

Enabling Social Innovation in Jamaica

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 Jamaica’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



Jamaica does not appear to have a single, codified cross-government definition of “social innovation” in law or a national strategy. Instead, policy language most directly aligned with social innovation is framed through social value creation, social enterprise and social entrepreneurship—especially within the national MSME policy architecture.²

Working definitions aligned with social innovation (social enterprise / social value creation)



In the Updated MSME & Entrepreneurship Policy (2018; issued Jan 2019), Jamaica’s policy approach explicitly positions social enterprises as problem-solving business models for social, economic and environmental issues:

- The policy describes a social enterprise as a business with a mission to solve social, economic or environmental problems through ethical business practices, with profits reinvested into the social mission, while maintaining financial viability.²
- The policy defines social value creation as positive societal impact (social, economic, or environmental) generated by individuals, organizations, and governments, and notes the importance of capturing and measuring that value.²

Government Body for Social Innovation



There is no single “social innovation ministry/agency.” Responsibilities relevant to social innovation are distributed across institutions that

- lead MSME and social enterprise policy,
 - coordinate planning and monitoring, and
 - support financing and community development. Key public actors identified in official materials include:
- Ministry of Industry, Investment and Commerce (or its predecessor configurations in earlier policy cycles), responsible for MSME policy oversight and social enterprise legislative development initiatives.³
 - Planning Institute of Jamaica, which appears as a central coordinating and technical body (including as beneficiary of technical assistance for the social enterprise legal framework).⁴
 - The National MSME & Entrepreneurship Policy implementation arrangement includes a National Policy Implementation Committee (and a Social Enterprise Working Group, per government communications).⁴

Strategy and policy architecture



Jamaica's most direct policy "home" for social innovation is the MSME policy pillar focused on Social Value Creation. It includes intended measures that map closely to social innovation ecosystem-building, such as:

- awareness and sensitization of social enterprises within the business ecosystem;
- capacity building among business development support institutions to support social entrepreneurship;
- data mobilization, tracer studies, and developing tools to measure social value (including reference to approaches such as social return on investment);
- exploring financial solutions tailored to the social enterprise sector.²

Broader enabling policy also exists through general innovation and R&D policy instruments such as the National Science, Technology and Innovation Policy (2019).¹⁰

Laws and regulations



A central gap repeatedly referenced in official and partner documentation is the absence (to date) of a dedicated legal status for social enterprises. Key developments include:

- A draft Social Enterprise Legal Status Act was developed with technical assistance (ICR Facility) requested by government counterparts; it was reported as being prepared for Cabinet submission (status noted in 2022 project documentation).⁴
- Government communications also reference the completion of the draft act as a policy milestone, alongside efforts linked to social impact measurement and ecosystem strengthening.⁶

Official statistics



Jamaica does not publish regular official national statistics specifically enumerating the number, size, or economic contribution of "social enterprises" as a distinct statistical category. However, the MSME policy framework explicitly identifies a need to:

- mobilize national data on social enterprises and build a central database;
- conduct tracer studies;
- involve national entities such as national statistics and planning institutions in measurement and monitoring.²

Government Programs and implementation milestones



Recent official reporting highlights practical steps taken to operationalize social enterprise ecosystem development, including:

- coordination via a Social Enterprise Working Group under the national policy implementation structure;
- completion of a draft legal status act (funded under an EU-supported investment climate reform initiative, as reported);
- development of a draft social impact measurement framework (linked to a Jamaica Stock Exchange–Inter-American Development Bank initiative, as reported);
- small grants and entrepreneurship showcases linked to community-oriented programming.⁶

ECOSYSTEM

Ecosystem Stakeholders



Jamaica's social innovation ecosystem is best understood as a policy-linked network connecting public coordination, enterprise development institutions, capital-market platforms, and community development structures. Key actors named in authoritative sources include:

- Jamaica Stock Exchange as a prominent ecosystem "platform" actor, cited in official communications as a champion of the social enterprise ecosystem.⁶
- Jamaica Social Stock Exchange as a flagship mechanism connecting social-purpose organizations to funding and corporate governance expectations.⁶
- MSME support entities highlighted in trade-policy documentation, including Jamaica Business Development Corporation, Development Bank of Jamaica, and Start-Up Jamaica, among others.²



Support initiatives for social innovation

Support for social innovation tends to be delivered through MSME and entrepreneurship support infrastructure, plus targeted social enterprise capacity-building documented in public communications and partner interventions. Illustrative mechanisms include:

- policy-driven capacity building and administrative reforms to prepare institutions and intermediaries for implementing a social enterprise legal status regime (preparatory work).⁴
- investment readiness tools and market analyses produced for intermediaries supporting social enterprises (as reported in the ICR Facility deliverables summary).⁴



Collaboration for social innovation

A notable feature of Jamaica's ecosystem is the use of cross-sector partnership platforms (policy + capital markets + development partners). Examples include:

- a partnership between United Nations Development Programme and the Jamaica Stock Exchange, framed around mobilizing sustainable finance and scaling impact-oriented capital market products, including support linked to the JSSE.⁷
- collaboration between government counterparts and international reform partners focused on social enterprise regulation, market access, awareness and investment readiness (as described by the ICR Facility).⁴

FINANCE



Overview of social innovation financing

There is no official consolidated estimate of annual “social innovation financing” across all channels. Financing is best understood as a patchwork of:

- public and concessional funding aligned with policy implementation (including MSME policy activities and community development programming);
- capital-market-enabled philanthropy and blended finance mechanisms (e.g., JSSE);
- donor-supported business reform and ecosystem capacity building.^{2 6}



Public and policy-linked resources

Jamaica's MSME policy is “costed” through an implementation plan that includes an explicit budget envelope for Social Value Creation (alongside other MSME pillars). The plan identifies responsible agencies and envisages funding mobilization to support those actions.²

Government communications also report that partners implementing activities supporting social enterprise ecosystem growth expended approximately J\$200 million in 2021 and that grants to enterprises totalled J\$3.9 million (as reported).⁶



Capital market and platform-based financing

Jamaica's most visible social finance channel is the JSSE platform, referenced in government communications as improving investor confidence through governance signaling.⁶

A prominent example of platform innovation is “Project STAR,” which was reported as a listed Social IPO on the JSSE and reported to have raised approximately J\$14.7 million in its initial phase (as stated).⁸



Financing inclusivity

Although Jamaica does not have a single unified “social innovation finance strategy,” inclusivity is embedded in the policy logic of social enterprises and social value creation: financing and support tools are framed as mechanisms to address issues such as unemployment, poverty, exclusion and environmental degradation, and to enable social enterprises to scale social impact.^{2 6}



Public Awareness of Social Innovation

Public-sector communications and policy documents indicate that the terms “social enterprise,” “social entrepreneurship,” and “social value creation” are established in Jamaica’s policy vocabulary (particularly through MSME policy implementation and updates). ^{2 6}



Research and evidence base

The policy approach acknowledges the need for improved data and measurement to understand and scale social value. Jamaica’s MSME policy calls for national data collection, databases, and analytical tools to measure social value creation. ²
Government communications also describe development of a draft Social Impact Measurement Framework as a sector milestone. ⁶



Education & Human Capital

Public reporting suggests a growing interface between education providers and social entrepreneurship skills development (e.g., new course offerings and professional certificates referenced in official communications). However, there is no publicly consolidated figure on the proportion of graduates with credentials specifically tagged as “social innovation.” ⁶



Entrepreneurship



EIU Business Environment Ranking

Jamaica’s country-level position in EIU’s Business Environment Rankings is not consistently available in free public tables; however, Jamaica is referenced in official trade-policy materials as pursuing business environment reform and entrepreneurship support through multiple institutions and reforms. ²



Innovation Capacity

Jamaica is included in the World Intellectual Property Organization Global Innovation Index 2025 with an overall rank and score reported in its economy profile. ¹⁴



Social entrepreneurship prevalence

(GEM): Jamaica appears in Global Entrepreneurship Monitor social entrepreneurship measurement work in the Caribbean. In GEM’s Caribbean social entrepreneurship report, Jamaica’s results are shown within “Social Entrepreneurship Activity” measures, and the report notes (for 2011 data) that Jamaican women showed a 1.6% propensity to develop new social enterprises (within the report’s SEA framing). ¹⁷

Social & Environmental Consciousness



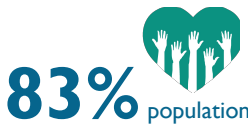
Solidarity

World Values Survey indicator: Recent World Values Survey environment-attitudes indicators for Jamaica were not identified in publicly accessible materials during this compilation; where required, preference should be given to nationally representative survey sources with transparent methods.



Political participation

In the Economist Intelligence Unit Democracy Index 2024 table, Jamaica’s political participation score is reported as 5.00 (0–10 scale). ¹⁶



Volunteering

In the Charities Aid Foundation World Giving Index 2023, Jamaica is reported with high levels of helping a stranger (83%) and volunteering time (40%) among adults (Gallup World Poll-based measures in the index). ¹⁵



Sustainability

In the 2024 Yale University Environmental Performance Index, Jamaica is ranked 68 overall, and 23 on the “Climate Change” issue category (with scores reported on the EPI portal). ¹⁸

