

Switzerland-US Vocational Training Cooperation

As the trade association representing the Swiss chemical, pharmaceutical and life sciences industries, scienceindustries works on behalf of its approximately 250 member companies to ensure that Switzerland remains one of the world's most innovation-friendly business locations. In this way, our industries continue to prove themselves as export champions and a driving force for growth in the Swiss economy. Our members account for over a third of all private investment in research and development in Switzerland (over CHF 6 billion in 2023 [according to the FSO](#)). Around a third of total R&D expenditure goes into biotechnology.

The attractiveness of Switzerland as a business location and its international competitiveness are based, among other things, on high-quality vocational training, which supplies our industries with qualified skilled workers. The chemical, pharmaceutical and life sciences industries employ over 80,000 people (FTE) in Switzerland. scienceindustries represents the interests of the Swiss chemical, pharmaceutical and life sciences industries in matters of vocational training. As an [Organisation of the World of Work \(OdA\)](#), it is committed to the further development of vocational training in Switzerland and assumes economic, social and educational policy responsibilities in this area. As a sponsoring organisation, scienceindustries is responsible for the planning, coordination and implementation of professional development processes for three occupations in initial vocational training and three further occupations in advanced vocational training.

The member companies of scienceindustries are keen to further expand cooperation with the USA in the field of vocational training. They are already implementing specific projects and measures to train skilled workers in the USA, which are set to be increased in the future. An overview of some examples can be found in the table in the appendix.

1. Planning and Development

Several priority measures are at the forefront of the area of training development. Firstly, joint curricula are to be developed to ensure consistent training quality and uniform competences within the life sciences sector. In addition, a coordinated understanding of role profiles is necessary, as is the joint definition of the skills to be taught.

Close cooperation with implementation partners, as well as with colleges and universities, forms the basis for this. Furthermore, Swiss training providers in the chemical, pharmaceutical and life sciences industries could take on a leading role in a 'train-the-trainer' programme; in this context, training providers and companies could make significant contributions through their training laboratories and workshops.

Cooperation within the sector and with US stakeholders is also to be intensified. The primary focus is on the collaborative development of vocational training, promotion at local and regional level, the improvement of framework conditions, and the recognition of training programmes. This should be accompanied by efforts to strengthen industry communication, for example through campaigns, skills initiatives and trade fair appearances in the US, to enhance recognition of the vocational training pathway.

Particularly important in this regard are:

- establishing the necessary infrastructure
- support for pilot projects
- joint development of curricula and role definitions
- recognition of vocational qualifications at least at state level

2. Implementation

- **Identification and engagement of implementation partners:** For example, collaboration with US implementation partners such as iLab in Indiana plays a central role.
- **Regional priorities:** From an industry perspective, the primary focus is on the Indianapolis region (Indiana). In addition, Houston (Texas) could be considered as a further location.
- **Incremental approach:** The aim is to build on existing initiatives step by step. This includes, in particular, strengthening the framework conditions, identifying and engaging implementation partners both locally and in Switzerland (for the 'train the trainer' concept), as well as ultimately securing recognition for vocational training programmes in the USA. In parallel, a pilot project is to be launched in selected regions of the USA.

Company	Location	US State	Sector(s)	Activities
Novartis	Indianapolis / Cambridge	Indiana / Massachusetts	Pharma / Life Sciences	<p>The Novartis site in Indianapolis is in preliminary discussions, collaborating with external Indiana VET implementation partners (iLab & Bio Crossroads) to develop guiding principles for VET training in Indiana and to organize a pilot program for Lab Technicians and Chemical Pharmaceutical Technologists at Novartis Indianapolis.</p> <p>Novartis already runs a 12-month post-grad US exchange program to its research facility in Cambridge for outstanding Swiss lab technician biology/chemistry graduates. Novartis is exploring options around sending chemical/ pharmaceutical technologists to its site in Indianapolis as well as intensifying the Cambridge program by including apprentice graduates.</p>
Roche	Indianapolis	Indiana	Pharma / Diagnostics / Life Sciences	<p>Vocational Program: Roche is currently considering expanding vocational training programs at its Indianapolis site (see: Indianapolis Students Get 'Leg Up' On Careers With European-Style Apprenticeships; Roche Academy University of Indianapolis)</p> <p>Graduate Exchange Programs: Before 2020, Roche had a US exchange program for the best Swiss STEM graduates. These graduates were sent to US sites (Indianapolis, Pleasanton, etc.) for six months after graduation to work in US development teams. Following the program, they would return to development teams in Switzerland. The exchange of graduates with Indianapolis could potentially be intensified again.</p> <p>Roche is currently sending 4-6 of its most outstanding graduates (lab technicians and chemical and pharmaceutical technologists) to the Genentech site in San Francisco. This is part of a Global Internship Program (GIP) designed to give them valuable international work experience. The main goal is to broaden their global education and encourage engagement with different cultures. Roche is also considering intensifying this program to allow more apprentices to participate.</p>
Lonza	Bend / Greenwood / Houston / Vacaville / Walkersville	Oregon / South Carolina / Texas / California / Maryland	Pharma / Life Sciences	<p>Across U.S. sites, apprenticeship and workforce development activities are at different stages. In Bend (OR), EMF has been active for over a year with 5–6 program graduates and further sector growth expected. Greenwood (SC) trains 15 students in maintenance, though the PTC program has ended and new roles are under discussion. Vacaville (CA) is in its integration phase without formal apprenticeships but runs a strong summer internship program (20 students in 2025), some of whom transition into contract or permanent roles. Walkersville (MD) launched its apprenticeship in 2023 with Frederick Community College and MD MEP, currently training internal employees and new hires via bootcamps, with growth potential of 30 roles in five years.</p>

				<p>At Houston (TX), there is no formal apprenticeship program yet, but several initiatives are in place:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cooperation: Engagement with advisory boards from local colleges/universities to shape curricula and attract talent.• Development: Partnership with Alvin Community College and Workforce Solutions to secure government funding for certificate graduate hires.• Participants: Three hires to date from the certificate program in manufacturing and QC.• Demand: Very high – with a potential need for 50–100 new positions annually in manufacturing, supply chain, and QC.
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