

# Pathways to Prosperity in the Americas Innovation Challenge



photos: World Environment Center

The Pathways to Prosperity in the Americas Innovation Challenge seeks to discover, field test, and scale solutions by grassroots partnerships in Latin America that have a proven track-record in overcoming labor and environmental barriers small businesses face. Launched in February 2014 by the State Department and the World Environment Center (WEC), the Challenge began with over 650 entities – non-profit organizations, private companies, and public entities featuring at least one partner operating in one of the 16 Pathways to Prosperity member countries – registering for the competition.

Policy and technical experts from around the region narrowed down the applicants to 30 semifinalists, and later to 12 final entries. The 12 finalists competed in a final Pitch Competition on July 25 in Washington, DC. A panel of experts selected four finalists to receive sub-grants of up to \$500,000 each and technical assistance to scale and replicate their solution over the next two years:

- **Empowering Small Businesses:** Lutheran World Relief, Nicaragua – “Mobile Cocoa” builds a network of diverse stakeholders across sectors to improve cacao farmers’ understanding of production and international markets, while connecting them to resources.
- **Facilitating Trade:** Núcleo Biotecnología Curauma, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Valparaíso, Chile – “CompiteMAS” provides SMEs tools to make decisions about technology and sustainability practices, as well as measure and monitor their productivity, environmental and social impact.
- **Developing a Modern Workforce:** ICAM GROUP (Informática y Computación Avanzada de México, S.C.), Mexico – The “Integral Measurement System and Productivity Improvement for SMEs” process builds skills for SMEs’ sustainability while facilitating communication between workers and employers to improve social dialogue.
- **Promoting Sustainable Business Practices:** Vista Volcanes, S.A., Guatemala – “Capilla Malla Inocua” offers a solution that changes the use of insecticides to protect crop development, creates a network of sustainable, small entrepreneurs, and empowers them with the tools to protect their business in the short-term, and grow it in the long-term.

## Continued Engagement

The State Department and WEC are now building on the success of the Challenge by re-engaging the 26 remaining semi-finalists in capacity-building activities and matchmaking opportunities with other applicants and potential funders. Eight of the 26 semi-finalists that obtain a pre-determined level of private sector investment will be eligible to receive awards to advance and expand their solutions. Network and capacity building support will continue through 2017.

## About Pathways to Prosperity

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 and environmental cooperation. Through this initiative, countries share best practices and collaborate to spread the benefits of economic growth more broadly to all of our citizens. Pathways member countries include 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.

For more information about Pathways to Prosperity in the Americas Initiative please visit:  
[www.pathways-caminos.org](http://www.pathways-caminos.org)

For more information about the Pathways Innovation Challenge please visit:  
[www.challenge.wec.org](http://www.challenge.wec.org)