sales sectors. In FY2017, TVET-SAY updated its assessment with a survey of 30 firms. Some of the findings of the updated report included a

³⁹ Bridges El Salvador started working in the renewable energy sector during FY2018.

willingness by the private sector to provide hands-on training to new/young employees, but firms continue to seek soft skills, notably honesty, responsibility, timeliness, and teamwork. The assessment also determined the possibility of certain sectors investing in project training programs. The sectors most willing to employ youth included the transportation, telecommunications and commerce sectors; however, this varied considerably by sector. The project updated the LMA again in FY2018, this time surveying 96 firms from 11 different sectors, some of which were tourism, dairy processing, financial services, cocoa, and telecommunications. The survey measured the willingness of companies to hire youth and noted that soft skills like responsibility, honesty, teamwork, and punctuality are most valued. As a product of the LMA, RENET helped create sector-specific reports (such as the coffee, automotive, and tourism sectors) that describe the state of the sector, positions available to youth, and the qualifications needed for those positions. Finally, the project updated the LMA in FY2019 based on a labor demand survey funded by FUNIDES, who surveyed 408 firms in six sectors, some of which were tourism, construction, food and beverage manufacturing, and textiles. On the company side, employers stressed the need for applicants to have technical knowledge and life and soft skills. Employers were also optimistic about the availability of technical jobs, despite the political crisis (FUNIDES 2019).

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

In Guatemala, the LMA facilitated a more nuanced understanding of the employment opportunities in the vegetable and legumes, textiles and apparel, processed food and non-alcoholic beverage, and tourism subsectors. In the agriculture sector, the general perceptions were that university students are an asset to companies in the sector and often also have the appropriate soft skills (positivity, self-motivation, and the ability to work well in groups). In the textiles industry, the LMA found that training opportunities in Guatemala did not satisfy the needs of formal and informal businesses in the sector. Employers in the processed food and beverage industry said they were seeking more trained technicians to respond to the spike in demand for health foods. Table F.3 summarizes some of the tertiary training needs identified by each subsector. The LMA also found that sales and marketing specialists with experience in web and graphic design are in demand in the tourism industry (FHI 360 2017c).

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

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

Note: Source materials from FHI 360c.

In Honduras, the LMA focused on the coffee, textiles, tourism, and health sectors. The Honduras LMA determined that, in general, employers do not think Honduras' secondary education system adequately prepares job seekers for the workplace. Employers also said soft skills such as a desire to learn, clear communication skills, and creativity were critical to employment. As with the example in Guatemala, the LMA mapped the sectors to local institutions offering training and education that could be relevant to employers in their sector. The Honduras LMA found that more training was needed in each of the four

focus sectors. Table F.4 depicts the training needs identified for each of the focus subsectors (FHI 360 2017d).

Table F.4. Honduras training needs by focus sectors identified in the LMA

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

Note: Source materials from FHI 360 2017d.

The information came from the LMAs and from additional institutional landscape analyses set up by the Advance Regional project to identify its priority areas of intervention by country. The project is working closely with three institutions and degree programs in each country to receive services for the duration of the contract. By the end of FY2018, Advance Regional had signed memoranda of understanding with nine institutions, meeting its life-of-program target. These partnerships set the framework for Advance Regional to start strengthening organizations that will train tertiary education institutions serving youth.

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APPENDIX G:

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON WFD SYSTEM STRENGTHENING: IMPROVING THE WFD ENABLING ENVIRONMENT AND SERVICE DELIVERY

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All six WFD projects discussed in this report have worked to improve the WFD system, either by creating a more enabling environment or strengthening the capacity of WFD service providers so they can develop more market-oriented courses, giving youth a better chance at employment and making the training centers more sustainable. It is important to note that the projects can differ in the types of organizations they strengthen or in their approach to strengthening the enabling environment.

Organizational strengthening activities conducted through the end of FY2019 are summarized below and divided into two categories: strengthening the WFD enabling environment and strengthening service providers.

A. Strengthening the WFD enabling environment and service providers

1. National WFD policy

Assessing policy constraints. In FY2018, Bridges El Salvador assessed WFD policy constraints within the country. The project built on a policy assessment conducted in FY2017, which has guided its activities at the national level. That policy assessment revealed that, in general, El Salvador's laws, policies, and regulations do not specifically create opportunities for at-risk youth. In particular, there appears to be limited guidance in the laws pertaining to internships and apprenticeships. In some cases, the law is not working as intended—as in the Law on First Employment. In FY2019, the project continued to provide technical and logistical support to assist INJUVE, the government entity in El Salvador with principal responsibility for supporting youth, in tailoring a new municipal youth policy based on youth needs. Other projects such as TVET-SAY also contributed to assessing policy constraints and improving the WFD system as summarized below.

Revising, updating, or creating new WFD policies. Bridges El Salvador and TVET-SAY Nicaragua supported updating or creating new WFD national policies in FY2019. Bridges El Salvador helped five municipalities revise or update their municipal youth policies to establish new legal frameworks for the rights of youth and to respond to the specific needs of youth in each community. TVET-SAY Nicaragua was instrumental in the creation of a national technical/vocational education network called RENET—it set up RENET's legal framework. As a result of TVET-SAY's role in strengthening RENET, many institutions recognize RENET's role in training Nicaragua's future workforce, and they have joined this network. In FY2018, TVET SAY supported RENET as it refined a draft on a preliminary law on internships and first jobs. The network was also preparing to participate in a discussion of a proposal for a Youth Employment and Entrepreneurship Act. The project also supported a consultation process, to include the Youth Advisory Council in the RACCS Youth Coordination Table, designed to ensure that technical/vocational education is incorporated into new youth policies. Although work has not stopped, advocacy efforts have been postponed or have encountered difficulties because of the political crisis and because RENET is still waiting to achieve legal status. RENET was therefore unable to continue public policy efforts in FY2019 due to the socio-political crisis, but TVET-SAY Nicaragua and RENET agreed to continue working on institutional policies to promote safe space and protection guidelines.

2. National WFD institutions

Assessing capacity and/or needs. EF Honduras worked with national WFD institution INFOP to assess its institutional capacity. In FY2016, EF Honduras conducted an in-depth analysis of INFOP to identify areas of improvement in order to ensure INFOP was providing services that corresponded to private-sector demands. The assessment gave the project in-depth understanding of INFOP's capacity and role in

continuing to train Honduran youth. The findings from the assessment of INFOP revealed that, overall, INFOP is a respected institution with vast reach within Honduras (Banyan Global 2016b). However, there is a general perception that INFOP's graduates would be better off if they received more soft skills training. In addition, the assessment indicated that INFOP management could benefit from more training, including participating in field missions to other Latin American vocational training institutions, such as the national WFD service in Colombia—*Servicio Nacional de Aprendizaje* (SENA). In FY2018, EF Honduras facilitated this exchange to provide INFOP staff with hands-on experience by visiting their Colombian counterparts.

In FY2017, EF Honduras started working with INFOP to develop 64 parameters, organized in six categories, to establish the institution's progress toward becoming a market-driven organization. The six categories include (1) institutional management, (2) finance and planning, (3) technical capacity, (4) new and revised curricula, (5) instructors receiving training, and (6) percentage of graduates tracked. All categories align student competencies and abilities with the needs of the market. In FY2019, the project conducted the third institutional capacity assessment (Second-Year score) of INFOP using a scale of 0 to 4. Although INFOP had improved from the baseline in the FY2018 assessment from a score of 0.71 to 2.01, the FY2019 was 1.85, a decrease of 0.16 points. This decrease may be caused by the closing of INFOP centers in the spring of FY2019 during political unrest and a more critical view of the project overall. Although INFOP is eager to make its offerings more market-driven, plans for a complete institutional overhaul were abandoned due to political pressures and they were replaced with more incremental changes. In FY2019, the project had to cancel numerous INFOP support activities due to withheld funding. However, this has led to EF Honduras focusing more on sustainability activities for future INFOP use (Banyan Global 2019b).

Training activities for national institutions. EF Honduras strengthened the management of INFOP by creating a Leaders for Workforce Development Change program, in which 25 trainers and government or private sector officials are being trained through a series of workshops, coaching sessions, exchanges, and a certification program to validate competencies to manage WFD programs. In FY2019, 21 members of the program earned certifications for the “Macro-Competency in Management of Market-Driven Workforce Development Programs.” In addition, 47 INFOP instructors completed training on how to integrate information technology within their courses. In the future, the project will also organize regular forums between INFOP and the private sector, train INFOP managers and technical trainers on how to adapt courses to private sector needs, and support exchanges between INFOP and training or vocational centers in Latin America or the United States, among other activities (Banyan Global 2017b, Banyan Global 2019b).

In FY2018, Nicaragua TVET SAY invested considerable effort in creating sustainable structures to promote technical/vocational education in Nicaragua. Notably, TVET-SAY was instrumental in the creation of a national technical education network called RENET. Currently, RENET has 65 network members from private sector chambers, private TVET centers and universities, and CSOs. This represents a unique opportunity in Nicaragua because RENET is able to convene TVET centers and private-sector representatives to develop better TVET services and employment opportunities. The project is still working with the government to recognize the network as a legal entity. In FY2019, RENET members received training on OCAT methodology and public and media communications. RENET also established new chapters across the country to continue building alliances with private companies and created four working groups based on specific sectors to address ways to better serve youth in the future. In addition, RENET created working groups focusing on improving and standardizing curricula on technical careers with the most-demanded skills for technical jobs, including computer systems and soft skills. RENET

also collaborated with ChileValora to create training curricula (using regional dialogues and workshops) for students interested in the electronics, industrial maintenance, and automotive mechanics sectors. Nicaragua TVET SAY also assisted RENET in implementing a financial sustainability strategy and helped launch its website after helping RENET through a communications diagnosis.

Other strengthening activities for national institutions. Three projects have worked to strengthen national WFD institutions that also support the WFD system. EF Honduras helped INFOP make institutional improvements to be more market-driven by helping to create a job forecasting office, and by helping INFOP create an intra-institutional coordination platform. TVET-SAY Nicaragua's RENET received training in how to implement the TVET-SAY Nicaragua's soft skill manual. The project also helped RENET strengthen advocacy and communication strategies that were implemented in FY2019. Projects also took steps to improve the institutional capacity of certain programs. During FY2019, Bridges El Salvador continued to work with INSAFORP and other government institutions, like the General Directorate of Statistics and Census, Ministry of Economy, Presidential Commission for Strategic Projects, and Secretary of Innovation, to enable one of these institutions to inherit Bridges' tailor-made customer relationship management (CRM) system, which it can use for years to come to improve data management, reporting, and analysis of youth training and employment at a national level. Bridges El Salvador is also planning to work with INSAFORP to integrate soft skills into technical/vocational training in FY2020.

B. Strengthening service delivery

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

1. Organizational capacity assessments

Table G.1 summarizes the types of organizational assessments and the dimensions of service that were observed in projects in different institutions. The Advance Regional project's OCA differs from the others because it used a multistep process for the assessment, which was completed in FY2018. First, the project did an institutional landscape analysis in each country to assess the state of tertiary education institutions, then it used the landscape analysis together with the results of the LMA to develop a short list of institutions to work with. The Advance Regional project also conducted institutional capacity assessments (ICAs) of the target institutions on the short list; these assessments are similar to OCAs but tailored to the needs of institutions.

Table G.1. Organizational strengthening assessments, by project

OCA characteristics	Bridges EI Salvador	Bridges Guatemala	EF Honduras	TVET-SAY Nicaragua	EFS Nicaragua	Advance Regional
Name of organizational assessment conducted	Technical Vocational Education and Training CAT	TBD (some form of OCA but not defined)	Strengthening INFOP in Directing Talent Toward Demand	Capacity Building Assessment OCAT	Appreciative Review of Capacity	Institutional Landscape Analysis (ILA) leading to a deep-dive Institutional Capacity Assessment
Date the assessment was completed	2017, 2018, 2019 (TVET CAT)	TBD	2016, 2017, 2018, 2019	2016, 2017, 2018, 2019	2015	2017 (Jamaica ILA), 2018 (Guatemala, Honduras, and Jamaica ICA)
Planned follow-up?	Yes, yearly	TBD	Yes	Yes, yearly	No	Not as part of the ILA, TBD as part of ICA
Number of organizations assessment was applied to	20 in 2017 3 in 2018*	Planned for 6	1, INFOP	6 in 2016, 2017 5 in 2018 6 in 2019	1, FADCANIC** (conducted by another organization)	The ILA explored the general tertiary education sector. ICAs covered 9 institutions based on the findings of the ILA.
Dimensions observed	Philosophy and objectives Organization and administration Training programs Library and learning resources Management of administrative staff and teaching faculty Finance Overall institutional infrastructure Workshops, equipment and materials Student services	TBD	Institutional management and coordination Finance and planning Demand-oriented training Curriculum and teaching aids Teacher training Monitoring, evaluation, and learning	Governance Management Human resource management Financial management Organizational management Technical management Program management Project performance management Workforce development management Communications Sustainability Private sector engagement	Governance Strategic planning Human talent External relations Project/service management Resource development Finance and administration	Context and target population Strategy and planning Educational programs promotion Student recruitment Staff recruitment Faculty and staff Staff professional development Education services Evaluation Graduates and degrees Financial resources and infrastructure Monitoring, transparency, and financial accountability Governance and enforcement

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

* This number is based on the first semi-annual report, and the number of organizations the assessment was applied to could be higher.

** As a part of its OCAT assessments, TVET-SAY Nicaragua also assessed one of EFS Nicaragua's primary service providers, Centro Wawashang.

CAT = capacity assessment tool; OCAT = organizational capacity assessment tool.

Below are some of the main findings from the OCAs conducted thus far for each project.

The **Advance Regional** project conducted institutional landscape analyses (ILAs) in its three countries of operation (Honduras, Guatemala, and Jamaica) in the first year and a half of the project. The ILA of local tertiary technical providers gave the project information on curriculum, faculty and staff, labor market bridging, and any other services (scholarships or other support). The ILA also shed light on the availability of other support services, such as admissions, financial aid (scholarships), and support with labor market bridging. Based on the results of the ILA, the project prioritized institutions to work with (three in each country, as shown in Table G.2) and began individual deep-dive ICAs. These ICAs were finalized in FY2018, and focused on understanding capacity constraints in curriculum development, staff and faculty professional development, labor market bridging, recruitment and student support services, and scholarships, thereby prioritizing future Advance Regional interventions. The ICA also conducted skills and knowledge assessments of faculty and staff. The ICA results identified four weaknesses: (1) the need to define and systematize administrative processes for managing scholarships and curriculum revisions, (2) the lack of effective tracking systems for program graduates, (3) the need for improved teacher professional development, and (4) the need for improved student support services. In Jamaica, the ICAs emphasized the lack of resources and learning equipment, and in Guatemala, the universities highlighted the need for improved collaboration with stakeholders.

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

Country	Institution	Degree program
Honduras	Universidad Cristiana Evangélica Nuevo Milenio	Clinical laboratory Logistics, transportation, and ports operations
Honduras	Centro Universitario Tecnológico	Web design and development Auxiliary nursing
Honduras	Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Honduras	Business administration for coffee growers Food and beverage management Agriculture production
Guatemala	Universidad Panamericana (UPANA)	Business administration Marketing and sales
Guatemala	Universidad Rafael Landivar (URL)	Hotel management and gastronomy Physical and occupational therapy Primary care nursing Logistics and transportation
Guatemala	Universidad San Carlos	Fruit production Forestry
Jamaica	Council of Community Colleges of Jamaica	Agroprocessing and business management Health and wellness tourism
Jamaica	Vocational Training Development Institute	Entertainment and events management Animation
Jamaica	University of Technology	Entertainment design, production, and technology Fashion styling and image consulting

Note: Source materials from FHI 360.

In FY2017, **Bridges El Salvador** used its TVET-CAT tool to lead an assessment of 20 WFD service providers. The results of the assessment revealed a series of suggested interventions that Bridges could support depending on the individual needs of each organization. The findings from the baseline TVET-CAT indicated that some areas of possible intervention across the service providers included reworking training programs to better meet the needs of the private sector and the future employees, strengthening and upgrading library and learning centers where youth can access learning resources, designing and implementing recruitment and hiring procedures that comply with labor laws, training service providers so they can identify sources of funding to keep infrastructure and content updated, and developing a student services roster that could allow for better follow-up communication with students (DAI 2017c). These findings shaped the project's work to improve the capacity of training centers and the quality and relevance of training available to at-risk youth. In FY2018, Bridges conducted midline TVET-CAT assessments for three training centers (*Capacitación Profesional en Computación* (CAPUCOM), *Asociación Ágape de El Salvador* (AGAPE), and *Asociación para la Organización y Educación Empresarial Femenina de El Salvador* (OEF)). This allowed the project to understand how each project improved by comparing results with the baseline assessment. All three training centers improved their overall scores, with particularly visible improvement in the following categories: philosophy and objectives, organization and administration, finance, and overall institutional infrastructure.

TVET-SAY Nicaragua is strengthening the capacity of eight organizations—six WFD providers and two universities—in nine different categories. In FY2019, the project evaluated six training centers. TVET-SAY OCAT evaluations only focus on TVET centers, as universities have completed separate evaluations with the support of other USAID projects. Equipped with OCA scores for each organization, TVET-SAY staff crafted individualized action plans for each TVET center. The baseline OCA also generated valuable information on enrollment, retention, and course offerings that the project could share with partners and the private sector. Although TVET-SAY does not have indicators that track the number of organizations with improved capacity or the number of programs that were strengthened, it does track progress through individualized OCA scores. Based on the individualized plans and the work carried out throughout 2019, on average, TVET-SAY was able to raise the OCA score from 2.77 out of 4 to 3.53 out of 4 in the span of three years for six organizations. These OCA assessments also helped TVET-SAY Nicaragua come up with recommendations for improvement including improving the system for graduate tracking and job placement and developing a network map to track and identify private sector partners (Creative Associates 2019c). A summary of some of the interventions TVET-SAY implemented to increase organizations' OCA scores is included in the next section. TVET centers are now using strategic plans based on OCA results as a tool to help management become more results-oriented. In addition, the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) team also conducted a rapid qualitative assessment parallel to the OCA to measure the impact of program activities and to determine areas of growth in order to improve the quality and inclusivity of services. See Table G.3 for a summary of service provider improvements based on OCA results in FY2019.

Table G.3. Improvement in OCAs over time (percentage increase in score from 2016 to 2019)

TVET centers	% improvement 2016–2019
CEFODI	32%
Centro Juvenil Don Bosco	38%
Roberto Clemente de Fe y Alegria	5%
Instituto Rey Juan Carlos 1	19%
Samuel Foundation	4%
CETAA Wawashang	109%

Note: TVET-SAY Nicaragua also conducted an assessment of BICU, but we do not have data on the improvement.

As stated, the **EFS Nicaragua** project’s organizational strengthening component has focused on FADCANIC, the local implementer of EFS. In the mid-2000s, the American Institutes for Research conducted a baseline OCA of FADCANIC. Based on those findings, FADCANIC started to receive training in youth engagement, M&E, and strategic planning. In 2014, the Programa de Gobernabilidad Local led a follow-up organizational self-assessment (Global Communities 2016). Based on the results of the self-assessment, FADCANIC developed an organizational improvement plan that was used to prioritize its own organizational strengthening activities. FADCANIC organizational training activities focus on improving strategic plans and internal policies, developing human resources, and improving ICT systems and office infrastructure. Since this assessment was completed, no formal follow-up assessments have taken place. In addition to self-strengthening activities, EFS also strengthens FADCANIC’s Center for Agroforestry and Environmental Education (CETAA) through teacher training; institutionalizing the soft skills, counseling, tutoring, and peer mentoring programs; and supporting the introduction of virtual learning programs.

Bridges Guatemala plans to use an adaptation of the OCA methodology to conduct an assessment of 25 organizations in FY2020. It is currently finalizing the plan for this work.

2. Strengthening WFD programs and service providers

Bridges Guatemala is designed to strengthen 25 service providers who will ultimately help deliver the project’s *Diplomado Emprender con Éxito* curriculum. In FY2019, Bridges Guatemala trained 158 facilitators to deliver seven modules of the *Diplomado Emprender con Éxito* including through the new Big Brothers and Sisters model, which includes more experienced facilitators who participated in the validation cohort. Workshop subjects included an orientation to project goals; the objectives of the curriculum, materials, and resources available to facilitators; and practical experience for delivery. The *Diplomado* is being implemented in the 25 prioritized municipalities. The project also continued implementing versions of the *Diplomado* to reach more youth including a radio version of its *Diplomado* program with the help of the *Instituto Guatemalteco de Educación Radiofónica* (IGER). Bridges Guatemala also completed the validation of a virtual version of the *Diplomado* in collaboration with the Ministry of Education. The project has already started to review and improve modules that have been implemented, and will continue to do so in FY2020.

In addition to this, Bridges Guatemala developed a *Diplomado* for Credit Advisors for youth who have completed the core *Diplomado* and expressed an interest in becoming credit advisors through the Chamber of Microfinance. The methodology is still being developed. In addition, FundaSistemas and

J&A began developing a *Diplomado* in Innovative Extension for Export for youth interested in quality standards for growing vegetables for export.

The project also continued supporting vocational courses, notably technical/vocational training through the *Fundación para el Desarrollo Integral de Programas Socioeconómicos* (FUNDAP) in areas such as health and agriculture, through the *Fundación para el Desarrollo Integral* (FUDI) in agricultural training centers, and through FundaSistemas for entrepreneurship, among others. New courses include a *Diplomado* on microfinance and employment and entrepreneurship. In addition, the project continues to partner with local municipalities that will house Municipal Youth Centers. These Youth Centers are safe places for youth to take courses and get additional WFD support with mentoring, internships, and access to activities in the areas of science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics.

In FY2019, **EF Honduras**, after seeing LMA results, developed nine courses through a process involving businesses and INFOP. EF Honduras also trained 47 INFOP instructors to integrate information technology and communications within their technical courses. The project has helped develop a Leaders for Workforce Development Change program to expose WFD stakeholders such as INFOP to more market-driven strategies. EF Honduras also trained 37 vocational instructors in personalized follow-on plans and trained 32 instructors and private sector human resources leaders in leading customer service courses. The project trained technical staff in socio-labor orientation (a capstone course that includes labor bridging activities) and cognitive behavior therapy. In addition, project staff conducted technical assistance and quality control activities with nine implementing organizations.

At the university level, **Advance Regional** is improving the quality and relevance of the technical degree program by working closely with curriculum task teams at partner institutions. Advance Regional used the results of the ICAs conducted in FY2018 to design and implement activities on capacity-building strategies within each institution. It also worked with institutions to revise existing curricula and pilot new courses to align with labor market needs. The project used guidelines to decide whether a degree program needed minor or substantive revisions. Overall, Advance Regional identified two degrees for minor revisions and three degrees for substantive revisions, and created four new degree programs. By the end of FY2019, the project completed curriculum revisions for nine of the degree programs, and it will continue to make changes for the seven remaining programs in FY2020. New programs include Fashion Styling & Image Consulting and Agroprocessing & Business Management in Jamaica; Logistics, Transportation and Port Operations in Honduras; and Logistics & Transportation in Guatemala. Advance Regional has also started to institutionalize the curriculum revision process within institutions to standardize the process across all project institutions.

Advance Regional also tailored additional professional development programs for faculty and staff, and will continue doing this in Year 5 of the program. The project focused on building technical/vocational skills, improving pedagogical techniques, and developing transferable skills. Beyond training faculty for new degree programs and new pedagogical skills, the project focused on building skills to better utilize technology, develop private sector partnerships, and leverage resources. Additionally, Advance Regional organized another one-week tour of five technical education universities in Mexico for selected faculty and staff from Honduras, Guatemala, and Jamaican institutions. Study tour participants learned about recruitment and admissions practices, curriculum development, and labor bridging strategies.

Throughout the project's life cycle, **Bridges El Salvador** provides ongoing technical assistance to help service providers improve organizational capacity. Although Bridges El Salvador did not add any new certifications or accreditations in FY2018 or FY2019, the project revised and updated five curricula in FY2019. This included changes in the textile and apparel and energy courses and integrating two modules

to the soft skills curricula. This fiscal year, Bridges El Salvador also conducted two trainings for instructors on improving teaching methodologies, monthly training workshops to build the capacity of job placement managers, and one workshop to improve the capacity of training staff to assist youth with disabilities.

In FY2019, programs improved training curricula and responded to the needs of the sectors. Trainings were accredited or serviced by an industry association, INSAFORP (*Instituto Salvadoreño de Formación Profesional*, the national WFD institution), or the Ministry of Education. The project also developed new training curricula, most of which focused on the results of past LMAs or were based on discussions with the private sector on hiring needs. For example, Bridges collaborated with CAMTEX (Chamber of the Textile, Clothing and Free Trade Zone of El Salvador) to update outdated curricula for training participants to operate and maintain apparel machines. Bridges El Salvador also worked with the plastics industry to help fill positions by developing new curricula focused on boosting innovation and building leadership skills and with the commerce industry to create a gastronomy course in San Miguel.

TVET-SAY Nicaragua developed seven new courses with the help of private sector companies in FY2019, including courses on electricity, automobile maintenance, software installation, and entrepreneurship. Each course was developed based on industries with the highest market demand, even if the course did not traditionally fit within the blended approach. The project also created new curricula out of the youth self-employment initiatives, such as the Chiles de Nicaragua course. In addition, TVET-SAY Nicaragua created new blended and online courses and trained staff and teachers to use online tools for these new courses. Other initiatives for capacity strengthening included human resource capacity building, counseling services for youth, and the implementation of new management systems. In FY2019 the project trained 392 training center staff through the “train-the-trainer” program, so that training centers and institutions could implement the new Soft Skills Manual.

In FY2019, **EFS Nicaragua** used partnerships to create community-based vocational courses and innovative courses. This includes CISCO Networking Academy online courses that EFS Nicaragua launched for older youth to close the technology gap among young people living in rural areas. The project also updated the soft skills curriculum to include a new module on Rights. Overall, 45 FADCANIC staff were engaged in a variety of trainings and workshops focused on soft skills, employability and networking, and various sector-specific topics, among others. The project also recruited and trained 50 volunteer soft skills instructors and several staff participated in a Diploma course on building employability clubs for youth in training.

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APPENDIX H:

RANGE OF ASSESSMENT TOOLS USED BY COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

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Table H.1. Description of assessment tools

Name of tool	Description	Projects using tool	Project designed the tool
Individual assessment tools			
Violence Involved Persons Risk Assessment (VIP-RA)	Risk-level assessment tool that identifies signs of violent behavior and classifies youth as having primary, secondary, or tertiary risk. Based on their identified risk level, youth are referred to training programs with varying levels of support.	EF Honduras	
Comprehensive Positive Assessment Tool (COMPAS-T)	A tool developed by TVET-SAY Nicaragua and USAID to measure 12 risk factors and 5 protective factors. The assessment is administered to beneficiaries before and after the training, as well as six months after they finish it. The tool includes an early warning system useful for identifying beneficiaries who need individual counseling.	TVET-SAY Nicaragua	X
Social risk assessment tool	Administered to TVET program beneficiaries to determine eligibility for primary and secondary scholarships. The tool is also administered to screen youth who may be in immediate need of referral to psychosocial services. Areas that are assessed include family conditions, living conditions, economic situation, and four self-esteem dimensions.	EFS Nicaragua	
Soft skills measuring tool	Bridges Guatemala served as a validation site for a soft skills measurement tool developed by FHI360 as part of the USAID YouthPower initiative. The tool aims to assess changes in individuals' soft skills following completion of a soft skills training program. The tool has been administered to participants twice to determine change.	Bridges Guatemala	
Participatory Youth Assessment	Assessment that describes the quality of life of at-risk and vulnerable young men and women—their conditions, access, obstacles, and opportunities pertaining to education, professional training, soft skills, employment, entrepreneurship, gender equality, and how involved they are as citizens.	Bridges El Salvador	
Study of Barriers to Access and Completion (SBAC)	Study examines the barriers that students in disadvantaged situations face, based on three criteria: student, community, and gender.	Advance Regional	
Institutional assessment tools			
Organizational Capacity Assessment (OCA)	Tool to evaluate critical elements for effective organizational management and to identify areas that need strengthening and development.	Bridges El Salvador TVET-SAY Nicaragua	X
OCA+	Adapted OCA tool to include technical/vocational and private sector engagement categories.	TVET-SAY Nicaragua	X
Institutional Capacity Assessment (ICA)	Tool that includes self-evaluation carried out by the academic and administrative staff; it measures operational capacity, management capacity, leadership capacity, and adaptability.	Advance Regional	X

Appendix H: Range of assessment tools used by community of practice

Name of tool	Description	Projects using tool	Project designed the tool
Institutional Landscaping Analysis (ILA)	Study that identifies institutions' capabilities in terms of curriculum, faculty, and personnel of existing programs. The study also identifies support structures for students, the barriers that impede the development of programs, and the main areas of improvement.	Advance Regional	
Technical Vocational Education and Training Capacity Assessment Tool (TVET-CAT)	Tool that documents the state of the main functions and key features for efficiency of training centers, in order to identify areas for improvement. The diagnosis is made in three categories: institutional leadership, programs and services, and operational efficiency.	Bridges El Salvador	

TVET = technical/vocational education and training.

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