HEMISPHERIC WORKSHOP

COORDINATION BETWEEN EDUCATION AND LABOR IN THE AMERICAS IN CONTEXTS OF TRANSFORMATION

December 3-4, 2026 | Panama City | @RIAL_OAS | oas.org/sedi



Organized by: OAS, MITRADEL Ministerio de Trabajo y Desarrollo Laboral

With technical support from: Gobierno Nacional Con Paso Firme, Ministerio de Educación, ITSE Educación Superior de Ciclo Corto, INADEH

CONCEPT NOTE AND DESCRIPTION

IMPORTANT DATES:

Request for financial assistance for travel:	October 28
Responses to Guiding Questions:	November 16
Registration (depending on financial request):	October 28 or November 16

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1. BACKGROUND

The Hemispheric Workshop “Coordination between Education and Labor in the Americas in contexts of transformation”, to be held on December 3 and 4, 2026 in Panama City, and described in this document, builds on the work carried out by the Organization of American States (OAS) with labor and education authorities across the region, at both the political and technical levels.

Within the framework of the OAS, the Ministries of Labor and Education of the Americas have taken important steps toward strengthening their linkages and coordination, recognizing that closer cooperation between the two sectors is essential to addressing longstanding gaps in the quality, equity, and inclusiveness of education and to responding to profound transformations in the world of work. The “Conceptual framework” section of this document examines these issues in greater depth.

The OAS is particularly well positioned to promote stronger education-labor coordination, given its ongoing relationship with the region's Ministries of Labor and Education through their respective specialized ministerial meetings, as well as through the implementation of the Inter-American Education Agenda and the operation of the Inter-American Network for Labor Administration (RIAL).

Since 2015, the OAS Inter-American Meetings of Ministers of Education have provided a space for dialogue with the Ministers of Labor who led the OAS labor ministerial process. Conversely, since 2015, meetings of the Inter-American Conference of Ministers of Labor (IACML) have also included the participation of the Ministers who chair the Inter-American Committee on Education (CIE), representing the region's Ministries of Education. These exchanges have reaffirmed the commitment to achieving greater coordination between the two sectors at the highest level.

In order to translate political commitments into technical actions, three intersectoral workshops have been held to date within the framework of RIAL. These workshops have provided pioneering spaces for officials from Ministries of Labor and Education to exchange experiences and collectively identify areas for cooperation:

- The first Workshop was held in December 2016 in Brasília, under the theme "Youth Employment - Coordination between Education and Labor",
- The second was held in May 2019 in Santiago, Chile, focusing on "Skills for the future: Coordination between the Ministries of Education and Labor", and
- The third was held in May 2023 in Buenos Aires, under the theme "Towards a Stronger Coordination between Education and Labor in the Americas" and addressed experiences with national qualifications frameworks.

During these three meetings, participants examined various aspects of intersectoral coordination, exchanged experiences, and identified lessons learned and policy recommendations. These discussions are reflected in the OAS publication "The Coordination between Education and Labor in the Americas", as well as in the outcome documents of each Workshop, and were taken into consideration in planning the Workshop described in this document.

The current Work Plans of the OAS ministerial processes on education and labor include actions aimed at further strengthening education-labor coordination.

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Strengthening the linkages between the world of education and the world of work has been a priority across the Americas for decades and has consistently been featured in discussions on development, productivity, education, employment, and inclusion. Today, as reflected in numerous policy declarations and technical studies, this issue has gained renewed significance and urgency in light of the pivotal moment and profound transformations that humanity is experiencing.

Technological acceleration and the expanding use of artificial intelligence, which have advanced exponentially in recent months, are affecting every sphere of social and economic life. In the fields of education and labor in particular, these developments are driving far-reaching changes in learning processes, occupations, tasks, forms of work organization, the skills demanded by productive sectors, and the content of education and vocational training, among other areas.

This technological revolution is accompanied by two additional structural processes that are also reshaping skills demand, educational pathways, and opportunities for labor market participation: the demographic transition, which in Latin America is characterized by population aging; and the transition toward more sustainable economies in response to climate change.

The need to strengthen the link between education and labor is also reflected in the longstanding and cross-cutting challenges facing the Americas, which intersect with these emerging transformations. Across the region, difficulties in labor market integration disproportionately affect young people. In 2025, the youth unemployment rate reached 12,5%, nearly three times the rate recorded among adults, while labor informality affected 56% of young people compared with 42,8% of adults[1]. Significant gender gaps also persist. In 2025, more than two out of every three young people who were neither studying nor engaged in paid employment were women, and the corresponding rate among young women (24,7%) was nearly double that of young men (13,1%)[2]. These disparities, together with other indicators of labor market inclusion, demonstrate that opportunities to develop skills, access employment, and sustain career pathways are not distributed evenly. Rather, they are shaped by multiple, intersecting factors, including age, gender, disability status, ethnicity or race, and educational attainment, among others.

Differences in educational trajectories are likewise associated with opportunities to obtain formal and decent jobs. An analysis of labor informality in the region shows that, at the regional level, the likelihood that an employed person will work in the informal economy decreases as educational attainment rises. Compared with individuals who have not completed secondary education, the estimated probability of informality declines by approximately 12% among those who have completed secondary education, 27% among those with technical education, and 34% among those with university-level studies[3].

These trends underscore the importance of expanding opportunities for access to and retention in education and training, while also strengthening their quality and relevance, so that the skills developed respond to labor market needs and contribute to more sustainable labor trajectories. This highlights the need to strengthen the connection between education and labor.

The linkage between education and labor cannot be reduced to occasional coordination among institutions. Rather, it requires the development of mechanisms capable of responding coherently to transformations in the world of work and to the diverse pathways followed by individuals throughout their lives. This involves Ministries of Education and Labor, as well as

[1] ILO (2025). 2025 Labour Overview. Latin America and the Caribbean
[2] ILO (2026). Global Employment Trends for Youth 2026: Back to the future
[3] ECLAC (2024). Informal employment in Latin America: groups most prone to it

vocational training institutions, technical and technological education institutions, public employment services, workers, employers, and other stakeholders linked to productive sectors.

Within this framework, Ministries of Labor play a fundamental role that extends beyond their connection with education and training systems. As the public authorities responsible for employment policy and labor administration, they possess information and policy tools that allow them to identify labor market transformations, anticipate skills needs, facilitate labor market transitions, and promote inclusive and quality employment outcomes. Through public employment services, labor market observatories, job matching and career guidance systems, active labor market policies, and social dialogue mechanisms involving workers and employers, Ministries of Labor can help ensure that education and training policies respond more effectively to the current and future needs of the world of work.

The linkages between education and labor can be strengthened through a wide range of policy actions. The following areas have been identified through discussions and commitments adopted at OAS meetings of Ministers of Labor and Ministers of Education, as well as through hemispheric workshops:

- Promote and create the conditions for lifelong learning.
- Strengthen teacher training.
- Promote skills-based education and training that enables the development of foundational and transferable skills, including digital and socioemotional skills, to respond to changes in the world of work.
- Improve reskilling and upskilling processes.
- Strengthen public employment services, which are designed to efficiently connect labor supply and demand and facilitate the school-to-work transition.
- Strengthen and enhance the value of vocational education and training and establish stronger linkages with post-secondary education, so that individuals can move between the two systems.
- Promote the inclusion of apprenticeship programs and workplace training in education and training initiatives.
- Develop national and regional qualifications frameworks.
- Develop and consolidate systems for the certification of occupational skills.
- Strengthen active labor market policies, including job matching, career guidance, employability, and support for labor market entry and re-entry, with particular attention to young people and groups facing greater barriers to accessing the labor market.
- Consolidate labor market information systems and observatories, develop forward-looking analyses, and promote mechanisms for coordination and follow-up among these observatories, public employment services, and education and vocational training institutions, with a view to anticipating skills needs and aligning training provision with current and emerging demands from productive sectors.

The above list, which is not exhaustive, shows that there are multiple actions that can be taken to strengthen education and labor linkages. These actions are complementary and should be pursued in parallel. For the purposes of the Workshop described in this document, and in order to

focus the discussions, three areas of emphasis have been selected: institutional coordination among Ministries of Education and Labor, as well as with institutions involved in education and training systems; labor inclusion and the education-to-work transition; and lifelong learning.

Institutional coordination between Ministries of Education and Labor

The institutional arrangements through which education and labor systems are coordinated vary across countries, reflecting differences in development models, public policy priorities, and legal and regulatory frameworks. Ministries of Education and Labor can establish linkages through joint actions and strategies, as well as through formal coordination mechanisms and bodies addressing a range of policy issues.

Notable examples of such coordination include sectoral councils and similar bodies that bring together Ministries of Education and Labor, vocational training institutions, and educational institutions, as well as public-private coordination mechanisms such as sector skills councils and tripartite technical committees. These spaces enable government, academia, and productive sectors to guide training content and jointly validate the relevance of occupational profiles and quality standards required by the labor market. Similarly, vocational training institutions and skills certification bodies have provided spaces for collaboration among public authorities, workers, employers, and educational institutions.

Institutional coordination is also achieved through joint strategies and programs, generally implemented through inter-institutional agreements. Examples include career guidance initiatives and efforts to raise the profile of technical and vocational education developed jointly by Ministries of Education and Labor, as well as education and employment observatories, which serve as mechanisms for integrating information on educational offerings and labor market demand to support informed training decisions.

Labor inclusion and the education-to-work transition

Labor market insertion is one of the clearest manifestations of the relationship between education and labor. It refers to the process through which individuals enter the labor market, whether during the school-to-work transition, which is a critical stage for youth employment, or when accessing a new job opportunity. The characteristics of this transition, the time required to secure employment, and the quality of the job obtained provide important signals regarding the quality of the education and training received, the relevance of acquired knowledge and skills, and the effects of technological transformations on the world of work.

ECLAC has noted that not any form of labor market entry or employment is sufficient to address inequality and strengthen social mobility and cohesion. Rather, efforts should focus on achieving labor inclusion, which is understood as comprising, in a complementary manner, both labor market access and the working conditions obtained[4].

[4] ECLAC (2023). Social Panorama of Latin America and the Caribbean 2023: labour inclusion as a key axis of inclusive social development

Improving labor market insertion and inclusion requires at least two complementary actions: (1) strengthening individuals' skills and ensuring their relevance within the current context of transformation; and (2) improving linkages with productive sectors not only to inform education and training systems, but also to facilitate access to employment opportunities.

Accordingly, this Workshop will focus on policies and mechanisms that facilitate the transition from education-to-work and promote inclusive and quality employment. Particular attention will be paid to active labor market policies, public employment and career guidance services, skills anticipation mechanisms, and initiatives that connect education and training with practical workplace experience, including dual education [5] and training systems, work-based learning models, and apprenticeship programs. The role of Ministries of Labor in coordinating these initiatives with education systems, technical higher education institutions, vocational training providers, and the social partners will also be examined.

Lifelong learning

Lifelong learning, understood as a continuous process of learning from childhood through old age aimed at improving and updating knowledge and skills, is not only an indispensable concept but, above all, a necessity in the context of the profound transformations currently reshaping the world.

Making lifelong learning a reality and facilitating access to it requires multiple policies and actions. One of the most important, in line with regional discussions among Ministries of Labor and Education[6], is the creation of pathways connecting education systems, vocational training systems, and skills certification systems, enabling individuals to move among them and receive recognition for learning acquired both through formal education and training and through practical experience.

In addition, lifelong learning requires educational reforms and innovations that provide flexible learning content and modalities, enable the design of modular learning pathways, and support the development and recognition of stackable micro-credentials. These tools can help individuals acquire and update specific skills more flexibly, while allowing learning acquired at different stages and in different settings to be progressively integrated into broader learning pathways. In particular, micro-credentials can enhance employability and professional development by providing concrete evidence of skills valued by employers. Their relevance can be enhanced when employers and other labor market actors participate in their design and development, helping to address both current and emerging skills mismatches[7].

Finally, facilitating lifelong learning also requires strengthening systems for the certification or recognition of prior learning and ensuring that credentials are recognized and valued both by

[5] See the Alliance for Dual Training in Latin America and the Caribbean, an initiative promoted by ILO/CINTERFOR.
[6] OAS (2023). Outcomes and Recommendations of Intersectoral Workshop "Towards a Stronger Coordination between Education and Labor in the Americas"
[7] UNESCO (2025). Mapping micro-credentials in Latin America and the Caribbean: towards a common framework

productive sectors and within education and workforce training systems. Moreover, in the context of growing intraregional migration across the Americas, cross-border recognition of skills and competencies has become essential for supporting meaningful learning pathways and promoting effective labor inclusion.

3. DESCRIPTION OF THE INTERSECTORAL WORKSHOP

The Intersectoral Workshop ***"Coordination between education and labor in the Americas in contexts of transformation"*** will bring together representatives of Ministries of Labor and Ministries of Education from the Americas; representatives of workers and employers –represented by the Trade Union Technical Advisory Council (COSATE) and the Business Technical Advisory Committee on Labor Matters (CEATAL), respectively–; and international organizations to exchange experiences and analyze strategies aimed at strengthening coordination between the world of education and the world of work, in accordance with the objectives set forth below.

The event is co-organized by the OAS and the Government of Panama, through the Ministry of Labor and Workforce Development (MITRADEL), with the technical support of the Ministry of Education, the National Institute for Vocational Training and Human Development (INADEH), and the Specialized Superior Technical Institute (ITSE). The event is part of the OAS Inter-American Network for Labor Administration (RIAL) and forms part of both the 2025–2027 Work Plan of the XXII Inter-American Conference of Ministers of Labor (IACML) and the Work Plan of the Inter-American Committee on Education (CIE), particularly the Hemispheric Program for the development of skills in contexts of change.

Venue: Hotel Las Americas Golden Tower Panama – Avenida Balboa y Calle 53, Panama City

Date: December 3 and 4, 2026

General objective: Increase knowledge and strengthen the capacities of Ministries of Labor and Ministries of Education to advance greater intersectoral coordination, particularly to improve labor inclusion and lifelong learning processes in contexts of transformation.

Specific objectives:

- Analyze concrete experiences of coordination and/or collaboration among Ministries of Labor, Ministries of Education, and institutions involved in the region's education and training systems, and strengthen linkages among these actors.

- Identify, exchange, and analyze policies and measures adopted by Ministries of Labor to: (1) improve labor inclusion and education-to-work transition; and (2) realize lifelong learning.

- Identify lessons learned and policy recommendations to strengthen intersectoral coordination between education and labor, particularly in the areas of labor inclusion and lifelong learning.

Methodology:

The Workshop will have three plenary sessions and a subgroup session that, in a complementary way, will address the objectives of the Workshop.

All sessions will have a series of **guiding questions** with the objective of guiding the presentations and spaces for dialogue, maintaining consistency during the discussions, stimulating the debate, and ensuring that the proposed objectives are covered.

Plenary sessions:

- The plenary sessions will consist of:
    - Three (3) or four (4) formal presentations by Ministries of Labor and Education with relevant experiences that can inform and stimulate the subsequent dialogue. The presentations will address the guiding questions.
    - Interventions by workers and employers representatives (in selected panels).
    - An open dialogue among all participants to share national experiences related to the core theme of the session, in response to the guiding questions.

Subgroup sessions:

- The organizers will divide participants into subgroups to promote a more in-depth exchange on the issues raised during the plenary sessions and facilitate the identification of lessons learned and the formulation of policy recommendations.
- The number of subgroups will depend on the total number of participants. In similar workshops, between 3 and 4 subgroups have typically been formed.
- Each subgroup will have a moderator, who will guide the discussion around the guiding questions and present the subgroup's conclusions at the end of the event.
- Each subgroup will have the support of a member of the Technical Secretariat and the organizing institutions in preparing the conclusions.

4. PRELIMINARY AGENDA

December 3

8:30 – 8:45 **Welcome and opening remarks –** By the Government of Panama and the OAS

8:45 – 10:00 **Introductory panel – Skills, transitions and transformations: Coordination between education and labor in today's world**

- Introductory session to provide a general framework for the Workshop, with the participation of specialists from international organizations – OAS, ILO, UNESCO, OECD, ECLAC

10:00 – 10:15 Break

10:15 – 12:45 **1st Session – Institutional coordination: Concrete experiences of coordination between Ministries of Labor and Ministries of Education in the region**
(Session based on Guiding questions)

- Introductory presentation by the Chair of the XXII Inter-American Conference of Ministers of Labor (IACML) and the Chair of the Inter-American Commission on Education (CIE) – (15 minutes)

- Presentations from 3 or 4 Ministries of Labor and 3 or 4 Ministries of Education (ideally from the same country), to encourage dialogue (15 min. each)

- Open dialogue among all participants to share their national experiences (1 hour)

Guiding questions

1. What concrete experiences of coordination exist in your country between Ministries of Education and Labor, as well as with other institutions involved in education and training systems? *Please consider joint actions and strategies, as well as coordination mechanisms and institutional arrangements currently in place.*

2. What have been the main achievements, challenges, and lessons learned from these coordination experiences? *Please consider the factors that have facilitated or hindered institutional coordination as well as the sustainability of the initiatives undertaken.*

12:45 – 14:00 Lunch – *Offered to all participants by the organizers*

14:00 – 17:00 **2nd Session – From education to work: Employment policies, skills development, and coordination with the productive sector for effective labor inclusion**
(Session based on Guiding Questions)

- Presentations from 3 or 4 Ministries of Labor and 3 or 4 Ministries of Education (ideally from the same country), to encourage dialogue (15 min. each)

- Perspectives from workers and employers, represented by COSATE and CEATAL (10 minutes each)

- Open dialogue among all participants to share their national experiences (1h30)

Guiding questions

3. What strategies or programs are being implemented in your country to improve labor inclusion and education-to-work transition, in partnership with the productive sector and considering the ongoing transformation of the world of work? *Please consider active labor market policies, public employment services, job matching and employment guidance, dual training, alternance training, and apprenticeship programs.*

4. What have been the main achievements, challenges, and lessons learned from these strategies or programs?

17:30 Closing of the first day of the Workshop

December 4

8:30 – 10:45 **3rd Session – Ensuring lifelong learning: Learning pathways, certification, and recognition of skills**
(Session based on Guiding Questions)

- Presentations from 3 or 4 Ministries of Labor and 3 or 4 Ministries of Education (ideally from the same country), to encourage dialogue (15 min. each)

- Perspectives from workers and employers, represented by COSATE and CEATAL (10 minutes each)

- Open dialogue among all participants to share their national experiences (1 hour)

Guiding questions

5. What efforts are being undertaken in your country to build bridges among education, professional training, and skills certification systems, and what have been their achievements, challenges, and lessons learned?

6. What education innovations or reforms have been introduced in your country regarding flexible learning modalities, modular learning pathways, and micro-credentials?

7. What progress, challenges, and lessons can be identified in your country regarding skills certification and the recognition of prior learning, particularly with respect to the validity and recognition of certificates issued?

10:45 – 11:00 Break

11:00 – 12:30 **Subgroups activity –** *(Based on Guiding Questions)*

Guiding questions

8. What policy recommendations can be proposed to strengthen coordination between education and labor, particularly with regard to:

   (i) institutional coordination among Ministries of Education and Labor and other institutions involved in education and training systems;
   (ii) labor inclusion and education-to-work transition; and
   (iii) lifelong learning?

12:30 – 12:45 Break and space for subgroups rapporteurs to refine conclusions

12:45 – 13:15 Presentation of subgroups conclusions

13:15 – 13:30 **Closing Session**

13:30 – 17:00 **Lunch and Field visit** – ITSE Campus

5. GUIDING QUESTIONS

The guiding questions included in the boxes throughout the preliminary agenda are intended to guide presentations and dialogue sessions, as well as to maintain a common thread throughout the discussions and stimulate debate. Therefore, participants are kindly requested to prepare their responses in advance and submit them to the Technical Secretariat (trabajo@oas.org for Ministries of Labor, and education@oas.org for Ministries of Education) no later than November 16. We thank you in advance for your cooperation.

6. REGISTRATION INFORMATION

Registration: Please complete the attached Registration Form and send it to the Technical Secretariat as soon as possible and no later than **October 28** (if requesting funding) to trabajo@oas.org for Ministries of Labor and other guests, and to education@oas.org for Ministries of Education. Governmental delegations should submit this form through the Permanent Mission of their countries to the OAS.

Financing: Travel expenses are the responsibility of the participating institutions. However, the OAS, with resources from the RIAL, may provide partial financial support by covering accommodation and local transportation costs for selected government representatives whose responsibilities are aligned with the objectives of the Workshop, as well as for representatives of COSATE and CEATAL.

Resources are limited; therefore, requests for financial support will be reviewed and awarded on a first-come, first-served basis. Participants wishing to receive financial support must indicate this on the Registration Form and submit it as soon as possible, and no later than October 28.

Accommodation: Each participant is responsible for booking their accommodation at the hotel of their choice, except for participants receiving financial support. For these participants, the OAS will arrange accommodation at the Hotel Las Americas Golden Tower Panama, where the workshop will take place.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE WORKSHOP:

Visit:
https://rialnet.org/?q=en/Workshop_LaborEducation_Panama

Contact:
trabajo@oas.org

REGISTRATION FORM

INTERSECTORAL WORKSHOP

"Coordination between education and labor in the Americas in contexts of transformation"

December 3 and 4, 2026 – Panama City, Panama

Last Name	First Name
Title	
Organization	
Country	
Telephone	E-mail

Please submit this Registration Form to trabajo@oas.org for Ministries of Labor and other invited participants, and to education@oas.org for Ministries of Education, according to the deadlines indicated below. Government officials must submit the Form through the Permanent Mission of their country to the OAS.

Does your institution require financial assistance in order to participate in the meeting?*

Yes ___ No ___

If so, please submit this Registration Form as soon as possible, and no later than **October 28** to: trabajo@oas.org. If you are not requesting financial assistance, the deadline to receive this form is **November 16**.

*The OAS, with resources from the RIAL, may provide partial financial support by covering accommodation and local transportation costs for selected government representatives whose responsibilities are aligned with the objectives of the Workshop, as well as for representatives of COSATE and CEATAL. Given that resources are limited, requests will be reviewed and awarded on a first-come, first-served basis.