

Enabling Social Innovation in Samoa

Country Snapshot

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

This snapshot represents a descriptive, non-exhaustive overview of key highlights from Samoa’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 🔗



Public evidence of an official Government of Samoa definition of social innovation was not identified. Relevant adjacent terminology appears in national planning and public policy around community-led development, community economic development, inclusive government, social protection, welfare, resilience and enterprise development.

Government Body for Social Innovation ✓



Samoa does not appear to have a dedicated public body for social innovation. Related responsibilities are distributed across several institutions:

- The Ministry of Finance leads national development planning, including the Pathway for the Development of Samoa and Samoa 2040.
- The Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development focuses on community development, social protection, welfare services and coordination of community-facing programmes.
- The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Labour supports business registration, enterprise development, labour services, apprenticeships, cooperatives, societies and market-enabling legislation.

Government Strategy for Social Innovation ✓



While Samoa does not have a standalone social innovation strategy, the Pathway for the Development of Samoa provides a relevant enabling framework. The current planning architecture emphasises governance, social wellbeing, economic growth, national resilience, climate risks, infrastructure and energy constraints, with Aiga at the centre of development.

Samoa 2040 also provides a long-term agenda for economic growth and development over 20 years. Community-focused implementation is further supported by the Community Sector Plan and the Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development’s corporate and strategic planning instruments.

Policies, Laws & Regulations ✓ 🔗



No public evidence was identified of a specific social innovation, social enterprise or social economy law. However, Samoa has several relevant policy instruments that create an enabling environment for inclusive and community-based innovation.

These include national policies on Community Economic Development, Inclusive Government, Persons with Disability, Gender Equality and Rights of Women and Girls, Family Safety, and Child Care and Protection.

The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Labour also administers business-facing systems and regulatory areas, including business registration, business licences, foreign investment registration, intellectual property, employment services, cooperative societies and societies.

Official Statistics



The Samoa Bureau of Statistics provides official statistics for policy and decision-making, including dashboards and releases on population, GDP, prices, government finance, trade, migration and employment. Public evidence was not identified of dedicated official statistics on social innovation, social enterprises or the social and solidarity economy. Administrative data related to companies, societies and cooperative societies may provide partial foundations for future mapping.

Government Programs



The District Development Programme is a major community-led public programme. In FY2025–2026, the Government approved a \$91.8 million national investment, with each of Samoa’s 51 districts receiving \$1.8 million to support locally identified priorities through district councils and village-level implementation. The Samoa Disability Partnership Program, implemented with Australian support, provided a four-year disability inclusion programme from 2019 to 2023, with a reported cost of \$3.932 million. It aimed to strengthen disability-inclusive policies, plans and programmes using a human-rights-based approach.

ECOSYSTEM

Stakeholders



Samoa’s social innovation-related ecosystem is primarily community, government and development-partner driven. Key public actors include the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development, Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Labour, Samoa Bureau of Statistics and district councils. The Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development identifies partners including UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, UN Women, Australian Aid, Samoa Victim Support Group, METI and SASLI. Women in Business Development Inc. is a notable ecosystem organisation supporting vulnerable families through income generation, certified organic farming, traditional fine mat weaving and inclusive employment opportunities for persons with disabilities.

Support Initiatives



Support initiatives are linked to local development, enterprise development, inclusion and skills. The District Development Programme provides community-level capacity building, induction for district leadership and implementation support for locally led priorities. The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Labour offers practical business and labour-market services, including business registration, industry development, employment services and apprenticeships. The Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development also supports community-facing initiatives, including the Talavou App, which is designed around employment, education and life skills for young people.

Collaboration



Collaboration is visible through Samoa’s district development model, which connects central government, district councils, villages and families around locally defined priorities. Disability inclusion work also demonstrates multi-stakeholder collaboration between government ministries, agencies, NGOs, community-based organisations and external partners.

FINANCE

Financing Schemes



No standalone public social innovation fund was identified. However, Samoa has several relevant financing channels.

The District Development Programme is the most significant public financing mechanism linked to community-led development, with \$91.8 million approved for FY2025–2026.

Development finance is also present through targeted inclusion programmes, such as the Samoa Disability Partnership Program.

Women in Business Development Inc. uses market-based and community-based approaches in which revenue from organic products and traditional production supports vulnerable families and income generation.

Financing Inclusivity



Financing and support mechanisms show a strong inclusive-development orientation. The District Development Programme reaches all 51 districts, supporting rural and village-level priorities.

Inclusion is further reflected in policies and programmes targeting persons with disabilities, women and girls, families, children and inclusive government.

Women in Business Development Inc. specifically works with vulnerable families and supports income opportunities for women, rural households and persons with disabilities.

SOCIETY

Public Awareness of Social Innovation



The term “social innovation” does not appear to be widely institutionalised in public sources reviewed. However, related public discourse is visible through national language on local solutions, community-led development, inclusive development, resilience and family-centred progress.

The District Development Programme is especially relevant because it frames development around district ownership, local priorities, village empowerment and community solutions.

Research



Public evidence was not identified of a dedicated social innovation research centre or academic programme in Samoa. However, Samoa has an official statistical and monitoring foundation through the Samoa Bureau of Statistics and the monitoring and evaluation architecture linked to national development planning.

The Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development also frames its work around evidence-based policy advice, strategic planning and coordination of resources.

Education & Human Capital



Human-capital development appears through apprenticeships, employment services and enterprise support led by the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Labour.

Community capacity building is also embedded in the District Development Programme through induction and support for district councils and village representatives.

Youth-focused human-capital development is visible through the Talavou App, which is designed around employment, education and life skills.

Entrepreneurship

Samoa’s policy environment places strong emphasis on resilience and climate-related development challenges. The Pathway for the Development of Samoa highlights climate risks, infrastructure and energy constraints, and national resilience.



Business Environment

The World Bank’s archived Doing Business platform retains Samoa’s earlier business-environment data, while the newer Business Ready framework is a current international comparator; a public Samoa B-READY 2025 result was not identified.



Innovation Capacity

For international indicators, public evidence of a Samoa-specific Global Innovation Index 2025 rank was not identified in the WIPO GII pages reviewed; the GII 2025 covers 139 economies.



Social entrepreneurship

Public Samoa indicators were also not identified in the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor economy profiles reviewed.

Social & Environmental Consciousness



Solidarity

Samoa’s policy environment places strong emphasis on resilience and climate-related development challenges. The Pathway for the Development of Samoa highlights climate risks, infrastructure and energy constraints, and national resilience.



Political participation

Community participation is nevertheless visible through the District Development Programme and Samoa’s district-level governance model.



Volunteering

Publicly comparable indicators on volunteerism and solidarity were not identified in the sources reviewed.



Sustainability

In the 2024 Environmental Performance Index, Samoa ranked 80th out of 180 countries, with a score of 47.1 and a ten-year change of +4.7.