

Laboratoria - A pathway to formal job opportunities

Employer bias and reliance on closed, male-dominated hiring networks restrict women's access to higher-value formal jobs, particularly in sectors like technology. In Latin America, women remain underrepresented in tech roles, reflecting occupational segregation and hiring practices that rely on narrow pipelines and informal networks that limit access to opportunities. Laboratoria addresses this barrier by creating a direct hiring channel between women and employers, reducing reliance on informal networks and expanding access to formal employment opportunities.

Laboratoria partners with employers to align training, screening, and placement with real hiring demand, enabling women to enter formal tech roles through structured pathways. As a result, a majority of participants transition into employment - many who were previously outside the labor force - and experience significant income gains, demonstrating how targeted labor market intermediation can expand access to formal jobs where traditional hiring systems exclude women.

Quick facts

Barriers addressed



Policy & Regulation

Broader legal constraints



Women's Participation in the Workforce

Lack of formal job opportunities



Social Norms

Ambivalence or antagonism towards women's financial independence

Segment focus

1 2 3 4

Customer Journey Relevance



Geography

Latin America (Peru, Mexico, Chile, Brazil, Colombia)

Key stakeholders involved

Laboratoria

Sources

- [Laboratoria Impact Report 2024](#)
- [MIT D-labs 2022](#)
- [World Economic Forum](#)
- [World Economic Forum, 2023](#)
- [IDB 2022](#)
- [JustJobs Report 2024](#)
- [World Bank 2023](#)
- [CEPR 2023](#)

Laboratoria

Key activities

Laboratoria partners directly with private sector employers to redesign how entry-level tech talent is sourced and evaluated, creating an alternative hiring pathway that reduces reliance on traditional credentials and informal networks. Rather than operating solely as a training provider, the organization functions as an intermediary between women and employers, aligning curriculum, screening, and placement processes with real-time labor market demand.

- **Co-designed hiring pipelines with employer partners.**
Laboratoria works with companies to understand their talent needs and hiring constraints, and then structures its training and recruitment processes to meet those requirements. This includes aligning technical skills, soft skills, and evaluation criteria so that graduates are perceived as job-ready candidates, reducing the uncertainty employers often associate with non-traditional applicants.
- **Standardized candidate evaluation to reduce screening bias.**
To address credential and network-based exclusion, Laboratoria replaces informal screening signals (such as university background or personal referrals) with structured assessments of skills and competencies. This creates a more transparent and comparable

hiring process, enabling employers to evaluate candidates based on demonstrated ability rather than traditional proxies.

- **Facilitated direct placement into formal roles.**
Laboratoria actively connects graduates to employers through interviews, job matching, and placement support, ensuring that training leads to concrete employment outcomes. This reduces reliance on informal job search channels, [which often disadvantage women](#), and creates a more predictable pathway into formal wage employment.
- **Expanded continuous upskilling and career progression support.**
In response to evolving employer demand - particularly shifts driven by digital transformation and AI - Laboratoria has expanded its model to include ongoing training and professional development. This allows graduates to adapt to changing job requirements and maintain their position within formal labor markets over time ([Laboratoria Impact Report, 2024](#)).
- **Built professional networks and alumni ecosystems.**
Recognizing that lack of access to professional networks is a key barrier, Laboratoria invests in building peer and alumni communities through in-person and virtual engagement. These networks function as an alternative to traditional hiring channels, providing women with ongoing access to opportunities, mentorship, and labor market information ([Laboratoria Impact Report, 2024](#)).

Laboratoria

Outcomes/results

Laboratoria's model continues to evolve in response to changing labor market conditions. Evidence so far demonstrates how structured hiring pipelines can expand women's access to formal employment.

Increased access to formal employment and income gains:

Graduates achieve job placement rates of approximately 70–80%, with over 75% securing roles in the tech sector ([World Economic Forum](#)). Many participants enter the program from outside the labor force - for example, one study found that [71% were not working](#) prior to enrollment. Across cohorts, participants experience [substantial income gains](#), with average monthly earnings increasing from approximately \$600 to \$1,241 post-graduation, reflecting movement into higher-paying formal jobs.

These shifts have direct implications for women's financial inclusion. Transitioning from no or low income into stable, formal employment increases women's ability to open and use financial accounts, build savings, and engage with formal financial services. Laboratoria's participant base includes a significant share of women with care responsibilities - approximately [22% are mothers](#) - highlighting the

program's reach among women facing additional constraints to labor market participation and for whom access to reliable income is particularly critical for financial security and inclusion.

Creation of alternative hiring pathways and access to networks:

By connecting graduates directly to employers, Laboratoria reduces reliance on informal job search channels - where access is often mediated through [gender-segregated networks that disadvantage women](#) - and creates a more predictable pathway into formal employment. Alumni and peer networks further support ongoing access to job opportunities and professional connections. ([World Bank; Laboratoria Impact Report, 2024](#))

Sustained participation through ongoing upskilling:

Laboratoria has expanded its model to include continuous learning and career development, supporting graduates to adapt to evolving employer demand and remain competitive in the labor market. This shift reflects a growing focus on not only entry into formal employment, but sustained participation over time. ([Laboratoria Impact Report, 2024](#))

Laboratoria

Key enabling environment factors for the intervention

Strong private sector demand for digital talent, driven by expansion of the digital economy

Laboratoria's model depends on a labor market where employers are actively seeking digital and technical skills. Across Latin America, firms are [adopting new technologies](#) and expanding digital operations, increasing demand for roles in software development, data, and digital services ([World Economic Forum, 2023](#)). This demand is not being fully met through traditional education and hiring pipelines, creating space for alternative talent sources. Laboratoria leverages this gap by aligning training with employer needs and positioning its graduates as a viable solution to talent shortages, enabling women to access roles that might otherwise remain out of reach.

Employer openness to alternative hiring pathways

Recruitment outside traditional credential-based systems - which can exclude women - offers women new pathways to employment. Laboratoria's model is enabled by firms that are open to evaluating candidates based on demonstrated skills rather than formal qualifications, particularly in response to talent shortages. By acting

as a trusted intermediary - standardizing training, screening, and candidate quality - Laboratoria reduces perceived hiring risk and encourages employers to adopt new recruitment practices. This shift is critical to expanding access to formal employment for women who lack traditional credentials or networks.

Exemplar/ Project name

Key design elements and principles that led to successful outcomes

- **Direct employer engagement:** Aligning training with real hiring demand ensured graduates were job-ready and reduced employer risk.
- **Focus on placement outcomes:** Prioritizing employment - not just training - created clear pathways into formal jobs.
- **Trusted intermediary model:** Standardized screening and signaling helped employers move beyond credential and network-based hiring.
- **Addressing network exclusion:** Building structured pipelines and alumni networks expanded access to opportunities typically mediated through informal channels.

Potential for scale/replicability

This model demonstrates a replicable approach for expanding women's access to formal employment by reshaping hiring pathways in addition to job skill training. By embedding women into employer-driven recruitment pipelines and aligning skills development with labor market demand, the model supports both scalability and sustainability. This approach can be adapted in contexts where talent shortages exist and where traditional hiring practices - such as credential bias and reliance on informal networks - limit women's access to formal jobs.

Challenges encountered during the program

- Limited access for women without baseline digital skills or formal education.
- Concentration in urban, higher-skill labor markets.
- Continued exposure to structural barriers, including care responsibilities and social norms.
- Sensitivity to fluctuations in labor demand, particularly in the tech sector.

Exemplar/ Project name

Recommendations from the research

- Expand employer-linked pipelines into additional sectors beyond technology.
- Increase accessibility for women with lower levels of education or prior experience - this could mean partnering with vocational or high schools to improve pipeline constraints.
- Combine placement models with interventions addressing structural barriers (e.g., care, mobility).
- Strengthen long-term support for career progression and retention in formal employment.

“

Laboratoria creates a transparent hiring process, enabling employers to evaluate candidates based on demonstrated ability rather than traditional proxies.