

Achieving Sustainable Partnerships for Innovation, Research, and Entrepreneurship (ASPIRE)



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Based in Guatemala at the Universidad del Valle de Guatemala, ASPIRE seeks to create a replicable model for how Latin American higher education institutions and their collaborators in the private sector, government, and local communities can address local and regional development priorities through their research, teaching, innovation, and entrepreneurial activities.

OVERVIEW

ASPIRE is a \$15 million, five-year partnership (2021-2026) between the USAID Innovation, Technology, and Research (ITR) Hub's Research Division, Universidad del Valle de Guatemala (UVG), the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), and the Guatemalan Exporters Association (AGEXPORT). The project is creating a network of innovation and technology centers building on the existing center at UVG's main campus in Guatemala City and adding two new centers at UVG's satellite campuses in Santa Lucía Cotzumalguapa and Sololá. The Santa Lucía campus area will focus on the integration of diverse industries, including agro-industrial sugar cane and other extensive agriculture crops. The majority of the students at Sololá campus are members of Guatemala's indigenous communities, where poverty and migration pressures are acute.

The three partner organizations are working closely together to promote the continuous generation of practical and sustainable solutions to locally identified development challenges with a focus on appropriate technology, strengthening research capacity within higher education institutions, providing training for development actors and decision makers on using research and innovation, and fostering a culture that supports innovation and entrepreneurship.

FOCUS AREAS



Agricultural Exports



Climate Change Resilience



Environmental Sustainability



Food Security




Sustainable Livelihoods



Youth Employment

USAID ITR Hub

  @GlobalDevLab

 [usaid.gov/research](https://www.usaid.gov/research)

AREAS OF WORK



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ASPIRE is part of the Building Research and Innovation for Development, Generating Evidence, and Training (BRIDGE-Train) program. It uses partnerships between higher education institutions in the United States and USAID partner countries to develop research, innovation, and training centers. These centers convene partners, build capacity, and generate research to address local and national development priorities.



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TRAINING

To build the research capacity of faculty, researchers, and staff at UVG, ASPIRE provides the following trainings:

Co-Creation and Inclusive Innovation: This training guides participants through the process of working together to identify shared values, challenges, and opportunities, and collaboratively convert them into the development of solutions not only for, but also with those who have been traditionally excluded from development.

Introduction to MIT D-Lab and Participatory Design Approaches: Participants learn about MIT D-Lab and the basics of different participatory design methodologies, which actively engages the people in the community to make sure that the product or service meets their needs.

Lean Research: This training introduces the participants to the Lean Research approach—co-created by colleagues at Tufts University and MIT—and includes hands-on activities on how to apply the principles of rigor, respect, relevance, and right-sizing to research, monitoring, and evaluation projects.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

ASPIRE further integrates traditionally marginalized groups in the community by:

- Incorporating USAID/Guatemala's [Indigenous Peoples' Engagement Strategy](#);
- Collaborating with AGEXPORT members from different sub-sectors within the agriculture sector;
- Ensuring women and indigenous groups are selected to participate in trainings; and
- Identifying and implementing strategies for engaging marginalized groups in other project activities.