

Enabling Social Innovation in Belize



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 Belize's 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 🔗



Belize does not currently appear to have an official legal or policy definition of “social innovation” in major national planning and budgeting documents reviewed (e.g., medium-term development planning and the public-sector investment pipeline). ^{2 4}.

- In practice, government and development-partner initiatives often frame relevant activity through adjacent terms (digital transformation, competitiveness, entrepreneurship, open government, social protection, and climate resilience) rather than a single “social innovation” definition. ^{2 6}.

Government Body for Social Innovation ✓



No dedicated “social innovation” unit is publicly evident; responsibilities relevant to an enabling environment are distributed across the public sector and agencies. ^{2 4}.

- Ministry of Economic Development leads national development planning in the government’s medium-term strategy and positions delivery as cross-ministerial and multi-stakeholder. ².
- Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Technology established a pro-tempore Science, Technology, and Innovation Advisory Committee to support a national STI strategy process, with representation spanning public, private, and academic sectors (alongside development partners noted in the announcement). ³.
- Belize Trade and Investment Development Service and Development Finance Corporation operate as key execution and financing channels for SME support and modernization, including grant/loan instruments and business upgrading that can enable socially oriented ventures. ^{12 14}.

Government Strategy for Social Innovation ✓



Belize’s national strategy landscape contains multiple “entry points” that can support or accelerate social innovation, even where the term is not central. ^{2 6}.

- The medium-term development strategy (#planBelize) frames priorities including poverty reduction, citizen security, environmental protection, and good governance—areas commonly addressed through social-innovation approaches (cross-sector, problem-driven delivery). ².
- Public-sector programming lists “innovation platforms” with “social and economic impact,” including institutionalization of a social-innovation-lab methodology (I-Lab) and scaling digital talent. ⁴.
- The open-government reform track (training, collaboration networks, and hackathons using open data) illustrates direct experimentation with participatory problem-solving methods. ^{6 5}.

Policies, Laws & Regulations



Belize's legal toolkit primarily enables social innovation through organizational forms (NGOs, companies, cooperatives) rather than a dedicated "social enterprise" statute. [2](#) [10](#) [11](#).

- The Non-Governmental Organisations Act sets a registration framework for NGOs (including an organizational definition tied to a company limited by guarantee), shaping how civil-society actors formalize and operate. [2](#).
- The Companies Act provides corporate forms (including company limited by guarantee provisions) that can be used to structure non-profit or mission-led entities. [10](#).
- The Co-operative Societies Act provides a legal basis for cooperative solutions (often important in community-based and inclusive economic models). [11](#).

Official Statistics



Belize maintains a functioning official statistics system through the Statistical Institute of Belize, including economic, labor, poverty and business establishment survey outputs. [16](#).

- No official statistical series specifically classifying "social enterprises" or "social innovation organizations" was identified in public statistical portals; social innovation activity is therefore typically inferred using adjacent indicators (SME dynamics, poverty, labor, sector performance). [16](#).

ECOSYSTEM

Stakeholders



Belize's ecosystem is shaped by a relatively small market size and high exposure to climate and external shocks—conditions that often increase the value of practical, locally grounded innovation. [17](#) [18](#).

Key stakeholder groups include:

- Public agencies and public financial institutions focused on SME support and service modernization (notably in digitalization and business competitiveness). [12](#) [13](#).
- Civil society organizations formalized through the NGO registry framework, spanning social services, community development, and conservation-linked livelihoods. [2](#).
- Universities and training providers linking entrepreneurship support to applied innovation, including infrastructure designed to co-locate incubation and SME resource functions. [23](#).

Networks



- A visible "social innovation community" is more apparent in program-based coalitions (open government, youth challenges, digital adoption) than as a standalone national movement. [6](#) [20](#).
- Open government programming created collaboration networks and used participatory co-creation processes for commitments and citizen engagement. [6](#).
- Regional development-partner programs (e.g., challenge-based initiatives and capacity-building) can function as convening infrastructure and knowledge transfer channels. [20](#) [21](#).

Support Organisations



Support capacity is oriented toward entrepreneurship and SME modernization, which can indirectly incubate social innovation when mission-driven ventures use the same support rails. [23](#) [13](#).

- The SBDC model in Belize has been linked to an enterprise/innovation facility concept at the University of Belize designed to house business support units and incubators. [23](#).
- Business-support programming that provides mentorship, technical assistance, and grants for adoption of digital solutions can accelerate service-based and impact-oriented business models. [13](#) [12](#).

Support Initiatives



- A \$10M digital innovation program financed by the Inter-American Development Bank supports digital adoption by firms and digitalization of government services (a common enabler of scalable social solutions). [12](#).
- The medium-term public investment pipeline includes a project explicitly referencing “innovation platforms” and post-project replication of a Social Innovation (I-Lab) methodology. [4](#).
- The “Change Dah Story” Social Innovation Challenge targeted youth-led solutions to social problems—an example of challenge-based social innovation programming. [20](#) [21](#).

Collaboration



Collaboration is strongest where national priorities require cross-sector execution (digital transformation, openness and accountability, and social protection). [3](#) [6](#) [15](#).

- The STI advisory committee model signals structured collaboration across government, private sector and academia around national innovation policy (STI), which can be leveraged for social-innovation needs over time. [3](#).
- Open government efforts involved co-creation with civil society, academia, citizens, and private sector stakeholders, and included hackathons focused on practical solutions using open data. [6](#).

Events & Awards



- Belize has hosted innovation competitions and hackathons as part of governance and youth-oriented programming, using problem statements tied to social needs (e.g., COVID-19 recovery via open data; youth social challenges). [6](#) [20](#).

FINANCE

Financing Schemes



Belize’s financing landscape is oriented toward SME stabilization, modernization, and public-infrastructure delivery—channels frequently used by social innovators even without SI-specific funds. [14](#) [12](#) [25](#).

- Development Finance Corporation’s MSME Support Program includes grants (capped per micro-enterprise), wage subsidies and a soft-loan component, illustrating instruments that can reach early-stage and community-rooted enterprises. [14](#).
- The \$10M IDB digital innovation operation supports firm-level adoption of digital solutions and simplification/digitalization of selected government services—often a prerequisite for scaling innovative service delivery models. [12](#).
- Community infrastructure (water, local systems) has been financed through development-bank operations with national execution via a social investment fund model—important for enabling “place-based” social innovation even when projects are not branded as such. [22](#).

Total Financing Scale



A consolidated estimate of “total financing directed to social innovation” is not publicly standardized, largely due to definitional gaps and multi-purpose funding streams. [2](#) [4](#).

- As indicative comparators (not SI-exclusive), major public-development operations include a \$10M IDB digital innovation program and a \$10M development-bank loan toward a social investment fund project. [12](#) [22](#).

Other Funding Support



- Social protection policy development and costing work (a key platform for innovations in delivery and targeting) has been supported through international development cooperation, including analytical work and stakeholder dialogues. [15](#) [6](#).
- Access-to-finance constraints for MSMEs—often including mission-driven SMEs—are explicitly documented in recent diagnostics, highlighting why blended instruments (grants + TA + credit) can be impactful in catalyzing social innovation. [25](#).

Public Awareness of Social Innovation

Explicit “social innovation” language appears most clearly in project-based contexts (innovation platforms, youth challenges, and open-government programming), rather than as an everyday mainstream label. ^{4 20 6}.

- The presence of hackathons in open-government programming suggests emerging familiarity with experimentation, digital civic engagement, and solution prototyping as governance tools. ⁶.

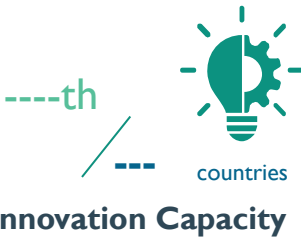
Research

Human capital development and applied entrepreneurship support are visible through sector planning and business-support models, which can be leveraged to mainstream impact-oriented innovation. ^{24 23}.

- The education sector plan provides an overarching framework for improving learning outcomes and system performance, which supports longer-run innovation capacity. ²⁴.
- The SBDC-linked facility concept at the University of Belize indicates intentional investment in entrepreneurship infrastructure (potentially including incubation spaces). ²³.

Entrepreneurship

Belize’s entrepreneurship environment shows active policy and program attention to digital adoption and MSME resilience, while diagnostics highlight affordability and access-to-finance constraints typical of small markets. ^{12 14}



BGlobal Innovation Index (GII): Belize is not listed among the 139 ranked economies in the latest available GII executive rankings table, implying no GII score/rank is reported in that release (likely due to data coverage thresholds) ¹⁹.

GEM data availability: the latest global report covers a subset of economies, and Belize is not among the economies explicitly described as part of that report’s survey base; a Belize-specific “social entrepreneurship prevalence” figure is therefore not available from that source.

Social & Environmental Consciousness

Solidarity and environmental orientation are better evidenced through sectoral and environmental performance proxies than through a single, consistent “social innovation culture” indicator set. ^{18 25}.



World Values Survey (solidarity proxy): Belize is not included in the participating country list for the Joint EVS/WVS 2017–2022 dataset, limiting the availability of recent WVS-based “solidarity” indicators for Belize. ²⁶.



Belize’s Biennial Transparency Report frames the country’s emissions/removals profile and climate reporting architecture, supporting evidence-based environmental governance and long-term innovation needs in mitigation/adaptation. ²⁵.



Environment (EPI): Belize ranks 75th overall in the 2024 Environmental Performance Index, and 126th on the Climate Change category in the same release. ¹⁸.