

Brazil's School of Workers scales skilling efforts for people at risk of being left behind



The Ministry of Labour and Social Security, Microsoft, and Softex are using an online learning platform to move under- and unemployed Brazilians through a skilling pipeline, from digital literacy to in-demand technical expertise.

The challenge

Brazil is the fifth largest and sixth most populous country in the world. Its unemployment numbers are similarly expansive. Roughly 13 percent of the population—more than 13 million people—are unemployed, and an additional 27 percent (more than 31 million people) are underemployed, according to the most recent data from the [Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics](#).

Meanwhile, the country is facing a shortage of qualified skilled workers in many sectors. In the technology field alone, there will be 400,000 openings in IT jobs by 2024, according to projections in a [recent study](#). Currently, not enough residents are prepared to fill those jobs—many of which support essential services such as education, government, and healthcare. A [recent survey](#) confirms this. In 2021, leaders from 7 in 10 companies say they are struggling to hire for the most in-demand roles, including those that require digital and productivity skills (such as operations and logistics) as well as professional and technical skills (such as IT and data-centric fields).

In 2020, a public-private-non-profit partnership created [School of Workers 4.0](#) (*Escola do Trabalhador*) to respond to the unemployment and hiring crises exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Brazil's Ministry of the Economy, Microsoft, and the technology non-profit Softex are working together to advance an inclusive economic recovery by providing skills and resources aligned to local labor markets.

School of Workers 4.0 leadership anticipate far-reaching impacts. "When we have a positive impact on someone's livelihood, we change their lives, the lives of those around them, and the lives of their descendants," says Tania Consetino, President, Microsoft Brazil.

Accelerating impact

We at Microsoft have a responsibility to ensure the technology we create benefits everyone on the planet, as well as the planet itself. We are proud to scale social impact by partnering with governmental agencies, private companies, and non-profits to build organizations' capacity, jointly deliver programs and services, and drive systems-level change. Together, we are focused on.

- Supporting inclusive economic opportunity.
- Protecting fundamental rights.
- Working toward a sustainable future for all.

The solution

To effectively reach the many people who are unemployed, the solution would have to be available remotely to accommodate social distancing measures, accessible by smartphone, and usable to people with a low level of formal education.

They incorporated each of these factors into [School of Workers 4.0](#), delivered on the [Microsoft Community Training](#) (MCT) online learning platform. MCT is an Azure-powered digital destination that enables learners to access content in low- or even no-bandwidth situations, and it is protected by world-class security and privacy safeguards. Partners designed and are now offering this resource free-to-Brazilians, which incorporates the following critical attributes.

Training for multiple needs.

School of Workers 4.0 offers training on digital literacy, digital skills and productivity, technology-supported vocations, and advanced technology such as artificial intelligence and data science. "Building School of Workers as a pipeline was intentional," explains Lucia Rodrigues, Microsoft Philanthropies Lead in Brazil. "The design means someone can start in digital literacy, learning the basics such as how to use a computer, and end up in an entry-level profession, such as an IT administrator."

Content delivery that works for learners.

School of Workers 4.0 accommodates different learning styles and life circumstances. On the Microsoft Community Training (MCT) platform, users can access pre-recorded sessions on their own time, which is helpful for people who have caregiving responsibilities, for example. They can also opt for live sessions. All trainings are accessible by smartphone and provided digitally to comply with social distancing measures.

Integration with existing services.

People seeking employment assistance already turn to SINE, the Brazilian employment services agency. The Ministry of Labour and Social Security team is training SINE staff to facilitate job-seekers taking a Microsoft-developed questionnaire, which identifies potential career paths and the skills needed to pursue those jobs. SINE staff can then help them register on School of Workers and sign up for the courses that will enable their career goals.

Additional supports.

The nonprofit [Softex](#) has trained 58 tutors so far, who teach School of Workers 4.0 sessions live and help learners who are struggling. In addition, Microsoft provides an Office 365 license to every registrant so they can complete assignments and practice using productivity tools.

In six months, **15,000** learners have completed School of Workers 4.0 courses, and **23,000** enrolled in at least one course. The partnership aims to reach **315,000** learners in **3** years

So far, close to **50,000** Brazilians have registered with School of Workers 4.0.

Promising practices for deeper impact.

Leadership within the partnership behind School of Workers 4.0 are eager to share what they have learned in scaling up the initiative.

Tap into existing infrastructure.

People who are under- or unemployed already seek help from SINE. By providing complementary resources, School of Workers 4.0 helps Brazilians become work-ready—faster. The alignment also helps School of Workers scale, reaching far more people who can benefit from trainings.

Scale through mobile.

Brazilians who are unemployed live across such a wide geography that teaching only in person would limit School of Workers 4.0. Offering all trainings online enables anyone with internet access and a device to become prepared for hard-to-fill jobs.

Offer certificates.

Rodrigues explains that certificates are a big draw for learners and an incentive to complete courses. “Certificates give job-seekers a leg up, especially with the more advanced skills like data science, Azure, and programming,” she adds. “The endorsement from Microsoft and the Ministry of Labour and Social Security help them demonstrate their abilities.”

Design role-based content.

Microsoft and Softex analyzed job postings on LinkedIn and the SINE platform. School of Workers 4.0 curriculum is based on the skills that would most help learners secure these jobs, thereby deepening the pool of qualified candidates for hiring companies.

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By working together on School of Workers 4.0, we will train more workers and job seekers than ever before. Expanding access to jobs that require digital and technical skills will help communities achieve financial mobility and the economy to grow.

Rodrigo Zerbone,
Undersecretary of Human Capital.

Microsoft is working with non-profits to ensure every person has the skills, knowledge, and opportunity they need to succeed in the digital economy.

Learn more aka.ms/skills-employability.

To learn more about Microsoft Community Training:
[Microsoft Community Training](#)

