

Enabling Social Innovation in Barbados



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Country Snapshot

Social innovation: "the processes and outcomes of developing novel approaches to address societal challenges facing people and planet." ¹

This snapshot represents a descriptive, non-exhaustive overview of key highlights from Barbados' social innovation ecosystem.

✓ Direct focus on social innovation 🔗 Connected but indirect focus on social innovation ✗ No focus on social innovation

INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

Official Definition of Social Innovation 🔗



Barbados does not appear to have a single, authoritative government-issued definition of "social innovation" embedded in law or a formal national strategy document (in public sources reviewed). As a working definition for this snapshot, social innovation can be framed as tackling "people and planet" challenges through context-novel approaches, including incremental or transformational change. ¹

Government Body for Social Innovation ✓



No dedicated "social innovation unit" is clearly identifiable in public documents. Institutional responsibility is more diffuse, with innovation and enterprise policy anchored in economic ministries and state bodies, and with cross-government coordination increasingly structured through a mission-oriented delivery model. ^{2 5}

Government Strategy ✓



Mission Barbados sets a national vision "to transform Barbados into a sustainable, prosperous, inclusive and resilient society," explicitly calling for citizens and stakeholders to collaborate, innovate, and invest, and for a "mission-oriented approach" to economic and social development. ² Recent implementation guidance strengthens this mission orientation by proposing governance and delivery mechanisms (e.g., mission boards, routines for coordination, and measurement approaches) intended to translate missions into programs and outcomes. ³

Policies, Laws & Regulations ✓ 🔗



The MSME policy framework positions MSMEs as "catalysts for human, social and economic development" and "enablers of social stability," signaling that enterprise policy is expected to contribute to broader public-value outcomes (even when not labeled as "social innovation"). ⁴ The Small Business Development framework is anchored in the Small Business Development Act (as described on the government's Small Business Development Unit page), including incentives for approved small businesses and a legislative definition of "small business enterprise." ⁵ Practical enabling conditions for social innovation also depend on how Barbados applies cross-cutting policy tools (e.g., entrepreneurship support, innovation/digital government programs, and partnership models), rather than on a bespoke "social enterprise" legal form (not identified as a distinct category in the public sources reviewed). ⁶

Official statistics



Publicly accessible “social innovation” or “social enterprise” statistics (e.g., counts, employment, turnover, sector distribution) are not clearly available as an official national series. The MSME policy framework references a prior small-business survey and indicates the need for improved information systems and indicators across enterprise support. ⁶

Government Programs



A technical cooperation project explicitly aims to help Barbados design strategies and policy tools to position the country as a “test bed” for “globally oriented social innovation start-ups,” supporting entrepreneurial spillovers into the wider economy. ⁴

Mission Barbados itself functions as a whole-of-society mobilization platform, emphasizing stakeholder collaboration and innovation as part of national transformation. ²

Enterprise-support programming is also embedded in state-body functions, including the Small Business Development Unit’s mandate and tools (e.g., incentives under the Act). ⁵

ECOSYSTEM

Stakeholders



Barbados’ enterprise-and-innovation ecosystem involves a mix of state bodies, support organizations, and partners referenced in national policy documentation, including:

- Enterprise support and enabling bodies, including the Small Business Development Unit and the policy framework actors engaged in MSME development. ^{5 6}
- Financial and advisory stakeholders referenced as part of the enterprise-support landscape (e.g., a microenterprise development agency and an enterprise growth fund), alongside sector associations and training institutions. ⁶
- International and regional partners supporting innovation capacity, including development-finance partners working on “social innovation start-ups” as a policy and capability area. ⁴

Support initiatives



Enterprise support is structured around a national MSME framework focused on competitiveness, innovation, employment generation, and a “technology-enabled society,” while also referencing interventions for special development sectors (e.g., renewable energy and creative industries). ⁶

A key “social innovation”—explicit initiative is the technical cooperation effort to develop strategies and instruments for Barbados as a test bed for social-innovation start-ups. ⁴

Mission-oriented governance reforms aim to strengthen the state’s ability to coordinate complex problem-solving across sectors, which can be an enabling condition for social innovation (especially for initiatives that require multi-stakeholder delivery and iterative learning). ³

Collaboration



Mission Barbados is explicitly framed around stakeholder engagement and collaboration, with a call for citizens and stakeholders to co-shape the country’s future through innovation and investment. ²

The mission implementation approach emphasizes governance arrangements and routines suited to “whole-of-society” coordination, which can support cross-sector coalitions, program alignment, and shared metrics—common requirements for scaling social innovations. ³

Financing schemes

Barbados’ publicly described enterprise-support architecture includes:

- Small business incentives, as supported by a legislative framework for small business development (as described by the government’s Small Business Development Unit page).⁵
- MSME policy provisions that address access to finance, technical assistance, and training for groups such as women and youth, alongside broader competitiveness and productivity goals.⁶

Dedicated, government-branded funding lines explicitly labeled “social innovation funding” are not clearly identifiable in public sources. The most explicit “social innovation” financing signal is partner-supported technical cooperation targeting policy tools and instruments for social-innovation start-ups (reported budget presence in project listings).⁴

SOCIETY

Public Awareness of Social Innovation

National narrative framing under Mission Barbados emphasizes mindset shifts and citizen/stakeholder engagement in collaborative problem-solving and innovation—an important cultural precondition for social innovation adoption.²

No recent, official “social innovation awareness” survey evidence was identified in the public sources reviewed; awareness is therefore inferred mainly from the prominence of mission-oriented communications and enterprise policy narratives.^{2 6}

Social innovation research

The MSME policy framework references research and diagnostic work on the MSME/small-business sector and highlights the need for improved data systems and inter-agency linkages—suggesting an ecosystem where research and operational learning are recognized as inputs to better policy execution.⁶

Education & Human Capital

Human-capital development for entrepreneurship and innovation is treated as a policy lever within the MSME framework, including references to skills, entrepreneurship culture, and technology enablement as foundations for a competitive and socially stabilizing MSME sector.⁶

At the system level, the Global Innovation Index country profile provides additional evidence of how education/skills and human capital inputs are assessed within innovation performance benchmarking for Barbados.¹

Entrepreneurship



EIU Business Environment Ranking

EIU “Business Environment Rankings” data are not openly reproduced for Barbados in the sources reviewed (noting that the rankings are generally distributed through EIU products), so this snapshot relies on public-facing innovation and governance indicators rather than proprietary, paywalled business-environment ranks



Innovation Capacity

Barbados ranks 84th (of 139 economies) in the Global Innovation Index 2025, with reported relative strengths in areas such as institutions and business sophistication, and comparatively weaker areas including market sophistication and infrastructure.¹



Social entrepreneurship prevalence

The MSME policy framework explicitly targets an “enabling business environment” and a “transformational culture that promotes entrepreneurship,” framing entrepreneurship as a route to both economic and social outcomes.⁶

Social & Environmental Consciousness



Solidarity

World Values Survey): Barbados is not listed in Wave 7 integrated documentation country coverage, and it is also not listed in Wave 6 integrated documentation coverage—meaning no recent WVS wave data are readily available in the WVS integrated documentation lists for this indicator context. [11](#) [12](#)



Political participation

The EIU Democracy Index 2024 regional table for “Latin America 2024” shown in the report does not list Barbados among the 24 countries in that regional table, so a Barbados-specific “political participation” sub-score is not retrievable from that table excerpt. [10](#)



Volunteering

In the World Giving Index 2024 rankings table reproduced in the report, Barbados does not appear among the 142 listed countries, implying that an index-based volunteerism percentage for Barbados is not available from that specific edition’s published ranking table. [2](#)



Sustainability

Environmental consciousness/climate alignment: On the Environmental Performance Index 2024, Barbados ranks 46th overall (score 53.1) and ranks 19th on “Climate Change” (score 56.7), suggesting comparatively strong performance on the climate-change pillar within the index’s framework.

