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PATHWAYS TO PROSPERITY in the Americas is a policy-level dialogue that links 16 Western Hemisphere governments and societies that collectively seek to empower small businesses, facilitate trade and regional competitiveness, build a modern and inclusive workforce, and encourage green, sustainable business practices. Through this initiative, countries share best practices and collaborate to spread the benefits of economic growth more broadly to all of our citizens.

Pathways was launched in New York in September 2008. Since then, annual ministerial meetings have been held in Panama, El Salvador, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Colombia, and Panama.

Through shared leadership, Pathways partner countries are committed to deepening cooperation on the following four pillars:

- **Empowering small businesses** by providing access to financial and technical support mechanisms for micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).
- **Facilitating trade** by improving regulations and the infrastructure that small firms need to trade more competitively across borders.
- **Building a modern workforce** by supporting worker rights and fair labor standards as well as promoting the education and training, jobs and entrepreneurship that will prepare our citizens to achieve their full potential.
- **Promoting sustainable business practices and environmental cooperation.**

Pathways Partners

Pathways was launched by the leaders of twelve Western Hemisphere countries and total of sixteen countries participate, including Belize, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay, and the United States. Brazil and Jamaica have observer status. The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the Organization of American States (OAS), and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) are strategic Pathways partners. Two member countries co-chair each Pathways pillar and organize activities throughout the year that advance the Ministerial Action Plan.

Pathways Activities

To make progress toward Pathway's goals, U.S. government agencies provide technical assistance in priority areas such as small business development, financial inclusion, infrastructure financing, women's entrepreneurship, greening the supply chain, improving environmental practices, and promoting internationally-recognized labor rights. Pathways achievements include:

- Expansion of the U.S. Small Business Development Center (SBDC) model to Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Honduras, and Panama, building on the foundation of the Small Business Network of the Americas (SBNA).
- Strengthening public-private partnerships for border management reform and increased customs technical expertise in Pathways countries through the Pathways Central American Border Management Reform Project.
- Expansion of WeConnect International into Mexico, which has so far brought together 45 buyers and 146 sellers resulting in \$6.5 million in deals closed.
- Fostering a public-private partnership that contributed to the development of a labor relations agreement in Honduras, resulting in improved dialogue and dispute resolution between management and workers.
- Developing cleaner production courses in the Dominican Republic and El Salvador that integrate business, engineering, and environmental education principles to help SMEs green their production practices and save cost.

Looking Forward

Since 2012, the Clearinghouse mechanism has served to broaden the network of Pathways stakeholders, and has expanded their engagement through outreach and information-sharing about the initiative. The Pathways Challenge Competition, implemented by the World Environment Center and launched in February 2014, is seeking out innovative, proven and sustainable ideas to help solve the challenges faced by small and medium enterprises in Latin America.