

Perkins **Latin America** & the **Caribbean** Present & Future

A Model of Educational Transformation
2025-2027

A young boy with glasses and a striped shirt smiles while coloring with a crayon on a blue table in a classroom. Other students and classroom furniture are partially visible in the background.

Introduction

At Perkins, we believe that **every child can learn**. Our vision for **Latin America** and the **Caribbean** is to ensure that every child with disabilities not only attends school but also thrives through inclusive, accessible, and high-quality education. We aim to empower these children to be active members in both their school communities and at home. Ultimately, **our goal is to drive systemic transformation in education and early care systems across the region**.



Our strategy is centered on the **model program approach**, where we collaborate with local governments to select schools and early education programs with the potential to become exemplary models for their countries and the broader **Latin American** and **Caribbean** region. Looking ahead to **2027**, our goal is to expand into **35 provinces** and states across Mexico, **Brazil, Argentina, Chile** and, **Dominican Republic**, reaching a total of **108 schools** and **Early Education-Early Care programs—achieving 66% growth from 2024 to 2027**. Additionally, we aim to extend our efforts into new countries, such as **Colombia**.



A classroom with several students sitting at their desks. A teacher with glasses and long black hair is standing next to one of the students, looking at the notebook the girl is reading.

This document contains **our strategic vision of the next three years**. We will explore each strategic axis in detail, providing a comprehensive analysis of how each component contributes to our overarching goals. This thorough examination will highlight the specific actions, initiatives, and collaborations that drive progress in these areas, **offering a clear understanding of our approach and its impact on the communities we serve**.



A girl seated in front of a slant board with a black background holding with her left hand one of the two rings placed on the lectern.

In this phase of ongoing growth, we are focusing on five strategic axis:

1

Improving Quality Education in Schools and Programs:

- Develop and implement a comprehensive educational model that integrates training, evaluation, and community engagement.
- Support the development of local resources to enhance educational quality.
- Foster collaboration between families and schools to ensure a holistic approach to education.



2

Strengthening the Family-School Alliance:

- Reinforce the role of families as educational partners as they participate in the assessments and working plans for family engagement, with an active role of the Perkins Family Coordinators.
- Empower families and reshaping the dynamic between schools and families, nurturing the educational environment.
- Strength Perkins Family Coordinators to play a central role in reestablishing families as key partners in their children's education.

3

Promoting Community and Global Engagement:

- Raise awareness, building relationships, and promoting active participation, empowering individuals with disabilities, their families, and support networks.
- Empower communities to lead societal conversations and drive transformative change, emphasizing meaningful participation and collaboration.

4

Building Collaborative Knowledge to Enhance the Perkins Quality Improvement Process:

- Generate, sharing, and refining insights from our activities, based on evidence, data and experience of the schools to continuously improve and strengthen the regional work model.
- Use this knowledge to inform and guide educational practices and policies.

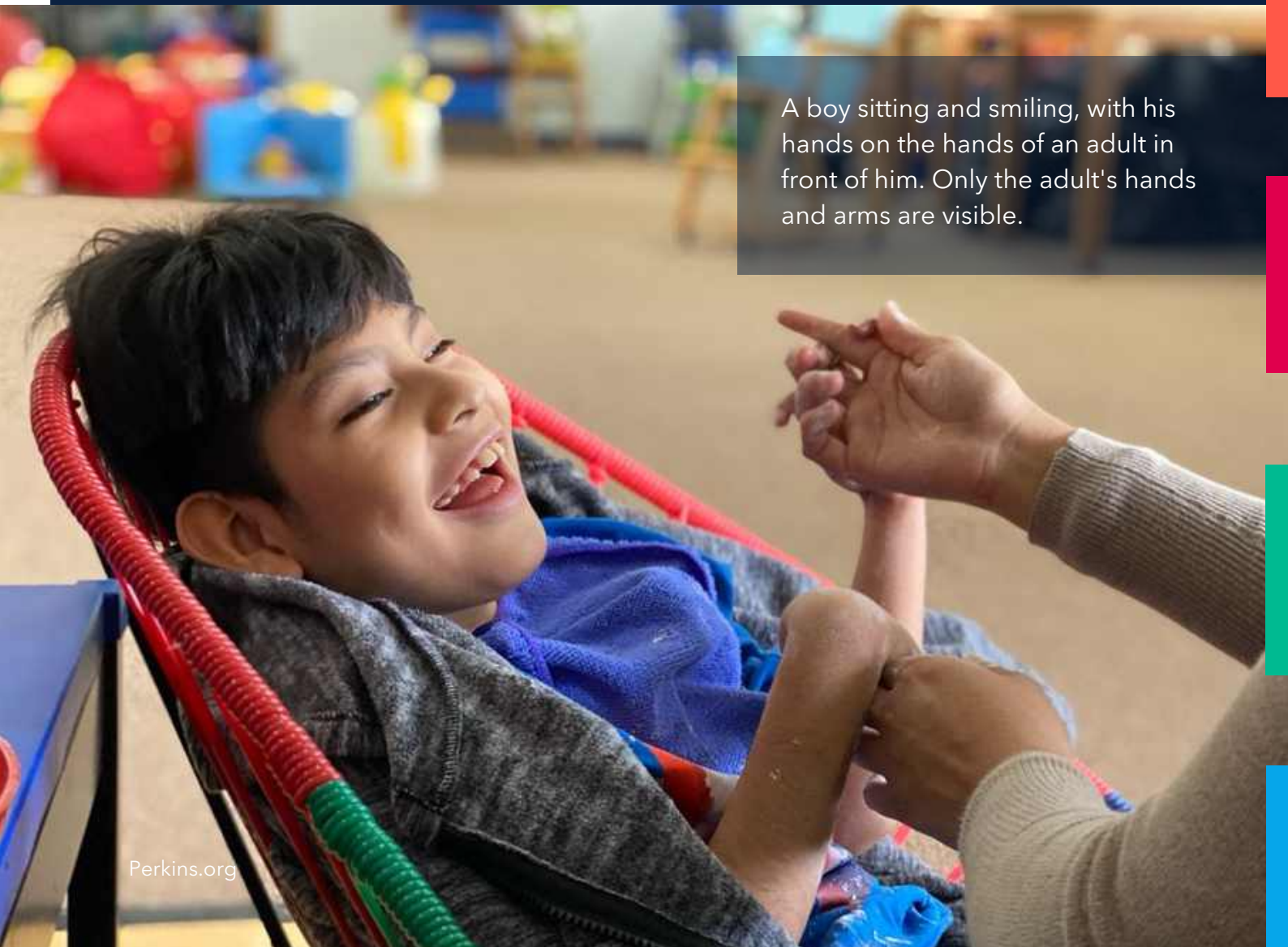
5

Facilitating Regional Growth:

- Expand the impact by reaching more states, provinces and countries with international and national cooperation.
- Allocate resources strategically to support systemic educational change and foster regional development.

Period 2025 - 2027

In our ongoing **commitment to enhancing educational outcomes and fostering inclusive communities**, we have identified five key axes of work that guide our efforts. These strategic priorities are designed to address the complex challenges and opportunities faced by students, families, and educators, particularly in the context of supporting individuals with disabilities. By focusing on **1) improving** educational quality, **2) strengthening** the family-school alliance, **3) promoting** community and global engagement, **4) building** collaborative knowledge to enhance the Perkins Quality Improvement Process, and **5) facilitating** regional growth, we aim to establish a sustainable and impactful educational model. The following objectives outline our approach to achieving these goals and driving meaningful transformation throughout the educational system.



A boy sitting and smiling, with his hands on the hands of an adult in front of him. Only the adult's hands and arms are visible.

1

Axis 1

Improving Quality Education in Schools and Programs

Quality education demands sustained commitment, expertise, and resources. **The model program approach** involves a sustained strategic initiative where programs progressively evolve through stages of training, mentoring, and coaching, until eventually becoming reference centers within their regions, maintaining an alliance with **Perkins Latin America and the Caribbean** to monitor progress and provide support as needed. This comprehensive strategy encompasses **building local capacity, evaluation, monitoring, and community engagement, setting the stage for broader and deeper impact.**



A girl is sitting at her desk, focused on her work on the table. In front of her, there is a large black sheet with tree leaves glued to it. She is holding a large piece of chalk in her right hand and seems to be about to draw or write on her work.

A **model school** is not viewed as a fixed state to achieve, but rather as an ongoing journey of transformation, grounded in both conceptualization and experience. **Perkins Latin America and the Caribbean** defines a model school as “**a place of constant search for improvement, a leader in self-assessment and innovation, committed to the revision of practices based on each individual demand. It is a school with social awareness and they see themselves as a point of reference and support, a training site, a model for other schools.**”^[1]

[1] Rodríguez-Gil, G; Vazquez, MA (2023) Model School: Quality and Leadership in Education of the Individuals Having Vision Loss, Multiple Disabilities, and the Individuals who are Deafblind DBI Review, 69. p;40.

1.1

Perkins Quality Improvement Process: Commitment to Quality and Collaboration with Model Schools

Adopting a quality approach involves ensuring equal opportunities to access high-level education by providing the necessary resources and support for a comprehensive academic and holistic education. This educational approach not only focuses on the development of academic knowledge and skills but also on the personal, emotional, social, and ethical growth of students. To achieve this, work is done with schools and early education-early care centers in implementing strategies that include continuous process evaluation, identifying areas for improvement, and making informed decisions to optimize teaching and learning. A quality approach fosters a culture of dialogue, collaboration, and cooperation, oriented towards achieving common goals.

The **Perkins Quality Improvement Process** is a standardized approach to enhancing educational programs, particularly for children with multiple disabilities. It begins with the selection of programs that have the potential to become local and regional models, based on established criteria. These programs are evaluated at the onset and thereafter annually using specially developed quality indicators.

Three children and two adults are sitting around a table. One of the children is standing to the side, while an adult and a girl, sitting, seem to be painting or writing. The other adult, also sitting, is closely supervising the work. All the adults are wearing masks.



As **Perkins Latin America and the Caribbean** expands from **74 to 108 schools and early education-early care programs**, we are intensifying our collaborative approach (see Axis 5 below). We are streamlining our processes and developing tools for monitoring and evaluation that empower schools with greater autonomy, **fostering sustainable transformation over time.**

1.1

Continuous assessment of results and processes over time enables informed decision-making to optimize teaching and learning, thereby promoting a culture of quality. This requires consistency and standardization to ensure credible results, which involves the use of uniform criteria and clear standards for measuring achievement, consistent evaluation tools, building consensus among evaluators, and clear standards for measuring achievement. Such an approach ensures comparable results, reduces errors, and facilitates meaningful analysis, informed decision-making, and identification of improvement areas. Consistent evaluation practices consist of 3 elements:

- **Assessment Streamline:** The Perkins Quality Indicators serve as the primary evaluation tool used to measure the program's progress toward becoming a model initiative. The web platform that hosts this evaluation tool streamlines assessment tasks and improves overall efficiency. It also serves as a repository for evidence provided by schools and programs, showcasing improvements in practices, action plans, and follow-up actions.
- **Evidence-Based Decision Making:** Recording evidence of educational practices documents specific examples of improvement, helping to identify areas of strength and weakness. This process guides future decisions and fosters learning, allowing for informed planning. Additionally, the systematic recording of evidence contributes to objective analysis when evaluating practices and making decisions.
- **Action Plans:** Based on results from the assessment, annual action plans are built in collaboration with the school or program. These plans are dynamic and can be adjusted throughout the implementation period according to circumstances.

Future vision

- **Continued Use of Perkins Quality Indicators:** Encouraging schools and programs to conduct self-assessments and improve Perkins Quality Indicators application to enhance user-friendliness and integration into routine assessments.
- **Development of a Dedicated Application:** Developing an application for the Perkins Quality Indicators will offer multimedia support for the timely integration of evidence, facilitate the independent use of the evaluation tool, and maintain the integrity of the assessment system.
- **Networks for Enhanced Growth:** Connecting and collaborating, schools impacted by the model program approach collectively leverage strengths, resources, and expertise, bringing systemic change.

1.2 Foundational training: Perkins International Academy

Adopting a quality approach involves ensuring equal opportunities to access high-level education by providing the necessary resources and support for a comprehensive academic and holistic education. This educational approach not only focuses on the development of academic knowledge and skills but also on the personal, emotional, social, and ethical growth of students. To achieve this, work is done with schools and early education-early care centers in implementing strategies that include continuous process evaluation, identifying areas for improvement, and making informed decisions to optimize teaching and learning. A quality approach fosters a culture of dialogue, collaboration, and cooperation, oriented towards achieving common goals.

Future vision

- **Deepen our focus on the human rights perspective.** It's a heartfelt recognition that individuals with disabilities possess inherent rights to education, healthcare, and full societal participation. Embracing this perspective underscores the critical importance of inclusion and the moral imperative to uphold these rights.
- **Continually working to refresh the "look and feel" of our online courses.** As education and technology evolves, our methods must adapt as well. By updating the content and presentation, we can better serve those seeking training in an ever-changing educational landscape.
- **Expand our network of tutors and coordinators.** This new network includes graduates from the Perkins Educational Leadership Program and Perkins International Academy programs. By doing so, we can ensure a richer, more diverse pool of knowledge and experience.
- **Increase the number of teachers,** service providers, family members, and government technical assessors or supervisors from model programs participating in courses of the Perkins International Academy.



A girl with glasses is sitting at a table looking at a card, while the teacher, standing to the side, is looking at the card the girl is looking at. On the table, there are cards with drawings and colored pencils.

1.3

Adaptive design in Model Programs

Creating adapted materials are custom-made adaptive materials, equipment and furniture that are made to help children with physical and or sensory disabilities to have access to communication, learning and socialization. They not only enhance individual learning but also fosters a more inclusive educational environment where all students can actively participate in their educational process. These adaptations are crucial for ensuring that children with disabilities have equal opportunities to learn, participate, and succeed in an educational setting, promoting their overall development and inclusion in society.

In order to develop adaptive designs that responds to the demands of each student and their context, it is important to:

- **Design** personalized, low cost materials that can easily obtained
- **Propose** attractive and functional designs for the user's age, preference and cultural background
- **Define** adjustment based on feedback from the user, their family and the educational team.

In Mexico, Perkins Latin America and the Caribbean has an ongoing collaboration with the Yucatan's Adapted Design Center which remains a strategic choice for the future. This partnership, supported by Perkins' investments, has fostered a positive relationship with the Secretary of Education of Yucatan, significantly benefiting numerous children and educators in the region.

The Adapted Design Center produces low-cost adaptive devices, such as adapted chairs, tables, and slant boards made of cardboard, to meet the specific support needs of students in daily living activities, learning, recreation, and work. These devices are modified and customized to enhance, maintain, and improve the abilities and skills of children and young people with physical, sensory, and multiple disabilities. Furthermore, they are made from eco-friendly materials that are locally available and affordable.



A young child with disabilities sits in a yellow, adapted cardboard chair. Two adults are nearby—one in front of her, providing support and testing the chair.

1.3

Additionally, international connections with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and local partnerships with Universidad Autonoma de Yucatan strengthen the rationale for sustaining collaboration with the Adapted Design Center. These relationships could help secure future funding opportunities while supporting the Adapted Design Center in expanding its reach and impact on children.

Future vision

- Looking ahead, the demand for adapted furniture, learning aids, and tools that facilitate communication and independent living is steadily increasing. With the right resources, there is immense potential to impact even more children. The staff at the Adapted Design Center has identified a significant need from the Regular Education Support Services Units (USAERs), particularly in preschools, where tools such as slant boards are in high demand. We could explore expanding collaboration with USAERs in future projects, focusing on schools already receiving devices from the Adapted Design Center
- Assessments are being conducted to explore the feasibility of funding additional Adapted Design Centers, not only in Mexico but potentially in Brazil as well.



An ADC staff member assembles a cardboard model using a tape measure and a square tool at a well-lit table. Draft papers and a cutter are scattered across the workspace.

Axis 2

Strengthening the Family-School Alliance

Parents and family members play a critical role in the development and education of children with disabilities. While regular and special educators provide essential support in school, the family environment is where a child's growth begins and continues. Parents are often the first to recognize a child's needs and are key participants in the assessment and advocacy process. By integrating learning into daily activities, families help children develop essential skills beyond the classroom. Moreover, families are vital in fostering the social and emotional well-being of children with disabilities, providing the care, and encouragement needed for them to thrive academically and socially.

Our model program approach recognizes the essential role of parents and families by incorporating Perkins Family Coordinators into our country teams. These coordinators, who are parents of children with disabilities themselves, work to reestablish families as active educational partners. Their primary objective is to foster collaboration that enhances the educational experience and overall quality of life for children and youth with disabilities. The ultimate goal is to cultivate a culture of continuous collaboration between families and school professionals, driving positive change in schools, homes, and communities.



Three women smiling, holding hands, looking at the camera. Behind them, a blackboard with a text that says in Portuguese: "none lets go of the other's hand."

2

The Perkins Family Coordinator specific objectives include:

1. **Identify Family Educational Needs:** Assess the needs of the families to provide them with the necessary tools and resources to be more proactive in the education of their children.
2. **Deliver Family Training:** Deliver training and mentoring sessions for families that align with the professional development topics covered by the Perkins International Academy such as personal center planning and calendar systems and routines.
3. **Maintain Open Communication:** Ensure ongoing communication between Perkins family coordinators and Perkins educational coordinators to collaboratively implement clear, shared goals outlined in the school's action plan.
4. **Foster Stronger Collaboration between School and Families:** Facilitate staff and family meetings on topics of interest for both groups such as alternative and augmentative communication and collaboration strategies.
5. **Promote Parent Leadership:** Encourage the selection of parent leaders through thorough training and mentoring, ensuring their ongoing commitment to the project.
6. **Involve Families in Individualized Educational Plans:** Engage families in the development of Individualized Education Plans to ensure that the impact extends from school to home.
7. **Integrate Families into Perkins International Academy:** Involve families in Perkins Academy's training by inviting them as guest lecturers and offering training scholarships to support sustainable, long-term change within the school and community.

Future vision

- Creating a **guidance manual** for organizing and developing the family network within the school, offering recommendations for collaboration between school and family.
- Organizing **regional family meetings** where school professionals and families come together and develop action plans that enhance collaboration between the parties.
- Promoting the development of **Perkins family coordinators and parent leaders** in the model programs who, through practical-theoretical training and mentoring will sustain the continuous collaboration between families and school professionals.
- Coordinating further **collaboration among Perkins family coordinators** to enhance cohesion in our cross-country efforts.
- Develop **a tool to monitor and track activities**. This tool will provide insights to more informed decision-making and continuous improvement.

Axis 3

Community & Global Engagement

Community and global engagement is fostering awareness, building connections, and encouraging active participation with local and international communities to address shared challenges, promote mutual understanding, and drive positive transformation. Perkins Latin America and the Caribbean wants to enhance the visibility and influence of the education community by building and strengthening their networks, taking a leading role in societal discussions and opening new untapped spaces.



A large group of men and women sitting in a circle.

We have three key strategies. First, the **Strategic Working Groups** act as catalysts for addressing present and future challenges, bringing together diverse expertise to coordinate efforts and address issues to drive meaningful progress. Through the **Perkins International Academy Community**, we are fostering a network of learners and leaders who are committed to advancing inclusive education in Latin America. Finally, by actively **Engaging in Conferences and Events**, we can broaden our influence, share our knowledge, and connect with local and global partners, paving the way for impactful collaborations. Together, these strategies help us strengthen our presence and amplify our impact on a local and global scale.

3.1

Strategic Working Groups

The Strategic Working Groups are integral to our model program approach, comprising cross-disciplinary individuals with disabilities, and family members, civil society members, and national experts. They provide Perkins with advice, identify opportunities to promote accessible, inclusive education, and engage local and international stakeholders. By involving diverse civil society representatives, they help drive systemic change and extend Perkins' commitment to inclusion beyond education. They also create opportunities to influence policy at state and federal levels, amplifying our efforts beyond individual schools.

In Argentina and Chile, for example, Strategic Working Groups have successfully advocated for legislation recognizing deafblindness as a unique disability.

In Mexico, they've integrated education for multiple disabilities/visual impairments into the training curriculum of "Escuelas Normales de Especialización" in 15 states.

In Brazil, the group has collaborated with museums like the Museu de Patologia da Fiocruz and Museu de Ciências da Terra to improve accessibility for people with disabilities. They focus on training staff in inclusive practices, such as enhancing communication with non-verbal visitors and making exhibitions more accessible.

Future Vision

Looking ahead, we aim to increase the impact of these groups by focusing on targeted work that can drive national discussions and actions toward improving the quality of education in each country. We plan to:

- **Support action plans that broaden the reach** in the implementation of educational policies, with special attention to the visibility of the needs of the population with multiple disabilities, visual impairments and deafblindness.
- **Organize seminars and workshops** in collaboration with local training centers, to disseminate information, promote a culture of inclusion, and improve the cooperation between local organizations.
- **Create resource materials and training programs** for educators and administrators to apply best practices.
- **Participate in academic dissemination spaces**, through lectures, conferences and training opportunities, to disseminate the vision, action and projection of the Strategic Working Group.

3.2

Enhancing our Digital Outreach

Enhancing our outreach in the region is crucial for remaining relevant and impactful within the disability community and beyond. We want to share our collaborative journey—highlighting the stories of children, youth, families, and programs with whom we partner—to demonstrate our collective impact and commitment to making a difference.

Future vision

- The Perkins International Academy Community private Facebook group was established in 2019 as a strategic tool to keep alumni of the Perkins International Academy in the region connected with Perkins' initiatives and new resources and opportunities. We will enhance our current Facebook page to ensure that it serves as a **vibrant platform for sharing content and resources** from Perkins webpage (perkins.org), Perkins Latin America website (perkinsla.org) and other curated online resources.
- **Convene** Perkins International Academy graduates to events, training, or engagement opportunities. These events would provide an opportunity to assess their progress, identify areas for improvement, and determine where they still need support.
- Evaluate the need to create **additional communication channels** in LinkedIn or other modes as needed.
- Continue publishing **quarterly digital newsletters** that share stories about programs in Latin America, and rethink the format including more resources and updates in shorter, bite-sized versions.
- Create **new content in the Latin America and the Caribbean website** to share information regarding Adaptive Design and work with families in the region among other topics.

3.3

Amplify Our Voices

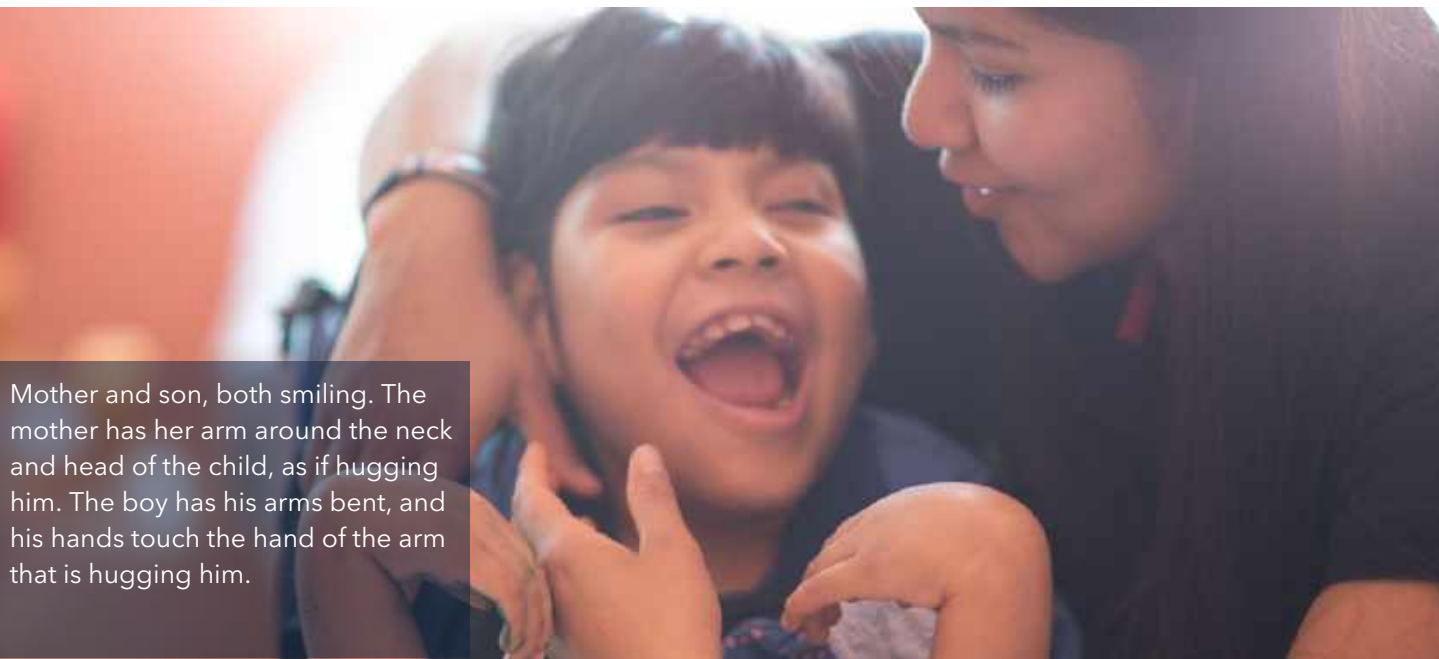
By actively engaging in national and international forums and conferences, both within and beyond the Latin America and the Caribbean region, we aim to amplify not only our organization's voice but also the voices of our partners on critical global issues. These engagements enable us to strengthen our collaborative efforts with diverse stakeholders worldwide, build mutual credibility, and foster growth, and influence at national and regional levels.

Future vision

Rooted in the collaborative essence of our mission, we recognize and deeply value the contributions of Perkins staff, along with the personnel and families from the programs and organizations we partner with. Moving forward, we envision Perkins Latin America and the Caribbean actively participating in at least one conference annually, ensuring that our collective expertise and perspectives are represented on a global stage.

Through these conferences, we aim to:

- **Elevate** the importance of inclusive education and advocate for policies that support individuals with disabilities.
- **Share** our successes and challenges transparently, fostering a culture of shared learning and continuous improvement.
- **Strengthen** our existing partnerships and forge new ones, building a robust network of allies committed to advancing our shared mission



Mother and son, both smiling. The mother has her arm around the neck and head of the child, as if hugging him. The boy has his arms bent, and his hands touch the hand of the arm that is hugging him.

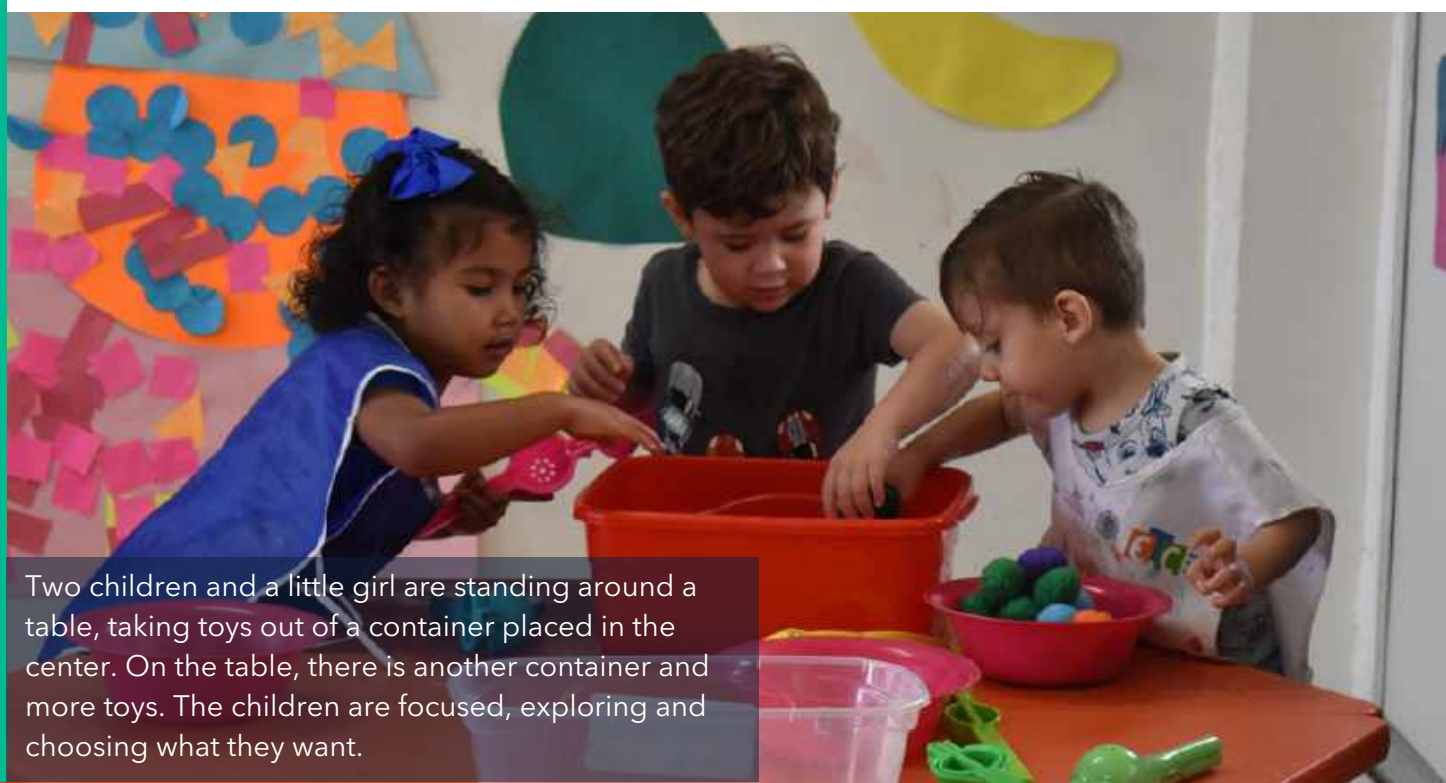
Axis 4

Collaborative Knowledge Building to Enhance the Perkins Quality Improvement Process

Adopting a participatory and collaborative approach fosters a collective knowledge-building process, enabling the identification of challenges and solutions faced by schools undergoing progress. It also actively involves those directly impacted in reflecting on and analyzing these experiences. Additionally, this process provides valuable feedback from documented experiences to make Perkins' working model more efficient and adaptable to the diverse contexts in which it is applied.

By using an action-research approach to learning, we intend to:

- **Optimizing practice:** Identifying areas of improvement in existing practices and developing effective responses.
- **Promoting active participation and capacity building:** Engaging and fostering skills and knowledge in participants in action-research so that they can address their own challenges.
- **Generate contextual knowledge:** Engage in critical reflection on practices to offer feedback on the training, assessment, and evaluation processes, while generating contextual knowledge to enhance understanding of challenges and impacts during implementation.



Two children and a little girl are standing around a table, taking toys out of a container placed in the center. On the table, there is another container and more toys. The children are focused, exploring and choosing what they want.

4.1

Action-research

Perkins Latin America and the Caribbean adopts an action research framework to foster the creation of research communities in the schools, enabling them to explore their own educational transformation processes and facilitate the exchange of experiences. This approach is an ongoing component of our quality improvement process.

Future vision

- **Improving practices:** The implementation of innovative strategies are documented and integrated as part of the quality improvement process in schools and early education early care centers.
- **Dissemination of results:** Sharing learning through publications in educational journals, and events such as congresses and seminars, and activities organized with the schools and early education early care centers.

4.2

Evidence & data for continuous improvement

Currently, data from the implementation of the Perkins Quality Indicators, of the follow-up visits and action plans developed by the schools in the process of change are collected on an online platform designed to manage the data more efficiently. This platform incorporates user-friendly data recording techniques and is both accessible and intuitive, allowing schools to proactively embrace the evaluation process.

Future vision

- **Continuous improvement in the quality of the evaluation tool:** Based on the research findings, the results are intended to reflect the impact of the training on the perspectives and experiences of the protagonists of the change. This implies focus on validation tasks of the evaluation tool based on the results obtained from different users during its application.
- **Make Perkins Quality Indicators platform accessible** through a variety of devices to enhance the user experience, increasing both the reach and effectiveness of the online tool.

5

Axis 5 Regional Growth

Regional Growth is focused on spreading our presence and impact across Mexico, Brazil, Argentina and Chile; while also exploring new countries such as Colombia and deepening our work in the Dominican Republic. By doing this, we are not just expanding geographically; we are aiming to touch more lives, make a bigger difference, and bring quality education and support services to more communities.

5.1

Perkins Presence in Latin America. Actual and Future Growth

We are currently developing 68 programs in 4 countries. By 2027, we plan to develop 121 programs in 6 countries (see details in the Preliminary Budget section).

We are not only growing in the number of programs, but also expanding our reach to other states and provinces in the countries where we currently work, as can be seen in the following table.

NUMBER OF PROVINCES/STATES BY COUNTRY				
		2025 - 2027		
	2024	# of provinces/states with perkins presence	Expansion %	2024
Mexico	10 of 31 states	15	50%	48%
Argentina	5 of 23 provinces	6	20%	26%
Brazil	5 of 26 states	6	20%	23%
Chile	1 of 16 states	5	400%	31%
Dominican Republic	0 of 31 provinces	2	-	-
TOTAL	21 of 96	32 of 98	50%	33%



5.2

New countries

As for 2025 we are exploring developing projects in Colombia and the Dominican Republic. Notwithstanding, we are always looking for new possibilities in the Region

Colombia

Since Perkins began working in Latin America in 1989, we have built relationships in Colombia, including training teachers. Children with disabilities in Colombia are a highly underserved population; a recent study found that 90% do not attend mainstream schools, with only 27.4% of children aged 6-11 with disabilities having access to education compared to 85% for the general population.

Starting in the fall of 2024, the Latin America and the Caribbean team will conduct exploratory work to identify opportunities and reach out to potential partners to ensure no child in Colombia is left behind. We will build on Perkins' established regional strategy in Latin America, embarking on a new project tailored to Colombia's needs, including developing a desk report to assess the needs and opportunities for serving children with disabilities, their families, and teachers.



For more information about Perkins's programs in Latin America & the Caribbean:

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Photo Credit: all photos are of children, teachers, families, partners, and Perkins team members who are part of our programs. To learn more about us, please reach out!

