



A North American Workforce Development Agenda

Better Jobs for a More Competitive Region

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The Challenges

- North America faces an **alarming skills gap** that negatively affects the competitiveness and economic performance of all three countries.
- Simultaneously, the U.S., Canada and Mexico are facing **economic and technological transformations and fierce global competition**.
- These challenges call for priority **investment in the development of the continent's workforces**.
- North America's highly integrated production and commercial networks mean that **regional collaboration is essential**.



Workforce Development Cooperation

- North American collaboration is an opportunity to create **jobs**, achieve higher levels of **productivity**, and strengthen the **competitiveness** of the region.
- North America would benefit greatly from a **trilateral task force**, established by the three governments, which would include **public-private, federal-sub-federal working groups** to develop proposals on workforce development issues.
- We recommend **focusing on the following four areas:**

ISSUE #1 Apprenticeships and other types of work-based learning and technical education



1. Agree **trilaterally on a definition of apprenticeships**, and a minimum set **of criteria and quality standards**.
2. Agree on **broad guidelines on assigning responsibilities to governments, industry and intermediaries** regarding the development, implementation and funding of apprenticeships.
3. Agree on building **a tri-national Career and Technical Education and apprenticeships taskforce to identify best practices** to promote apprenticeships and other types of work-based learning programs.

ISSUE #1 Apprenticeships and other types of work-based learning and technical education



4. Agree on elements of a **marketing strategy to increase public awareness** of the benefits and advantages of work-based learning.
5. Agree on building **tri-national spaces to foster on-going dialogue between stakeholders across the region** to share best practices on work-based learning and training and to strengthen public-private partnerships.
6. Agree among the three countries on ways to **incentivize and support companies, including SMEs**, to develop training and learning programs for reskilling and “upskilling” their workforces.



ISSUE #2 Certifications and related issues

1. Agree at federal and sub-national levels on a **common terminology about credentials and competencies** to facilitate broader understanding, transferability and recognition of credentials.
2. Agree on **developing or strengthening national competency frameworks** and aligning them to the tri-national common terminology for credentials and competencies.
3. Agree tri-nationally on a set of **guidelines to assess and validate informal learning and professional experience**, and to identify skills associated with such experience.



ISSUE #3 Data Collection and Transparency

1. Agree on a **tri-national set of norms to collect real time labor market data and information** in a consistent and homogeneous way, so it is understandable and comparable across the region.
2. Agree on the development of a **tri-national online platform** (linked to national platforms) that can serve as a hub of the **real-time labor market data** collected by the three countries. It can also serve as a **hub of best practices** from across the region.
3. Agree on guidelines to make the **tri-national platform and data tools openly available** to all stakeholders, while allowing space for the development of private sector initiatives.

ISSUE #4 Best Practices to prepare for the “Fourth Industrial Revolution”



1. Agree on key steps and tools to **incentivize companies to invest in reskilling and “upskilling” of their workers**, to provide mid-career training and learning opportunities, and to develop **short-term, agile training and learning programs** to ease the transitions needed with the technological changes expected with the Fourth Industrial Revolution.
2. Agree on **building tri-national spaces to share best practices on the implementation of “Industry 4.0”** and to **strengthen partnerships** between the education and private sectors across the region.
3. Agree tri-nationally on best practices to **support SMEs** so they keep up with technological changes, innovation and talent creation.

ISSUE #4 Best Practices to Approach/Prepare for the Fourth Industrial Revolution



4. Agree **tri-nationally on approaches and strategies to encourage companies to collaborate with educational institutions, unions and other interested parties** in order to
 - better align curricula with the labor market needs,
 - better connect students to the labor market,
 - and foster the modernization of academic spaces.
5. Establish **trilateral research and innovation projects** in strategic economic areas through grants and scholarships.



Implementing the North American Agenda

- The task force and working groups could be **usefully incorporated into a modernized NAFTA** as part of a forward looking agenda built into the relevant treaty chapters. But the workforce development agenda could also be pursued independently.
- The successful implementation of the North American Agenda depends on **joint collaboration** that includes **governments, private sector, educational institutions, and unions, among other stakeholders**, from all three countries.



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