



CHANGING INSTITUTIONS AND SYSTEMS FOR LARGE SCALE IMPACT

In Honduras, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is not only providing job training to at-risk youth but also supporting the transformation of national-level systems to be more self-reliant and responsive to the needs of the private sector. To do this, USAID/Honduras works directly with the National Institute for Professional Training (INFOP) to improve vocational systems in Honduras for over 300,000 Hondurans each year. The USAID-funded Empleando Futuros (Employing Futures) project works with INFOP to improve its ability to respond to private-sector needs and extends support to vocational training implementers within INFOP's network of collaborators.

In 2017, USAID created the Leaders for Workforce Development Change program for 25 INFOP leaders and collaborators. The program was modeled off of results from an Empleando Futuros study and included four workshops, five personal coaching sessions, a study tour to the National Learning Service (SENA) in Colombia, and the development of individual projects designed to demonstrate each participant's mastery of new skills. Those who successfully completed the process earned Central America's first-ever certification of the macro-competency, "management of market-driven vocational programs", awarded by Central American Technological University (UNITEC), Honduras' top private university.

The leadership program began in June 2017 and concluded in March 2019 with the certification of 21 participants. Among the program participants were nine upper-management staff from INFOP, including the institute's deputy director and the heads of the departments of curriculum development, instructor training, budget and planning, human resources, and distance learning. Other participants included leaders from three chambers of commerce, the ministries of labor and education, and six training institutes that are part of INFOP's network.

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*– José Antonio Elvir
INFOP's Deputy
Director*



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The impacts of the training program and the individual projects were both immediate and lasting. INFOP is in the middle of a major restructuring process, and many of the changes proposed by INFOP's leadership are directly related to lessons learned from the Leaders for Workforce Development Change program. INFOP plans to create a formal linkage between INFOP vocational courses and Ministry of Education accreditation; create a new jobs prospecting office to guide institutional decision-making and course development; revise training curricula to be more market-driven; create an instructor training institute within INFOP; and increase the use of information technology (IT) to improve the quality of training and to reach more people. Examples of the individual projects completed by INFOP staff during the program include training over 600 INFOP staff to improve their customer service skills; creating or revising 58 market-driven training curricula; graduating 43 instructors from advanced training in the use of IT in the classroom; and creating a digital training certification program that is projected to save INFOP over \$100,000 per year.

Additionally, Empleando Futuros and INFOP created a list of 64 parameters to measure INFOP's progress towards becoming more "market-driven". Within 18 months, INFOP has shown a 146 percent improvement in its institutional capacities. INFOP's executive director repeatedly reports his satisfaction with USAID support and its importance in his ability to transform the institution to USAID and project staff. INFOP's deputy director stated, "The Leaders for Workforce Development Change program has given me concrete tools for improving my leadership and promoting processes that positively impact the results established by INFOP."

In addition to INFOP staff, leaders from other organizations within INFOP's system of collaborators participated in the program in order to ensure broader impact within the vocational systems sector. Examples of successful projects implemented by those leaders include a new entrepreneurship curriculum specifically designed for at-risk youth and successfully tested with 80 Honduran first-offenders; a new curriculum to train certified vocational institution instructors at 19 public and private universities; a training program for employees of small hotels to better promote green jobs and eco-tourism; and a new chamber of commerce training program that has already benefitted seven businesses and 658 youth and trained over 20 new instructors.

Beyond their individual projects, the participants have consistently commented on how the leadership program helped them to better involve their staff in decision-making, improve their leadership qualities, and increase their chances for long-term changes to their organizations and the larger Honduran vocational training system in general. After participating in USAID's Leaders for Workforce Development Change program with support from Empleando Futuros, INFOP and its collaborators are better equipped to implement successful workforce development programming for youth in Honduras.