



OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER AND
MINISTRY OF INVESTMENT

ANNUAL TECHNICAL REPORT
2023 -2024

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Message from the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Economic Development, and Investment

The Honourable John Briceño

The sustained socioeconomic transformation of Belize as outlined in #planBelize continues apace with the energies of Cabinet, ministries and technical units across government working diligently in delivering both change, outcomes, and impact for bettering the lives of our Belizeans. Highlights of national significance for this reporting period include a historic record low unemployment rate of 3% compared to 2020 statistics of 14%, and an economic growth of 10% for the first quarter of 2024 (Statistical Institute of Belize) with contained inflation, the reduction of public debt to GDP among other major noteworthy achievements. Such major steps forward are both derived from and enable investments to further accelerate meaningful progress for the benefit of all citizens, especially those most in need. Outlined in this report are the details emanating from the various agencies, initiatives and actions under the purview of the Office of the Prime Minister and Ministry of Investment.

Extensive infrastructural investments, amounting to BZ\$ 6,132,848, have been completed and are underway through the Belize Social Investment Fund (BSIF) in Rural Transformation Projects, which include the provision of direct access to potable water and the extension of water supply services to communities with growing population. Investments in education amount to BZ\$ 9,679,010 for the construction of schools and extension of schools across Belize including an ITVET infrastructure project in Stann Creek. Investments in Health Projects/Human Development rose to some BZ\$3,235,228 for the construction of the Dorothy Menzies Child Care Centre. The BSIF aims at attaining Green Climate Fund accreditation and has made great strides through the support of the project “Enhancing Access for Climate Finance Opportunities”, through pre-accreditation support to BSIF and the Ministry of Economic Development-Belize and technical support for Belize National Protected Areas (BNPAS) entities, Belize.”

The I AM Belize Scholarship Programme has seen an increase in beneficiaries with a total of 66 students being under the programme this year. In advancing the outreach of Belize’s HIV/AIDS programme, there has been increased capacity among key partners to effectively promote the prevention of HIV, policy development and voluntary counselling and testing within organizations and the larger Belizean communities. Other significant changes for the National Aids Commission (NAC) include the repeal of sections 46A (1), (2) and 73A (1), (2), (3) of the Criminal Code Cap 101, of the 2020 Revision of Laws, which criminalized the non-disclosure, exposure, and transmission of HIV, including transmission of HIV from mother to child. The repeal aims to end inequalities alongside the elimination of discriminatory laws which impede our public health efforts to end AIDS as a public health threat in Belize and the wider Caribbean.

On the investment attraction front, 2023 saw the highly successful execution of the second edition of the Belize Investment Summit, hosted under the theme “Belize: Endless Opportunities” with record attendance. The BIS reflects the spirit of our #PlanBelize mandate to promote robust economic growth for all. Critical to ensuring this is the implementation of the Belize Investment and Business Climate Action Plan which consolidates the activities within key national policies namely the National Investment Policy and Strategy, the MSME Strategy and Roadmap and the Export Competitiveness Roadmap. We now have an institutionalized Public-Private Partnership Unit that will support the mobilization of private sector capital to support large-scale investments in infrastructure and other development projects that are in line with government policy priorities and that benefit the Belizean people. Through the Blue Bond and Finance Permanence Unit we can secure long-term

management and financing networks that support Belize in meeting its conservation needs. The Belize Blue Bonds align with the #planBelize key pillars 1, 2, and 5 which are focused on Poverty Reduction, Economic Transformation and Growth, and the Protection of the Environment and Natural Resources, respectively.

During this period, a total of five new investments were approved under the Designated Processing Areas Programme with a total of 46 companies now operating under the DPA program. A total of 9 new Fiscal Incentives (FI) were approved with a total of 41 companies now operating within the FI Program. Revenues generated from Gaming Machine licenses totalled to BZ\$1,834,800 with revenues from lotteries totalling to BZ\$125,000. This period saw the beginning of the implementation of the Fiscal Incentives Act, which was signed into law on March 3rd, 2023, now having a revised definition for MSMEs. Funding was identified for a Secured Transaction and Collateral Registry project through the Financial Services Commission who is also executing the project. This project will facilitate access to finance for MSMEs by allowing the use of moveable assets as collateral for loans. Policy reform initiatives to look forward to, include, the development of an MSME Procurement Policy and an Industrial Policy for Belize.

Very important is our contribution to the soon to be signed Partial Scope Agreement between Belize and El Salvador which aims at strengthening our economic ties with Central America. Overall, through these key initiatives, our government aims to create an enabling environment where both national and international trade and investments grow and contribute to Belize's robust and sustained economic growth.

Hon. John Briceño
Prime Minister
Minister of Finance, Economic Development and Investment

Message from Chief Executive Officer, Office of the Prime Minister and the Ministry of Investment

Mrs. Narda Garcia

The Office of the Prime Minister and Investment is pleased to present this consolidated Annual Technical Report which outlines the details and specifics involved in delivering on the significant progress made for the reporting period 2023-2024. Together, all units and respective technical teams continue to work tirelessly in executing their mandates and assigned tasks, which as evidence by the contents herein, are diverse and span the spectrum of efforts in supporting impactful and sustainable social and economic growth and progress for Belize.

Together, in close strategic collaboration, with public and private domestic and international partners, we continue to forge and to accelerate needed transformation through which to attract and nurture investments and with which to create employment and to drive modernization and technological transfer.

Through our dedicated focus on the green, blue, and orange economies, this portfolio has spearheaded transformative initiatives that align with our commitment to sustainable development. By integrating these diverse economic sectors, we are laying a robust foundation for long-term prosperity and ensuring that Belize remains a leader in innovative and sustainable growth.

On behalf of the Prime Minister, I take this opportunity to thank all government ministries, statutory boards, partners and in particular the teams supervised by the OPM/Investment portfolio for their continued support and collaboration in our vital collective endeavour.

Narda Garcia
Chief Executive Officer
Office of the Prime Minister and
The Ministry of Investment

ABBREVIATIONS

AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
BBA	Belize Broadcasting Authority
BBFP	Blue Bond and Finance Permanence Unit
BCC	Behaviour Change Communication
BCG	Belize Coast Guard
BELTRAIDE	Belize Trade and Investment Development Service
BFLA	Belize Family Life Association
BFSF	Belize Fund for a Sustainable Future
BHSFU	Belize High Seas Fisheries Unit
BLA	Blue Loan Agreement
BNBP	Belize National Broadcasting Policy
BSIF	Belize Social Investment Fund
BSOP	Belize Sustainable Ocean Plan
CDF	Constituency Development Fund
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CFA	Conservation Funding Agreement
CREAM	Contracts for Rehabilitation and Maintenance
CSEF	Caribbean Sustainable Energy Forum
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CVC	Caribbean Vulnerable Communities Coalition
CZMAI	Coastal Zone Management Authority and Institute
EDC	Economic Development Council
FD	Forest Department
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FiD	Fisheries Department
FY	Financial Year
GAP	Grant Awards Program
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GF	Global Fund
GoB	Government of Belize
GSA	Government Strategic Allocation
GSDS	Growth and Sustainable Development Strategy
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HRCB	Human Rights Commission of Belize
IBBS	Integrated Biological and Behavioural Surveillance Study
IDB	Inter-American Development Bank
IPCU	Investment Promotion and Compliance Unit
LAC	Latin America Countries
LFA	Local Fund Agent
LGBT	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender
MDA	Ministries, Departments, and Agencies
MIDH	Ministry of Infrastructure Development and Housing
MoHW	Ministry of Health and Wellness
MPUELE	Ministry of Public Utilities, Energy, Logistics & E-Governance
MSP	Marine Spatial Plan
MYST	Ministry of Youth, Sports, and Transport
NAC	National Aids Commission
NAC CCM	National AIDS Commission Country Coordinating Mechanism

NbS	Nature-based Solutions
NDCs	Nationally Determined Contributions
NHI	National Health Insurance
NIIP	National Infrastructure Investment Plans
OPM	Office of the Prime Minister
PANCAP	Pan Caribbean Partnership Against HIV and AIDS
PCU	Project Coordinating Unit
PFP	Project Finance for Permanence
PLHIV	People Living with HIV
PMTCT	Prevention of mother to child transmission
PN	Peer Navigator
PPP	Public Private Partnership
PR	Principal Recipient
PrEP	Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis
RSSH	Resilient and sustainable systems for health
STI	Sexually Transmitted Infections
TB	Tuberculosis
TNC	The Nature Conservancy
TWG	Technical Working Group
UNAIDS	United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
WAD	World AIDS Day
WWF	World Wildlife Fund

The Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) is pleased to present this Annual Technical Report summarizing the accomplishments of ten (10) of the units under the portfolio of the Office of the Prime Minister and of the Ministry of Investment for the period April 2023 to March 2024. The planned and completed work take account of the SDGs toward which the projects and initiatives contribute to as well as an alignment with the major approved strategic thrusts and guiding policies the OPM and Ministry of Investment.

As evidenced by the actions and initiatives outlined herein, safeguarding and uplifting Belize's human capital continues to be a major concern and area of investment for the Government of Belize. Much support has been geared at supporting the many programs of Restore Belize, the National AIDS Commission (NAC) and the Constituency Development Fund (CDF). Each of these programs have specific clients - beneficiaries of macro and micro activities - to whom doors are open and assistance is extended through individual and group outputs. Our youth, persons affected by and/or living with HIV/AIDS and other diseases, and constituent members countrywide are important to the social fibre of Belize, so the commitment to them remains a priority.

Part of serving our communities and strengthening Belize's position in a global society entails the improvement of our infrastructure and its management. This administration wants to ensure that Belizeans can live in safe, secure, sanitary and solid conditions, with a view on trending phenomena like climate change which bring risks and the advancements in technology which bring opportunity. The Social Investment Fund (SIF) and Belize Broadcasting Authority (BBA) are working on strengthening infrastructure to meet international standards and national needs. Numerous improvements in the areas of health, education, agriculture, and organizational enhancement have been made this year by these entities.

The focus on improving Belize's economy from the practical and policy standpoints has been very significant in the past year. The Economic Development Council (EDC), Investment Policy and Compliance Unit (IPCU) and the BELTRAIDE have delivered, in partnership and individually, various programmes of work. The amendment to the Fiscal Incentives Act and the Designated Processing Areas Act has brought opportunity for business to grow. The consolidation of the Belize Investment and Business Climate Action Plan (BIBCAP), a comprehensive actioning of key national economic strategies, coupled with the Belize Investment Summit 2023 aimed at generating growth of investment by international and national economic players, will contribute substantially to achieving progress in key economic sectors like the blue, green and orange economies.

The Blue Bond and Finance Permanence Unit (BBFPU) and the Public Private Partnership Unit (PPPU) are major strategic units formed with the objective of obtaining leaps in the economy of Belize. They have paved the way forward with BBFP garnering a win-win situation with the protection of our blue resources and the PPP Unit moving forward strategically to enable a larger role for the private sector in driving key initiatives in partnership with the Government of Belize.

In sum, a holistic approach of doing business has been implemented creating greater achievement of Belize's Medium Term Development Strategy - #PlanBelize, while nurturing the natural capital of Belize, by this group of champions.

Chapter 1 – The Office of the Prime Minister: Portfolio Overview

Functional Structure

The Office of the Prime Minister’s portfolio is comprised of the Ministry with responsibility for Finance, Economic Development and Investment. This portfolio is complemented by several special programmes and statutory bodies with investment in natural and human capital, as shown in the functional structure below.



I. Restore Belize

i. INTRODUCTION

RESTORE Belize was established in 2010 under the Office of the Prime Minister as a crime prevention entity with the primary



role of tackling the institutional, social, and economic factors that contributed to addressing the multifaceted challenges related to violence and crime in Belize. However, in recognition of the existing gaps in social programming, RESTORE Belize became an implementing agency. Since then, it has successfully implemented several programs which focused on increasing education accessibility, improving literacy, fostering positive community engagement, reducing gang recruitment, and implementing trauma-informed practices. This has been possible through collaboration with various government bodies, the private sector, NGOs, community-based organizations, and religious organizations with the view to improve the quality of life for all citizens.

RESTORE Belize is dedicated to empowering children, youth, and their support networks to build personal and community resiliency. Its programme goal is to contribute to an improved quality of life for at-risk adolescents and their families by increasing students' educational attainment and employability through access to developmental support services (economic and psycho-social support services and trainings), thereby equipping them to become productive, law-abiding citizens who positively contribute to society.

In November 2020, with the introduction of a new administration, RESTORE Belize realigned its work plan to support the priorities of #planBelize. This new direction saw greater emphasis being placed on increasing access to meaningful education, particularly during the pandemic when many students faced challenges in accessing online learning due to limited availability of internet services and electronic devices. Furthermore, teachers, schools, and families were provided with psycho-social support services through quality teacher training, counselling, and the promotion of social and emotional intelligence initiatives.

Over the past fiscal year, our programs have made significant strides in achieving this goal. This report seeks to present an overview of RESTORE Belize's accomplishments and progress made on its programmes for the fiscal period 2023 - 2024. It also aims to outline future plans and recommendations for enhancing and expanding the range of services available to our beneficiaries by highlighting key insights and lessons learned from its programme implementation.

ii. MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS

The I AM Belize Scholarship Programme is a multi-tiered intervention that targets adolescents between the ages of 13 to 18 who lack the financial resources to cover all the hidden costs of education and who reside in high-risk communities. The scholarship is provided to students who want to continue their education but require holistic support to achieve their academic goals. These students must possess an aptitude for learning, be serious about continuing their secondary education, and not be able to qualify for merit-based scholarships.

A) I AM Belize Scholarship Programme (Total funding of \$82,100) Partners and supporters of this programme are BWSL, UNICEF, ABL, UNDP, AIC, BNECT	
Activities	Results
Recipients (August 2022 – June 2023)	5 out of the 63 enrolled under the programme successfully completed their education. 3 went into the workforce, 2 went on to continue study at St. Johns Junior College while 59 students returned to the programme in August 2023
Completion rate, high school	94% (out of 63 scholars)
School leavers with a job	60% (3 out of 5 joined the service industry)
Scholarship Club meetings conducted by mental health therapist	A total of 9 club meetings

Student Services - Successful outcomes are realized through focused and targeted service delivery that allows students to grow at their own pace. This interpersonal growth is important as it helps students to recognize their own strengths through exposure to resources (human and capital) that can guide and shape their outlook on life. RESTORE Belize offers a three-pronged service to students by engaging them academically, socially and working with their parents. Our service delivery follows the template set out by Edith Grotberg for Resiliency where it looks at the three sources: **I HAVE – social and interpersonal supports; I AM – inner strengths and I CAN – interpersonal and problem-solving skills.**

1. **The Scholarship Club** is an integral part of the programme as it is designed to improve resiliency in students by providing them with the social and life skills that will allow them to better interact with others and make informed decisions about their path in life.
 - i. **Interpersonal Development Sessions** - Nine (9) Scholarship club meetings were held for the period April 2023 – March 2024. This year we separated students by gender and held specific sessions with them, these included sessions on goal setting, identifying strengths and weaknesses, personal grooming, proper hygiene and communicating effectively.
 - ii. **Capacity Building for Fourth Formers** - Sessions to build effective communication competencies in our fourth formers were held to prepare them for life after high school. Sessions included resume writing, impromptu speech, and debate preparation.
 - iii. **Christmas Party** – RESTORE Belize held a Christmas Party in December 2023 for students and their donors. The party was an opportunity for students to unwind after the work done during the semester/term and an opportunity to meet and connect with their donors. The party was a success and a great way to close off the calendar year.
2. The **I AM Belize Parenting Programme** resumed in September 2022 after a two-year hiatus. The Parenting Programme is an intervention that seeks to provide parents with an opportunity to network with their peers and build their capacity in areas of communication, sexual and reproductive health, positive discipline, setting goals and identifying opportunities for personal and professional growth. The programme provides a platform where parents can learn and acquire tools that can be utilized to

strengthen their parenting skills. A series of workshops and training sessions have been held with the parents as outlined below.

- a) **Mental Health Capacity Development** – parents received sessions on setting boundaries and communicating meaningfully with their children.
- b) **Strengthening families** – parents received sessions from a former Family Court Judge on navigating the court system as it relates to maintenance and custody issues.

Community service (paying it forward) – this school year RESTORE Belize instituted a community service aspect for parents and students. This initiative is a way for parents and their child to engage in activities geared at helping others. Community service was done by forms with parents taking the lead, so far parents and their students have done community service at Hand-in-hand ministry, the community policing department and with the Belize City Council clean-up campaign.

Comprehensive assistance – throughout the year, RESTORE Belize staff assisted students and their families with groceries on a need basis. Students received groceries and toiletries through the sponsorship of the Middleton family throughout the year. Students had access to private counselling to help them understand and manoeuvre through some of the personal challenges and traumas they were experiencing.

3. The **Early Identification Intervention System (EIS) Programme** sets out to build literacy skills in primary school students whose educational opportunities had been disrupted for two years, resulting in stunted development in their literacy abilities. The resumption of face-to-face instruction in the 2022-23 school year allowed teachers to accurately assess the students' literacy levels and needs to create interventions that will strengthen their literacy competencies, based on their class level. Improving students' literacy proficiency will enhance their ability to progress and will position children to achieve optimal results in their educational outcomes.

EIS Programme Objectives

- a) Educate teachers about remediation strategies in literacy
- b) Create a literacy plan that incorporates the literacy strategies
- c) Provide opportunities for teachers to engage in mental health and wellness personal development sessions
- d) Expose teachers to the concept of social and emotional learning
- e) Expose parents and community leaders to mental health and wellness sessions

Ten (10) schools partnered with RESTORE Belize and UNICEF during Cycle 1 of the EIS Programme, directly enrolling one thousand ninety-five (1095) in forty-three (43) classes ranging from Infant 1 to Standard 5 as presented below:

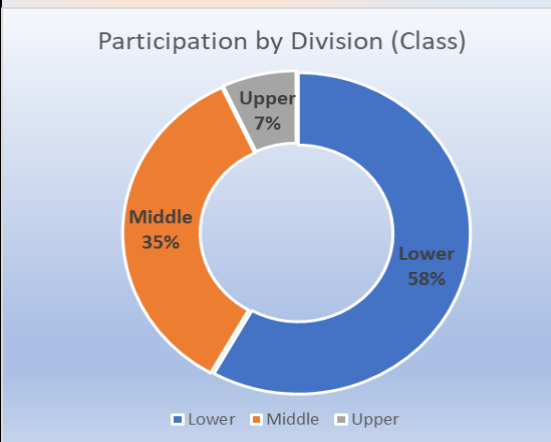
School	Class	Boys	Girls	Total	
Armenia Government	Inf. 2	29	29	58	120
	Std. 1	29	33	62	
Buttonwood Bay Nazarene	Std. 1	18	11	29	58
	Std. 2	20	9	29	
Holy Redeemer R.C	Std. 1	48	72	120	120
Light of the Valley Baptist	Inf. 1	13	12	25	114
	Inf. 2	15	6	21	
	Std. 1	5	13	18	
	Std. 2	7	9	16	
	Std. 3	6	12	18	
Our Lady of Bella Vista R.C	Std. 1	62	70	132	279
	Std. 2	68	59	127	
	Std. 3	9	11	20	
Our Lady of the Way R.C	Std. 1	13	21	34	133
	Std. 2	25	17	42	
	Std. 3	31	26	57	
St. Margaret Mary RC	Std. 1	13	17	30	110
	Std. 2	19	12	31	
	Std. 3	10	14	24	
	Reading Room	15	10	25	
St. Martin De Porres	Std. 5	11	8	19	19
St. Martin Government	Std. 1	24	29	53	53
St. Matthews Government	Inf. 2	24	21	45	89
	Std. 1	26	18	44	
	TOTAL	544	551	1095	1095

Networking – RESTORE Belize partnered with the owners/developers of RAZPLUS to provide a sensitization session on the use of the online platform. Sessions were held with individual schools to ensure that the teachers had the opportunity to ask specific questions. This engagement provided a platform for year-long technical support to the teachers and schools utilizing the website. Forty-five (45) licenses were purchased to ensure that each teacher had their own license and could use the platform at their convenience.

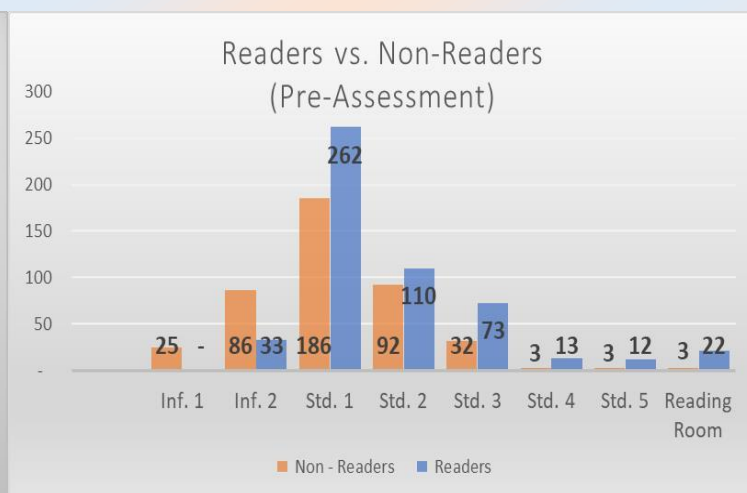
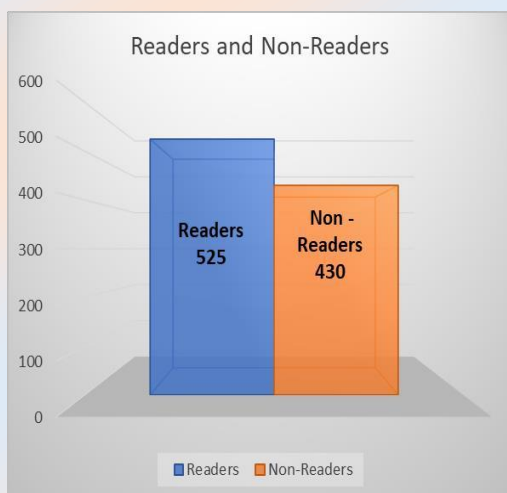
Literacy Plan & Interventions

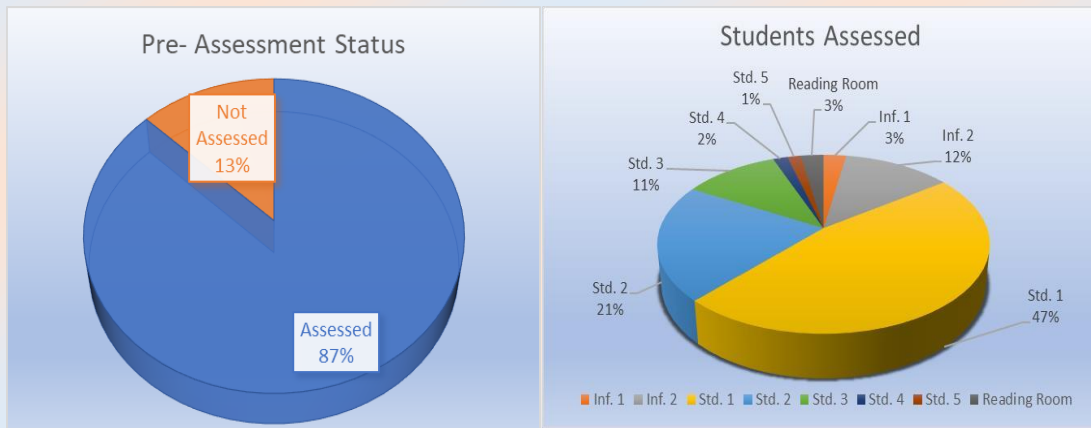
To commence the implementation phase, teachers and administrators applied the knowledge they gained from the workshop and utilized A to Z Benchmark Assessment to conduct pre-assessments for each student to ascertain their literacy capacity in relation to that expected at their class level. The evaluation assessed students' (i) ability to recognize capital letters and small letters (non-readers only); (ii) knowledge of letter sounds; (iii) phonological awareness about the initial, medial, and final sounds; (iv) ability to blend the initial, medial and final sounds; (v) digraphs; (vi) knowledge of Dolch Sight Words/High-Frequency Words. Teachers were able to successfully complete the preassessment evaluations with 98% of the students who were assigned to participate in cycle 1 of the 2022-2024 EIS Programme.

Class	Boys	Girls	Total	Classes
Inf. 1	13	12	25	1
Inf. 2	68	56	124	5
Std. 1	238	284	522	19
Std. 2	139	106	245	9
Std. 3	56	63	119	6
Std. 4	4	12	16	1
Std. 5	11	8	19	1
Reading Room	15	10	25	1
TOTAL	544	551	1095	43

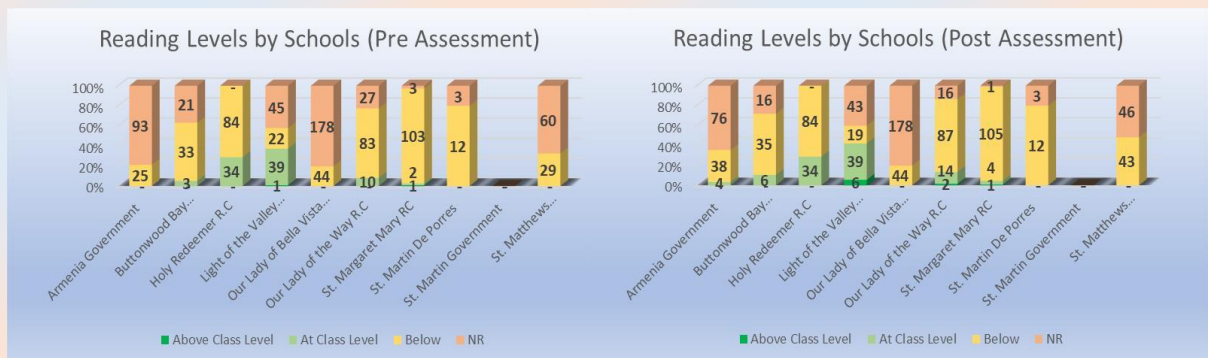


The Pre-Assessment scores highlight the importance of ensuring that the EIS intervention remains consistent in helping the students and their teachers. Based on the Assessment submitted between October/November 2023 (for returning schools) and December 2023/ January 2024 (for newly recruited schools), 45% of students were identified as non-readers, while 46% were reading below their class level. 9.21% read at their class level or above, with only 2 students of the 955 assessed, reading above their class level (.21%). Of those who were below their reading levels, 25% were 1 class below (1-4 letter grades below), 49% were 2 classes below (5-8 letter grades below) and 26% were 3 or more classes below their reading levels. This means that a Std. II student who is reading at 3 class levels (or more than 9 letter grades) below their class level is reading at an Inf. I level, and interventions are needed to bridge the learning gap to help their progression to their class level.





The data shows that the reading levels vary based on previous participation in the programme and the level of engagement at the school level, teacher level, and student level. New schools continue to show overwhelming numbers with more than 90% of their assessed students being non-readers at the time of their pre-assessments. However, schools that have been participating in the EIS Programme for more than 2 years (between the 2022/23 and 2023/24 cycles), have shown consistency in their student's progress and these students are primarily reading at, or above, their reading levels.



Resources – New schools were provided with a wide range of resources aimed at enhancing literacy instruction and supporting individual literacy interventions. In recognition of the continued reliance on paper-based materials for classwork and assignments, each school has been supplied with a printer, ink, and a case of letter-size paper. New schools received a comprehensive package of reading books tailored to various reading levels to ensure that students have access to books at their individual level. Schools were also provided with the following resources to support the development of a literacy-rich learning environment. Returning schools received, ink, paper, and supplies.

List of Resources	
Laminator	White glue
Laminating pouches	Bristol board
Magnetic white boards (small)	Poster board
White board markers	Glue guns
Permanent markers	Glue sticks

Children’s scissors	Index cards
Pens	Ruler
Pencils	

The Trauma-Informed Practices in Schools (TIPS) Programme piloted in 2018, is an initiative that aims to build the capacity of school personnel to effectively respond to challenges experienced in children and young people affected by trauma and various forms of violence, including armed violence, domestic violence, and community-wide violence. TIPS provides training to school personnel to enable them to recognize the signs and symptoms of abuse and trauma, and subsequently, make appropriate referrals or interventions. Grounded in a trauma-informed framework, TIPS emphasizes the importance of physical and psychological safety, the empowerment of survivors, and the prevention of re-traumatization. By sensitizing educators to trauma and its effects on children and staff, TIPS encourages a paradigm shift in the way disruptive behaviours are perceived and addressed in schools.

Programme Goal

To enhance the capacity of school personnel to effectively address the challenges they encounter while working with children and young people who have experienced adverse childhood experiences. By doing so, the programme aims to create equitable and inclusive learning environments that enable children and adolescents to learn and meet developmental milestones.

Programme Activities

1) **Capacity Building**

- a) Teachers and other faculty of the Anglican Cathedral College (ACC) participated in a two (2) day intensive training in an introductory course in Trauma-Informed Practices in Schools. Teachers and other school personnel learned about trauma’s impact on the brain and learning and how this impacts their students. They also learned strategies on how to respond to students who have experienced adversity.
- b) Teachers from Queen St. Baptist school participated in two (2) training sessions aimed at building their knowledge and skills in the areas of classroom management and managing their emotions in the classroom. They were able to identify practical strategies that aided their effectiveness in the classroom.

2) **Counselling** – Several individual counselling sessions were done with beneficiaries of the I am Belize Scholarship program including the parents of beneficiaries. The TIPS coordinator continues to build rapport with beneficiaries.

3) **Complementary programs** - TIPS program modules were revamped to reflect the growing understanding of the trauma informed practice approach. With the inclusion of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) component, there is a greater emphasis on the concept of resilience and its role in trauma informed practice. Modules are design on topics grounded in the understanding that trauma exposure can impact an individual’s psychological and social development.

Additional Support for Holistic Development

- 1) **Exposure to the beauty and wonder of Belize** – In July 2023, the National Biodiversity Office carried out its second trip with the students at RESTORE Belize as part of their Biodiversity and Educational Campaign Initiative. The students got to visit St. Herman’s Blue Hole National Park and Green Hills Butterfly Ranch.
- 2) **Corporate Social Responsibility** – As part of their CSR initiative, Belize Electricity Limited (BEL) distributed Christmas hampers to families in need to ensure that these families had an enjoyable Christmas. BEL provided eighty-four (84) hampers to RESTORE Belize to distribute to our beneficiaries and partners. Families from RESTORE Belize, The HUB, and St. Martins de Porres School received hampers a couple days before Christmas. The hampers contained non-perishable food items, toiletries and supplies for washing and sanitizing.
- 3) **Linkages to Social Service Sector** – after the consistent rain in November 2023, RESTORE Belize connected two (2) of our scholarship families to the Central Emergency Management Organization (CEMO) for assistance as their properties and homes received significant water damage. The families received cleaning supplies and tarp.
- 4) **Partnerships** – Throughout the year, RESTORE Belize has enjoyed several strategic partnerships which allowed us to extend our reach and provide a wider selection of services and exposure to our scholars.
 - a) **St. John’s Credit Union** – RESTORE Belize partnered with St. John’s Credit Union for a back-to-school activity in August that included hair braiding and haircuts for a couple of our scholarship students.
 - b) **National Committee for Families and Children** – RESTORE Belize continues to partner with NCFC for the planning of the Children’s Parliament and activities leading up to the celebration of World’s Children Day.
 - c) **Institute of Creative Arts (ICA)** – RESTORE Belize partnered with ICA for the implementation of an Art-in-de-Park activity in celebration of children’s day in November 2023.

iii. LESSONS LEARNT

1. Active parental involvement significantly contributes to positive outcomes for students. Holding parents accountable to the commitments made in scholarship contract is important for progress.
2. Addressing students' mental health is crucial for their overall success and well-being.
3. It is crucial for the TIPS Programme to have its own program budget to effectively respond to training and intervention needs.
4. Enhance teachers' effectiveness in literacy instruction through comprehensive teacher training, including follow-up classroom observation and immediate feedback on observed strengths and weaknesses of instructional strategies.
5. All students can learn; therefore, it is vital for students to be actively and meaningfully engaged to maximize their learning potential. Consideration for learners, their abilities and their interest are of utmost importance.

iv. FUTURE PLANS AND PRIORITIES

I AM BELIZE Scholarship Programme:

1. Streamline services for better program delivery: We will review and optimize our current services to improve the effectiveness and impact they have on our students and their families. By streamlining our processes, we aim to enhance the overall program experience and outcomes.
2. Develop a plan and full roll out of the Scholarship Club: We will create a detailed plan for the Scholarship Club, including specific timelines, a comprehensive overview and detailed discussions on each topic, and identification of potential facilitators for each session. This plan will ensure that students can develop essential personal, social, and employability skills.
3. Expand the reach of the Parenting Programme: We will continue to offer the Parenting Programme and actively seek to engage more parents. By providing additional opportunities for parents to develop their parenting skills, we can further support the overall development and success of our students.

TIPS Programme:

1. Training with the Police Department in Trauma Informed Practices specifically tailored to law enforcement personnel.
2. Training with the Leadership Intervention Unit (LIU) in Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) and Trauma Informed Practices specifically related to at-risk youths and persons affected by gang violence.
3. Training with the School Counsellors' Association specifically in trauma and its effects on the brain of children and adolescents, Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) and counselling techniques for practitioners in a school environment.
4. Training in Trauma Informed Practice in Schools and therapeutic support for teachers at selected high schools.
5. Training for Community Leaders in selected topics related to their community work.
6. Therapeutic services based on request and need in selected schools (primary and secondary schools)

EIIS Programme:

1. Secure funding for RAZPlus licenses and essential resources: We will seek funding to acquire RAZPlus licenses and other necessary resources for classrooms in the programme. These resources will empower our teachers to enhance literacy instruction and implement interventions to ensure that students receive the support they need for successful literacy development.
2. Provide ongoing training and support: We are committed to providing continuous training and support to teachers, specifically focusing on effective utilization of RAZPlus and other resources. By equipping teachers with the necessary skills and knowledge, we can maximize the impact of our literacy strategies and interventions.

Staffing and Financial Considerations

RESTORE Belize has a team of six (6) staff members, we are awaiting the addition of the Communications and Mobilization Officer and the Social Planner to complete the team. The team is small but committed to the work of the organization. The organization implements three (3) programmes: I AM Belize Scholarship Programme that presently has sixty-six (66) students spread across seventeen (17) high schools countrywide; Trauma Informed Practices in Schools (TIPS) that works closely with primary schools to ensure that they utilize a trauma-informed lens when working with students; and Early Identification Intervention System (EIIS) which works with primary schools to improve literacy levels in their students.

As an organization, our greatest strength lies in the dedication and commitment of staff to go above and beyond to ensure that our deliverables are met and that we create meaningful impact for our beneficiaries. We have a cadre of skilled personnel with diverse capabilities and skill sets. This allows us to harness these abilities for the greater good of the organization through strong networking and collaboration to ensure that the services we provide are always meaningful, empathetic, and understanding of the challenges faced by the persons we serve.

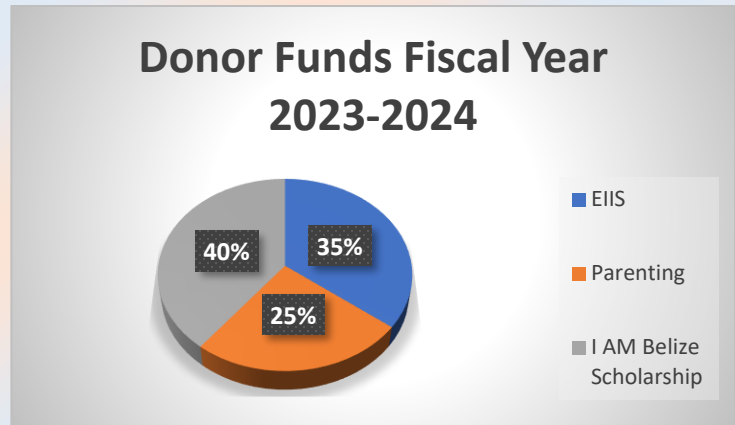
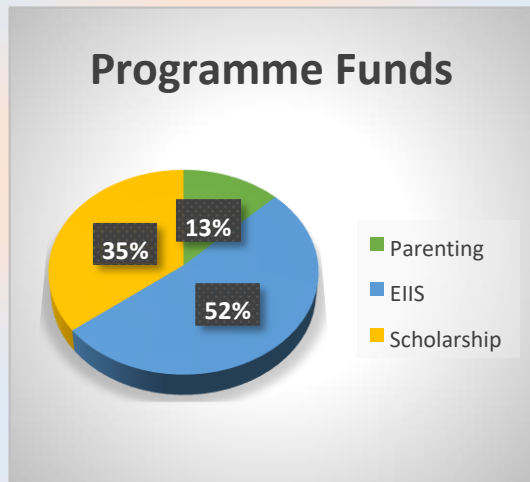
As an organization, our primary weakness is business continuity. Given the small staff, programmes are coordinated by individuals, and if those persons leave, then institutional memory will be lost.

POSITION	STAFF	Qualification
Executive Director	Christine Smith	MBA Technology Management
Senior Programme Officer	Roger Bradley	MBA with concentration in Sustainable Development
Senior Programme Officer	Sheila Middleton Kerr	Master's degree in education (Health Promotion)
Safe School Coordinator	Roshawan Ysaguirre	MSc in Counselling Psychology
Social Planner	<u>Vacant</u>	
Social Worker	<u>Emanuel Yama</u>	BSc in Social Work
Communications and Awareness Officer	Vacant	
Front Desk Clerk (Re-classified to be Administrative Assistant)	Kimberly Casimiro	Associate Degree in Business Science with a concentration in Accounting and Management
Janitor	Donnatta Tillett (Part-time) needs to move to a full-time position	
Social Worker	<u>In need of</u>	
Behavioural Therapist/Counsellor	<u>In need of</u>	
Driver/Officer Assistant	<u>In need of</u>	
<u>Consultant (Literacy)</u>	<u>In need of</u>	
<u>Consultant (M & E)</u>	<u>In need of</u>	

We have three (3) robust programs running, and we have been able to create an impact, but it comes at a cost: the workload is extremely heavy, and we run the real risk of staff burnout, which will create many irreversible challenges. Given the dynamics of the student population we serve, interventions must be timely and consistent. They must occur in real-time if we are to help the students transition from a point of crisis to one of tangible solutions. However, at times, this is not possible because we do not have the requisite human capital to ensure that we are tracking and monitoring students proactively.

FUNDS

RESTORE Belize received donor funding of **\$232,766.50** for the implementation of programmes, namely, I AM Belize Scholarship, Early Identification and Intervention System and the Parenting Programme.



v. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

RESTORE Belize had a good year, we continued working our mandate of building resiliency in our beneficiaries.

Below are some highlights:

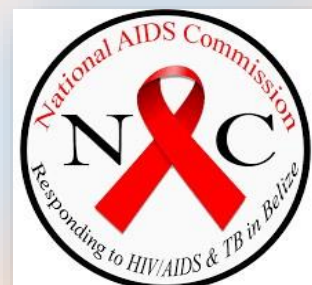
1. We received over **\$230,000.00** in donor funding for our programmes.
2. We have the highest number of students, **sixty-six (66)** on the I AM Belize Scholarship Programme this year.
3. We have continued engagement with the EIS schools, with **forty-three (43)** individual licenses being given to teachers at ten (10) primary schools. We also provided a wealth of resources to strengthen the implementation of literacy plans for each class.

A key recommendation is to increase RESTORE Belize's staff complement to allow for greater engagement with our beneficiaries and avoid staff experiencing burn-out.

II. National AIDS Commission (NAC)

i. INTRODUCTION

The National AIDS Commission (NAC) was appointed by Cabinet and officially established in February 2000 and responds directly to the Office of the Prime Minister. NAC, a multisectoral agency comprised of 17 voting members representing various key stakeholders, coordinates, facilitates and monitors the national response to HIV/AIDS, STIs, Viral Hepatitis & Tuberculosis and its overall National Strategic Plan. The NAC also serves as the Country Coordinating Mechanism (CCM) for Global Fund Grants.



The NAC is comprised of the following members:

- **Chairperson:** Dr Giovanni Solorzano
- **Representative from Ministry of Health and Wellness (MoHW):** Dr Marvin Manzanero
- **Representative from Ministry of Human Development:** Ms. Starla Bradley
- **Representative from Ministry of Education:** Mrs. Cecilia Smith Ramirez
- **Representative from Ministry of Labour:** Mr. Alfaro Muy
- **Representative nominated by the Leader of the Opposition:** Ms. Dianne Finnegan
- **Representative from Belize Medical and Dental Association:** Dr Mariana Ancona
- **Representative from the Attorney General's Ministry/Foreign Affairs:** Mr. Randall Sheppard
- **Chair of the National Committee for Families and Children (Civil Society):** Mrs. Maria Elena Contreras
- **Representative from Human Rights Commission (Civil Society):** Mr. Leo Bradley Jr
- **Person representing persons living with HIV/AIDS:** Mrs. Michele Irving
- **Representative Responsible for MSM/LGBT/SW/IDU:** Mr. Kevin Mendez
- **Representative responsible for Youth/Women/Children:** Mr. Abel Vargas
- **Representative from the private sector nominated by the business community:** Mr. Andrew Usher
- **Representative from faith-based organizations:** New Representative to be appointed
- **NAC Executive Director:** Mr. Enrique Romero
- **Bi-lateral Partners:** Mr. Ian King (UNDP)
- **Multi-lateral Partners:** Dr Karen Lewis-Bell
- **UNICEF-** Alison Parker

The Commission has the shared responsibility for advocacy, resource mobilization, the development of policy and legislation, and the overall monitoring and evaluation of all interventions and efforts in the HIV/AIDS Response.

The organization's vision is that "by 2030, Belize will have ended AIDs as a public health threat, continued to reduce the number of HIV infections; extended the length and quality of life of people with HIV and their families; significantly reduced discrimination against persons vulnerable to HIV; and effectively coordinated a multi-sectoral response which is human rights based and gender responsive".

An Overview of the HIV Situation in Belize presenting Epidemiologic Data for 2023

The Belize National HIV/STI/Viral Hepatitis and TB Strategic Plan, 2021 – 2025, describes the HIV epidemic as a concentrated epidemic among MSM. The NSP defines key populations as MSM and Transgender persons, and defines vulnerable populations as adolescents, women and girls, migrants, and prisoners.

UNAIDS data suggest that general population prevalence declined from 1.8 percent in 2018 to 1.3 percent in 2023. The estimated number of people living with HIV declined from 4,900 in 2018 to 3,721 in 2023.

In relation to prevention, several gaps remain including low reach of MSM with a package of services, linking newly HIV positive persons to care and linking and retaining HIV negative persons to the prevention service continuum for monitoring; rapid testing for other Sexually Transmitted infections (STIs) are not readily accessible; HIV/STI is not offered in MOHW sites and the community; low use of virtual approaches including a NAC app developed during the current grant; insufficient sensitization of healthcare workers to offer innovative prevention modalities such as HIV/STI and PrEP to KVPs; peer navigators face several personal safety and security risks and limited mitigation strategies have been established; and dependence on the Global Fund resources for reach KVPs with services in the absence of social contracting.

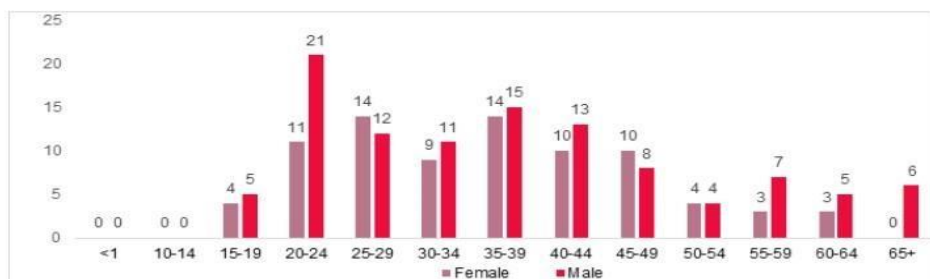
The response continues to focus resources to accelerate the reduction of new HIV infections and optimize linkage to care through rapid scaling up of differentiated and innovative people-centred approaches that would enable PNs and outreach workers to reach MSM including young NGI-MSM. These approaches include evidence-based strategies such as the use of digital media (social networks, dating apps), HIV self-testing (primary and secondary distribution), index testing and partner notification through social and sexual network testing approaches. Behaviour change communication and information for demand creation will be guided by the Communication Strategy for Key Populations including MSM and Transgender People.

Newly diagnosed HIV cases

In 2023, the MOHW reports 194 newly diagnosed infections, down from the 213 reported in 2019 (Figure 1). Beginning in 2018, national data show a reversal in the trend of increasing detection of HIV infections, with an overall decline of 30 percent from 271 to 189, between 2010 and 2023.

The population aged 20 to 49 years continues to account for most new infections, 78 percent (148/189) in 2023. There is increased vulnerability and burden including young men. In 2023 new infections in men, was 57 percent, with men aged 20-24 accounting for the

Figure 1: New HIV Cases by Age Group and Gender, Belize 2023



largest proportion of new infections, 11 percent. Early sexual debut (15 years for boys), multiple concurrent relationships, unprotected anal sex with a biological male partner, low risk perception, younger MSM are more engaged in sex work and intersecting inequalities continue to fuel the epidemic in Belize



Belize, Cayo and Stann Creek continue to experience the highest levels of the disease burden, in order of highest numbers of new HIV infections per year.

- 2020- 196 total new infections
 - 2021-178 total new infections
- 2022- 187 total new infections 2023 -194 total new infections

HIV TESTING

The Ministry of Health & Wellness (MOHW) reported that a total of 48,055 HIV tests were conducted in 2023, of which 1049 were MSM. The overall positivity rate was 0.4 percent (192/48,055). 1,049 unique MSM clients were reached and evaluated. This includes results from the CSO Hub, BFLA, and MOHW facilities. Although below the Global Fund target, we achieved a 54 percent increase in unique clients reached compared to 2022. CSO partners had an overall testing yield of 1.53 percent (14 reactive test results /914 unique clients assessed); the CSO Hub accounted for the most reactive tests and achieved a testing yield of 4.4 percent.

BFLA achieved a testing yield of 0.7 percent (4 reactive test results /533 unique clients tested). These data reveal low HIV testing yield including at BFLA and low uptake at CSO – Go Joven, having regard to the estimated number of MSM (9891) signalling a need for demand generation and differentiated testing approaches to reach undiagnosed people living with HIV and to promote frequent retesting among key and vulnerable populations.

Treatment

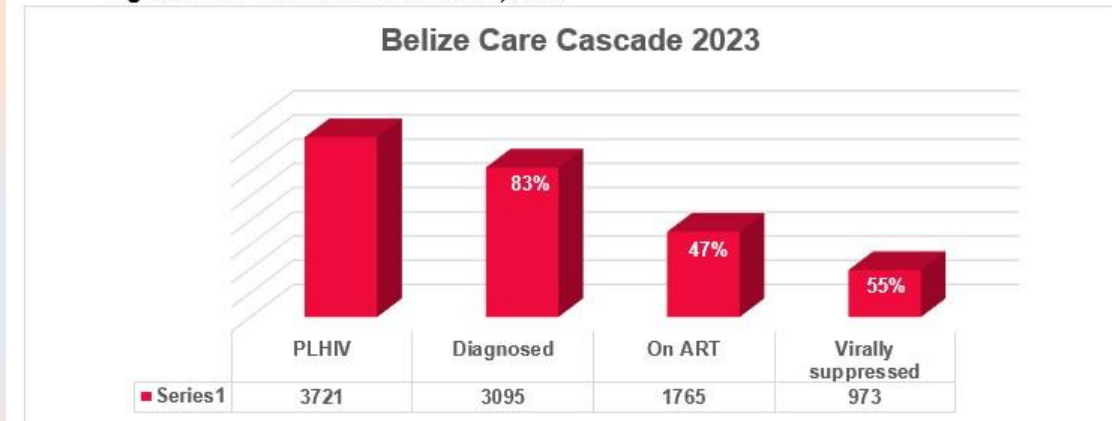
Regarding treatment, care and support several significant gaps remain in the HIV treatment cascade with low treatment coverage.

The first pillar of cascade shows encouraging progress, with 83 percent (3095/3721) of persons living with HIV who know their status (Figure 2), surpassing the NSP 2021-2025 target of 80 percent set for 2023 in the HIV NSP. However, there are significant gaps for the second pillar—only 47 percent (1765/3721) of people who know their status were on treatment, well below the NSP target of 70 percent set for 2023. Concerningly, 55.1 percent (973/1765) of People Living with HIV who are on treatment are virally suppressed, well below the 70 percent target set for 2023.

Table 1: HIV tests reported by facility and positivity ratio.

Facility	Tests Done	Positive tests	Positivity rate %
Belize Defence Force	11	1	9
Belize Family Life Association	730	10	1.3
Independence Polyclinic	1079	7	0.6
Central Medical Laboratory	12667	36	0.28
Cleopatra White Health Centre	2103	28	1.3
Corozal Hospital	3102	10	0.3
Go Joven	423	0	-
Guinea Grass Health Centre	21	0	-
Karl Heusner Memorial Hospital	2093	22	1.0
Mopan Polyclinic	6	0	-
Northern Regional Hospital	3945	9	0.2
Punta Gorda Hospital	2857	6	0.2
San Antonio Polyclinic	109	0	-
San Ignacio Hospital	6318	14	0.2
San Pedro Polyclinic	2121	17	0.8
San Narciso Polyclinic	759	1	0.1
Southern Regional Hospital	3879	16	0.4
Western Regional Hospital	5832	17	0.3
Total	48055	194	0.4

Figure 2: Belize HIV Care Cascade, 2023



Only 57 percent (1765/3095) of people who were diagnosed were on treatment in 2023, thus a high proportion, 43 percent (1335/3095) of Persons Living with HIV who have been diagnosed are currently not engaged in care and on ART (lost-to-follow-up). And only 31 percent (973/3095) of all people who were diagnosed were virally suppressed. Notably, 34.7 percent of PLHIV (612/1765) on ART did not have a VL result available in 2023. Although viral load testing is available nationally, there continues to be low uptake due primarily to clinical care physicians not consistently requesting timely viral load testing and follow up on the results.

There is suboptimal integrated management of common co-infections and co-morbidities diagnosis and management of advanced disease; limited understanding of factors associated with high attrition and disengagement from care; insufficiently trained healthcare workers to provide quality integrated people centred differentiated services for optimising adherence, retention, and viral suppression and to offer psychological support to clients.



The low ART coverage and overall viral suppression rate is likely responsible for the high and increasing trend in mortality, as well as the limited impact on the reduction in new infections. Crucially, the attrition along the continuum of care significantly affects the country's progress towards the 95-95-95 targets of ending AIDS by 2030.

ii. MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS

The programmatic activities and results during the reporting period were:

- **Labour Department and NAC Relaunch HIV/AIDS Workplace Program-** Labour Officers and Employment Officers were able to provide guidance to organization's focal points on the development and implementation of an HIV/AIDS Workplace Program, which includes HIV/AIDS prevention strategy,

the incorporation of the department's HIV prevention program, and working to eliminate HIV/AIDS-related stigma and discrimination.

- **Ministry of Labour in Collaboration with the NAC Host 3-day Training with Focal Points/Peer Educators** – The Training updated and increased the Focal Point's Knowledge of the HIV epidemic, factors that contribute to HIV infection among employees, and effective strategies for decreasing HIV/AIDS prevalence within their workplace; taught focal Points to design and/or monitor workplace HIV policy; develop creative ways to keep peer educators engaged and finalize HIV workplace policy programs.
- **Ministry of Rural Transformation, Community Development, Labour and Local Government, with the NAC, host Closing Ceremony to Culminate Trainings with Focal Points and Peer Educators-** Ministry of Labour, NAC along with other companies/organizations that revised their HIV Policy signed a memorandum of understanding to collaboratively undertake the following: Support the HIV and AIDS Workplace initiatives and programs of the Government of Belize, the NAC, and the International Labour Organization; provide guidance and support in the development of an HIV and AIDS Workplace Policy; assist in providing workers with referrals to testing sites, counselling and updated information on HIV and AIDS; participate in HIV and AIDS in Workplace advocacy programs and Partner to strengthen a support network for workers and their families infected or affected by HIV.
- **NAC Publishes its 2022 Annual Report for Public Use-** In early 2023, The NAC published its 2022 Annual Report and linked the document to its social media pages for public access. The NAC has been publishing its Annual Report to its website since 2016.
- **CCM Funding Agreement: BLZ -CFUND 2104-** The NAC, which also serves as the Country Coordinating Mechanism for Global fund Grants, signed its CCM Funding Agreement with the Global Fund for its 2023 Funding Period which represents year 3 of the agreement in the sum of USD\$35,000 to support activities implemented by the NAC Secretariat. This year also included funds for the CCM Evolution Program. The NAC Secretariat provides support to the CCM financing several activities including: CCM Quarterly General Meetings, Oversight Committee Meetings, Oversight Visits, M&E Visits, Consultancy to develop positioning plan, consultancy to support civil society organizations, support subcommittee meetings and support workshops and training.
- **NAC- Corozal District Committee and Ministry of Health collaborate in Outreach Activities-** The NAC Corozal District Committee, led by the Chair Clemente Novelo, collaborated with the Ministry of Health & Wellness in Corozal to conduct a series of outreach activities targeting key populations in the Corozal Commercial Free Zone, provided health education sessions, and appeared on morning shows sharing information, education and communication on HIV, STIs, and Tuberculosis. The District Committee also promoted and applied vaccines during the outreach activities.
- **NAC Contributes to the CEDAW Report-** The NAC is one of the key stakeholders that supported and contributed to the finalization of the CEDAW Report for Belize. (Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) 5th and 6th combined periodic reports.
 - **NAC participates in workshop hosted by the Executive Secretariat of the Council of Ministers of Health of Central America and Dominican Republic (SE-COMISCA)-** NAC Executive Director, participated in a workshop held by The Executive Secretariat of the Council of Ministers of Health of Central America and Dominican Republic (SECOMISCA) for the socialization of the 'Technical Guidelines for access to contraceptive methods in the framework of sexual health and reproductive health for adolescents in Central America and the Dominican Republic.'
- **NAC CCM Participate in Capacity Development Session-** members of the NAC CCM participated in a Capacity Development Session at the Belize Institute of Management in Belize City. The session was a



part of the NAC CCM's Global Fund Evolution Process which seeks to strengthen the CCM, its structures, subcommittees, and its positioning in the HIV response in accordance with the National Strategic Plan.

- **MoHW, NAC, and the Belize Family Life Association, Participate in Work Session to Sign Memorandum of Understanding-** the MOHW, NAC, and the Belize Family Life Association (BFLA) participated in a work session in Belmopan to sign a Memorandum of Understanding governing the working relationship between BFLA and MOHW.
- **MoHW, NAC, and Hand in Hand Ministries Participate in Work Session to Sign Memorandum of Understanding-** the MOHW, NAC, and Hand in Hand Ministries participated in a work session in Belmopan to sign a Memorandum of Understanding governing the working relationship between Hand in Hand Ministries and MOHW.
- **The NAC in Collaboration with Caribbean Vulnerable Communities Coalition from Jamaica Host Series of Sensitization Trainings-** The NAC in Collaboration with Caribbean Vulnerable Communities Coalition (CVC) hosted a series of trainings outlined below: 2-day training /sensitization of Justice Stakeholders/duty bearers on Key Population Human Rights Issues, Training of law enforcement officials (in-service and pre-service) on Human Rights and Key Populations, Training of healthcare professionals around service delivery for Key Populations. Each training took place over a two-day period and sessions included interactive facilitated presentations and practical exercises. The objectives of the project included: Reducing structural barriers to key population services, improving knowledge generation and use of strategic information on key populations for decision-making and advocacy by communities and other stakeholders, increasing domestic resources for effective key population programming and Mobilize resources for key population organizations
- **Integrated Biological and Behavioural Surveillance Study (IBBS)-** The NAC, with funding from the Global Fund Grant, was responsible for leading the development of the terms of reference for the consultancy to conduct the IBBS Study in Belize, establish the technical working group including their terms of reference, the receipt of technical and financial proposals, the evaluation of the proposals submitted, contracting of the successful applicant and providing the oversight of the study. The total cost of the IBBS Study is USD\$247,000 and seeks to achieve the following: Estimate the population size, Determine the prevalence of HIV and Syphilis, understand sexual and other risk behaviours (e.g., condom use, number, and types of partners), Assess knowledge/acceptability on the continuum of HIV prevention (i.e., PrEP, PEP, and self-testing) care, and treatment, Understand perceptions of the availability and to measure coverage of prevention interventions and services, Measure health needs, Understand the social platforms and sexual networks, Measure indicators related to Global AIDS Monitoring. The IBBS Study is expected to be completed by July 2024.
- **NAC Participates in Bowen and Bowen's 3- day Health Fair-** the NAC participated in Bowen and Bowen's 3- day health fair. Testing was conducted at 3 locations: King Street, Mapp Street, and in Ladyville. In addition to providing testing, at said event, the NAC and its partners also shared information on HIV and PrEP for HIV prevention.
- **Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS Supports the NAC with Technical Assistance to Conduct Midterm Review of National Strategic Plan for HIV, STIs, Viral Hepatitis and TB 2021-2025-** The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) provided technical assistance to the NAC to engage the services of an external consultant to conduct the midterm revision of the National Strategic Plan for HIV, STIs, Viral Hepatitis and TB 2021-2025. Dr. Insanally worked closely with the NAC M&E Officer and subcommittee to



engage the relevant stakeholders and obtain the necessary information and data needed for her to conduct the revision. Dr. Insanally also conducted a visit to Belize where she met with various stakeholders.

- **NAC Develops Communication Strategy for Human Rights of Transgender People-** The NAC, with support from the Global Fund Current Grant, engaged the services of key population representative, Mr Kevin Mendez to develop a Communication Strategy for the Human Rights of Transgender People specifically looking at trans persons access to health care services. The main outcome of these sessions included:
 - Priorities for Trans women include the right to gender identity, especially in their official documents as this makes navigating through the health system easier.
 - When accessing healthcare, it is important for the healthcare provider to address the person by their preferred name and pronouns
 - Trans women understand that certain services linked to their sex at birth will still be needed; however, for Trans women to be catered as a Trans woman is important because they know they are offered a comprehensive consultation.
 - Another service that is important is Gender Affirming Hormone Therapy, Transgender persons who are undergoing hormone therapy usually get the hormones in Mexico and self-administer it. This highlights the importance of having an endocrinologist to monitor and evaluate the individual undergoing hormone therapy.
 - Intake forms at health centres should include options for the person to identify as trans. This contributes to an easier flow in the health system and reduces victimization.



- **NAC develops Communication Strategy for Key Populations-** The NAC, with support from the Global Fund Grant, developed the Communication Strategy for Key Populations including Men Who Have Sex with Men and Transgender persons. This strategy encompasses the entire continuum of care cascade; from HIV prevention to treatment and care and support services, hence the involvement of most of the key partners in demand generation for the different HIV interventions. The NAC, and all its partners remain committed to coordinating the delivery of effective, evidence informed behavioural change communication for Key Populations in Belize to achieve zero new infections, zero deaths and zero stigma and discrimination as per UNAIDS 2030 goals. Men who have sex with men and transgender persons are socially marginalized, often criminalized and face a range of human rights abuses that increase their vulnerability to HIV. Men who have sex with men and transgender people – in particular, transgender women – have higher HIV risk, mortality and/or morbidity when compared to the general population. Access to, or uptake of, relevant services is significantly lower as well. It is important to recognize that key populations contribute valuable insights, guidance, and oversight to implementing organizations and to the Global Fund – as grant recipients, technical assistance providers, service providers and beneficiaries – due to their direct experience and personal investment in the National Response to HIV and AIDS.
- **NAC Upgrades its HIV Services App and Website-** LXJ IT Specialist was contracted by the NAC to upgrade the NAC App and website. The App is tied to an application program interface which is connected to a data base that feeds all or most data/information to the App. The NAC Platform includes: - Admin Portal- newly built to manage data and information on the App, API- App is now linked to Admin portal via API, which means that locations and other information can automatically be updated, or changes can be made without contacting the developer. IOS App- includes App updates with new features, Android App- includes App updates with new features, Web App, and Website- App website got a full upgrade in design

and information and with the list of features including advanced contact form, search engine submission, social media ready, google analytics setup, and blog set up and integration.

- **UNICEF supports Belize with USD\$54,000 funding for Consultancy to Develop Global Fund Grant Cycle 7 Proposal-** The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) who is a technical partner in the NAC of Belize is supporting the country with the funds needed to engage the regional consultancy team that will work with the Belize Country team in developing Belize’s next Global Fund Cycle 7 Proposal. The request from the Executive Director of the NAC was readily acknowledged and acted upon by Drs. Olusola Oladeji and Dra. Angela Edith Abaitwabusa who are both members of the NAC/CCM. The funds, totalling USD\$54,000 will be used to engage the services of Lead consultant Dereck Springer from Guyana who will be supported by Monitoring & Evaluation Consultant Lynette Hardy from Guyana and Finance consultant Faith Cunningham from Belize. Dereck Springer was the consultant who prepared Belize’s previous funding proposal, which is currently being implemented as a grant, so he has a wealth of knowledge of the Belizean context. The consultancy is expected to be completed by April 29, 2024, with the final submission of the funding proposal and supporting documentation.
- **Regional Validation Team Conducts In-country Validation for the Elimination of Mother to Child Transmission of HIV and Syphilis in Belize-** A Regional Validation Team conducted an in-country validation last week from June 13 - 15, 2023 to verify data on the Elimination of Mother to Child Transmission (EMTCT) of HIV and Syphilis. The Team visited several health facilities countrywide including the country’s Central Medical Laboratory. At the conclusion of that process, a debriefing session was done with management of the Ministry of Health & Wellness and key stakeholders including the NAC where findings and recommendations were shared.
- **NAC provides presentation to students from Tulane University, New Orleans USA, visiting Belize-** The NAC provided an educational presentation to students from Tulane University, New Orleans USA, visiting Belize. The students, who are enrolled in Tulane’s School of Public Health, were in Belize gaining insight into the operations of various agencies working toward global health initiatives.
- **NAC launches its Behaviour Change Communication Campaign (BCC Campaign)-** In 2023, following the launch of its Behaviour Change Campaign, The NAC continued working with civil society and health partners to advocate and promote the wide scale use of Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) and HIV Self Testing (HIVST) at all public health facilities, including NHI and Civil Society facilities. Social media content geared toward the promotion of this combination prevention approach was effective and continues to be used. NAC, MOHW and other key stakeholders made morning show appearances on the major radio and television shows to speak about and promote the use of PrEP and HIVST as part of a comprehensive combination prevention approach which was recently introduced in the country. Civil Society partners also participated in various shows providing a demonstration on how to use the HIV Self Testing Kit. In 2022, The NAC collaborated with key social media influencers in the creation of information, education and communication videos providing information and promoting the use of PrEP and HIV Self Testing.
- **Belize Team Attend Caribbean Regional Global Fund Workshop in Trinidad & Tobago-** The Global Fund hosted its Caribbean Regional Workshop on Grant Cycle 7- ***‘Making an Impact within Global Fund funding application Grant Cycle 7 (GC7)’*** in Trinidad and Tobago in November 2023. Countries participating in the workshop included Belize, Jamaica, Guyana, Suriname and OECS. Representing Belize at this workshop were: Dr Giovanni Solorzano- NAC Chairperson; Enrique Romero- NAC Executive Director; Ruth Jaramillo- Global Fund Project Manager- NHI; Dr Marvin Manzanero- Ministry of Health & Wellness HIV Focal Point



on Global Fund Grant; Leslie Perera- Project Assistant- Global Fund Project-NHI and Eva Burgos- Civil Society Representative

Present at the workshop were also technical partners including the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), UNAIDS, PEPFAR, LAC Platform and Board LAC Delegation. The agenda for the workshop were:
Day 1: Present the Global Fund strategy and grant cycle 7 (GC7) requirements. **Objective:** To present the GF strategy and processes and requirements for the GC7 funding application.

Day 2: Development of thematic areas on TB, HIV and Sustainability **Objective:** In-depth discussion of key thematic areas in the development of LAC Funding Applications

Day 3: Country planning and discussion. **Objective:** Support CCMs / RCM in defining a work plan for the funding application.

Ms Ruth Jaramillo presented on the People Centered HIV Testing Services while Mr Enrique Romero provided the welcome remarks on behalf of all the countries present.

- **Belize Govt Repeals law that Criminalized the Wilful Transmission of HIV-** The Belize government sought and received parliamentary approval to amend a section of the Criminal Code as it relates to the criminalization of the wilful transmission of HIV. The Ministry of Human Development, in collaboration with the MoHW proposed that there be a change to the legislation that currently allows an HIV-positive person knowingly engaging in risky sexual behaviour and infecting another carries a penalty and that included mother to child transmission. The NAC was a key player in the process by consulting with the AG Ministry and providing the evidence- based data and information on why such a law should be repealed.
- **NAC and Human Dignity Trust Continue Collaboration on Equal Opportunities Bill-** In 2023, The Human Dignity Trust continued its support to the NAC with the continuous revision and updating of the Equal Opportunities Bill which the NAC has been championing since 2019. The Equal Opportunities Bill (the 'EOB') as originally drafted in Belize, proposed the creation of a Commission and a Tribunal. This reflects the approach adopted by the CARICOM Model Anti-Discrimination Bill, and the Equal Opportunity Act 2000 of Trinidad and Tobago. Other countries where these two types of equality bodies exist include, for instance, Austria, Denmark, Finland, and Norway. the usual benefits of having an Equal Opportunities Tribunal to determine complaints are:

- reduced burden on the court system

- enhanced access to justice for victims of discrimination

- greater impartiality than the Commission and trust in its decisions.

- **NAC Observes World AIDS DAY 2023 under the theme 'Let Communities Lead'**- The NAC, with support from the Embassy of the Republic of China (Taiwan) in Belize collaborated with the MOHW and the British High Commission in Belize to commemorate World AIDS Day 2023 under the UNAIDS theme 'Let Communities Lead'. The Western Regional Hospital in collaboration with the NAC hosted a short ceremony followed by a health and information fair at the National Assembly steps near the entrance of the MOHW in Belmopan.



iii. LESSONS LEARNT

Ending AIDS by 2030 as a public health threat is a sustainable development goal. Bringing the epidemic under control is also a prerequisite for the long-term sustainability of the AIDS response results. Failure to achieve that goal will keep increasing both the budgetary demands and the social and human toll of the AIDS epidemic well into the future. The recent increase in new infections is threatening the gains we have achieved so far, and we have not been able to tip the AIDS epidemic into a decisive decline as has been hoped. Mobilizing domestic resources to meet the HIV response challenges, achieve universal health

coverage, and reach the sustainable development goals is a task for all countries, regardless of their income level, disease burden and level of socioeconomic status.

The Government of Belize continues to provide the political will that is needed for increased domestic investments in key population programs, community-led services, and human right programs to “leave no one behind.

Ending the AIDS epidemic as a public health threat by 2030 can only be achieved if we continue to embed human rights and equity principles in our national response. Four key areas have been identified as critical to the National Response to HIV/AIDS and Tuberculosis:

- Maintaining Political Commitment: as a country we need to continue to increase domestic resources and adopt policy and other changes.
- Investing for impact through robust National Strategic Plans: Effective decision making, and innovative strategies need to be developed so that proper resources are allocated for maximum impact. Our activities and interventions must be done through differentiated care for key populations.
- Delivery for sustained results: Accelerate quality implementation of fully funded HIV programs, including human rights and gender programs, which address the dual challenges of HIV and tuberculosis is warranted.

Engaging now for long-term sustainability: We must continue to pursue Universal Health Coverage, multisectoral financing of HIV, human rights, social enablers, and health activities and integrate donor financing within government-led fiduciary systems to build the foundation for sustainability.

iv. FUTURE PLANS AND PRIORITIES

The country’s Global Fund Grant under the theme ‘Getting to 90-90-90’ continues to focus its interventions and activities in achieving UNAIDS Global targets of having 90% of estimated number of persons living with HIV having a diagnosis and knowing their status, having 90% of those diagnosed retained on treatment, and having 90% of those on treatment virally suppressed.

The country will continue to procure dual HIV & Syphilis testing kits to support immediate diagnosis and treatment among HIV positive pregnant women. The dual kits will also be used to scale up testing among key populations.

The country will also continue to provide and expand its differentiated service delivery through collaborations between the MOHW with the CSO Hub, NHI and BFLA including implementation of innovative strategies to link people to care, retain them in care through interventions tailored to meet their needs, provision of multi-month prescribing of ARVs, use of peer navigators to return those lost to follow up to care and retain them in care utilizing innovative technology including an App with multi functionalities, provision of psychosocial support including counselling and nutritional packages and referrals to Persons living with HIV (PLHIV) and HIV negative key populations. An innovative payment mechanism has been introduced to incentivize both the public sector and CSO staff to successfully refer and navigate new persons living with HIV on to Anti-Retroviral Therapy.

The implementation of the Integrated Biological and Behavioural Surveillance Study will be implemented in 2023 and completed in 2024. This study will provide much needed updated HIV data including prevalence, sexual risk behaviours that place persons at higher risk of contracting HIV and will provide size estimates of men who have sex with men and transgender persons in Belize. This IBBS study will lay the foundation for the development of the new proposal by the NAC for the new cycle of GF Grant.

The NAC will continue to request technical assistance from our development partners including UNAIDS, PAHO, UNICEF, CVC, CRN+, PANCAP AND Human Dignity Trust and collaborate with local businesses through outreach activities, advocacy campaigns and a robust Public-Private-Partnership to advance our work and end AIDS by 2030, because AIDS is Everybody’s business as it has a significant cost to society.

v. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The NAC recognizes that Belize has made significant progress in its effort to urgently address the HIV response with an innovative differentiated service delivery which is a people-centred approach to HIV services, moving away from a ‘one-size fits all’ methodology. This innovative approach includes the introduction of PreExposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) and HIV Self Testing as part of a comprehensive combination prevention approach supported by newly recruited Peer Navigators working directly with our civil society implementing partners.

The NAC also acknowledges that this progress is under threat unless we urgently address stigma and discrimination as well as the economic, social, cultural, and legal inequalities that exacerbate the risk of infection and prevent people from accessing essential health services.

Stigma and discrimination continue to plague our most key and vulnerable populations which include women, young people, men who have sex with men and transgender women putting them at greater risk. Our young population, in particular men between the ages of 19 and 29, are more vulnerable to HIV infections. If we are to end AIDS as a global health threat by 2030, we must do so collectively.

Sources of Funding (BZ Dollars)

Sources of Support	2020	2021	2022	2023
Government of Belize	\$183,600*	\$183,600*	\$300,000	\$300,000
Global Fund Secretariat	\$70,000**	\$70,000**	\$70,000**	\$70,000**
UNAIDS	Technical Assistance	Technical Assistance	Technical Assistance	Technical Assistance
UNICEF	Nil	Nil	Nil	\$108,000
Total	\$253,600	\$253,600	\$370,000	\$478,000

* NAC subvention was BZ\$25,500 per month.

* This subvention was reduced by 40% in 2020 due to Covid to BZ\$15,300 monthly.

* NAC subvention was restored in 2022 at BZ\$25,000 monthly

** The NAC Secretariat signs a 3-year agreement with the Global Fund Secretariat for funding of BZ\$70,000 annually. This funding is based on a detailed costed budget that is endorsed by the NAC membership and covers line items such as NAC CCM Meetings, NAC CCM Outreach activities, Trainings and workshops, Monitoring & Evaluation Meetings, Monitoring & Evaluation site visits, Subcommittee meetings, country team meetings and work sessions and communication activities which are all aligned to the support provided under this type of funding by the Global Fund.

** The detailed costed CCM budget is approved by the Global Fund Secretariat only when the CCM members have endorsed.

UNAIDS supported the NAC through technical assistance from their Technical Support Mechanism (TSM) and engaged consultant Sarah Insanally directly including negotiating her contract and payment. UNICEF provided

the NAC BZ\$108,000 for the NAC to pay the consultancy team that worked with the country stakeholders in the development of the Global Fund Proposal. The Consultancy team comprised of Dereck Springer (Lead Consultant) and Lynette Hardy (M&E Specialist) both from Guyana and a local budget specialist; Faith Cunningham (ACunningham Enterprise).

The NAC is responsible for providing oversight to the implementation of the Global Fund HIV Grant being implemented and managed by the National Health Insurance who is the Principal Recipient and who manage the funds for the implementation of activities.

The Government of Belize provides co-financing commitments to each grant through the absorption of activities previously financed by the Global Fund particularly through the Ministry of Health & Wellness such as the absorption of MOHW adherence counsellors, MOHW Tuberculosis coordinator, the availability of Anti-retroviral medication (ARVs) for HIV patients, supply of condoms and lubricants, testing kits, Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP), hiring of biostatistician, introduction of HIV Self testing, introduction of new HIV Guidelines, Point of Care Testing and Treatment Guidelines, laboratory strengthening and the transition to Dolutegravir (DTG) medication which is a more effective medication. For every Global Fund Grant, the Government of Belize, through the Financial Secretary is requested to make specific commitments to the HIV response in addition to the expenditures within the Ministry of Health Annual budget.

The Government of Belize has also provided its political will in the development and possible introduction of the Equal Opportunities Bill into the House of Representatives for consideration for passage of such bill. This Equal Opportunities Bill is being championed by the NAC with support of civil society and other partners since 2019.

III. Social Investment Fund



i. INTRODUCTION

The Belize Social Investment Fund (SIF) was established in 1996 as an implementing agency for the Government of Belize. The mission of the Belize SIF is to address the human development needs of men, women, and children by implementing essential infrastructure projects and services. This empowers every Belizean to easily access and positively contribute to the social, economic, educational, cultural, environmental, and developmental resources of Belize.

Since its inception, the Belize SIF has impacted the lives of thousands of men, women, and youth in areas of education, health, water and sanitation, institutional strengthening, infrastructure development, human development, and social transformation. Annually, there are several projects under the leadership of this implementing agency for the Government of Belize which totals to date over seven hundred and fifty projects. With a new administration inducted in November 2020, BSIF was restructured to align with the ever-evolving technological advances and the needs of the communities within the six districts.

SIF's approach is grounded in inclusivity and collaboration. The organization understands that true progress is a shared endeavour, requiring active participation from government agencies, non-governmental organizations, private sector partners, and, most importantly, the communities they serve. By working together, they leverage their collective strengths to develop sustainable solutions with lasting impacts.

As they pursue the BSIF mission, they remain steadfast in their commitment to transparency, accountability, and efficiency. These principles are the foundation of its operations, ensuring that the entrusted resources are used effectively for the betterment of Belize.

ii. MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS

Having established solid working relations with multiple funding agencies like the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), the World Bank, the Caricom Development Fund (CDF), and the InterAmerican Development Bank (IDB), BSIF has successfully delivered new school buildings, water supply systems, health facilities along with equipment and furniture needed for quality health care, education, and water supply across the country.


The BSIF has undertaken various programmes and projects as Implementing Agency for the Government of Belize (GoB) during this reporting period, including the BSIF III (CDB Loan III), the Basic Needs Trust Fund 10, the CARICOM Development Fund (CDF), the Climate Resilient and Sustainable Agriculture Project (CRESAP), and an IDB Water Disinfection Project.



For the period 2023 – 2024, the Belize SIF successfully completed water expansion and improvement projects in several districts, multiple upgrades in the education sector, as well as health facilities. Furthermore, BSIF has continued its journey toward Green Climate Fund (GCF) accreditation and participated in multiple stakeholder engagement activities.

BSIF III (CDB Loan III) Loan



The BSIF III Project, also known as the CDB Loan III Project, in Belize currently encompasses five significant initiatives, all of which have received robust support from the Government of Belize. These projects focus on

enhancing education, ensuring access to safe and potable water, and improving the well-being of young people across the country.


The BSIF III (CDB Loan III) Loan Projects			
EDUCATION PROJECTS			
Project	Inauguration Date	Location, Cost (in BZ\$) & Other Details	Investment / Category
Corazon Creek Technical High School	N/A	Corazon Creek Village, Toledo District Cost: \$2,013,813.47 Consultant/Engineer: Anthony Thurton & Associates Contractor: FT Williams & Associates Ltd.	BSIF III (CDB Loan III)
Scope of Works		Direct Beneficiaries	SDG Alignment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Construction work resumed at Corazon Creek Technical High School, where a Project Monitoring Committee orientation was conducted, and the contractor was introduced in January 2024. This project serves the Corazon Creek community as well as students from sixteen neighbouring communities. The project aims to construct eight concrete classrooms by 2025. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School Community, inclusive of students from 16 buffer communities (approximately 324 male and female students) Male and female teachers Community 	SDG 4 - Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.
Project	Inauguration Date	Location	Investment / Category
Cristo Rey Pre-primary and Primary Education (Substitution)	N/A	Cristo Rey Village, Cayo District Cost: \$1,080,807 Consultant/Engineer: Anthony Thurton & Associates Contractor: Miguel Cienfuegos Constructions	BSIF III (CDB Loan III)
Scope of Works		Direct Beneficiaries	SDG Alignment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This project began in November 2023. Includes a two-storey concrete building with eight classrooms, office spaces, bathrooms, storage spaces, and an access 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School Community 	SDG 4 - Ensure inclusive and equitable

<p>ramp for persons with disabilities. Additionally, an open concept single-storey preschool building will be constructed, featuring classroom areas, a kitchenette, bathrooms, and storage facilities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The project, which also includes site fencing, walkways, and landscaping, is scheduled for completion in November 2024. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Persons with Disabilities 	<p>quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.</p>
Project	Inauguration Date	Location	Investment / Category
Calcutta Government Primary and Pre-Primary School	September 8, 2022	Calcutta Village, Corozal District Cost: \$1,350,509.81 Consultant/Engineer: We Architects Contractor: LV & Sons Construction Ltd.	BSIF III (CDB Loan III)
Scope of Works		Direct Beneficiaries	SDG Alignment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Although completed on August 3rd, 2022, the project remained within the defects and liability period, extending it into the fiscal year 2023/24. The project includes a six-classroom primary school and an open classroom pre-primary building with bathroom facilities, office space, and storage (\$1,321,753.16). As of February 20th, 2024, school furniture, computers, and printers have been supplied by Angelus Press at \$28,756.65 (for the fiscal year 2023/2024). The delivery of primary and pre-school accessories is still pending. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School Community 	<p>SDG 4 - Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.</p>

RURAL TRANSFORMATION PROJECTS			
Project	Inauguration Date	Location, Cost (in BZ\$) & Other Details	Investment / Category
Libertad Village and Concepcion Village Joint Water Supply System (Rehabilitation)	November 7, 2022 (for 750 households)	Libertad and Concepcion Villages, Corozal District Cost: \$1,454,518.08 Consultant/Engineer: Chentec Contractor: FT Williams & Associates Ltd.	BSIF III (CDB Loan III)
Scope of Works		Direct Beneficiaries	SDG

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Successfully completed this project at a cost of \$1,202,144.02. This project provided 750 homes with direct access to potable water. Including a metering system. The approved expansion extended access to an additional 81 households (at \$252,374.06). 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communities of Libertad and Concepcion Villages 	Alignment SDG 6 - Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.
Project	Inauguration Date	Location	Investment / Category
Infrastructure Works for the Expansion of Water Supply Services	N/A	Camalote, Teakettle and St. Matthews Villages, Cayo District Cost: \$1,276,330 Consultant/Engineer: Chentec Contractor: The Belize Water Services Limited	BSIF III (CDB Loan III)
Scope of Works		Direct Beneficiaries	SDG Alignment
This ongoing project aims to extend water supply services to the three villages, which have grown in size and population but lack access to potable water. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Installation of 160 immediate service connections for residences, churches, and other establishments. The contract was signed on November 17, 2023, and the project began on January 8, 2024. It is expected to be completed by October 31, 2024. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 Communities 	SDG 6 - Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.

HEALTH PROJECTS			
Project	Inauguration Date	Location, Cost (in BZ\$) & Other Details	Investment / Category
Dorothy Menzies Child Care Center	N/A	Belmopan, Cayo District Cost: \$3,235,228.09 Consultant/Engineer: Young's Engineering Consultancy Ltd. Contractor: FT Williams & Associates Ltd. and Joehann Constructions & Engineering Ltd.	BSIF III (CDB Loan III)
Scope of Works		Direct Beneficiaries	SDG Alignment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This major project, costing \$3,235,228.09, 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wards of the State 	SDG 3-

<p>represents a significant investment in the well-being and future of Belize’s children.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Groundbreaking took place on January 25, 2024, in the Maya Mopan area of Belmopan. • The centre will feature an administration building, dormitories for male and female occupants, playgrounds, a gazebo, and a perimeter fence. • Additional amenities include laundry facilities, storage spaces, a kitchen, a pantry, a dining hall, office spaces, a conference room, a computer resource room, and access for persons with disabilities. • The construction is set to be completed by December 2024. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Persons with disabilities • Community 	<p>Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages</p>
		

Basic Needs Trust Fund (BNTF) 10th Programme

The Government of Belize through the SIF signed a grant agreement with the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) under the Basic Needs Trust Fund (BNTF) 10th Programme on July 16, 2021. Signing on behalf of the Government of Belize were Prime Minister Hon. John Briceño; Mrs. Narda Garcia, chair of the SIF Board; and Mr. Valentino Shal, director of the board.




The BNTF Programme is the principal programme of the CDB aimed at reducing the incidence of poverty in low-income vulnerable communities. Under the programme, sub-projects are implemented to improve access to quality education and training, water and sanitation, basic community access and drainage, livelihoods enhancement and human resource development services. These projects contribute significantly to addressing the basic needs of Belizeans, creating opportunities to integrate citizens into the national development grid of Belize.



The sub-projects are being implemented by SIF, the implementing agency for the Government of Belize tasked with addressing the basic needs of all Belizeans. Project costs and the financing plan are estimated at US\$5,743,460 with CDB providing US\$5,031,000 in grant funds and US\$712,460 counterpart funding from the Government of Belize.

The seven sub-projects under the Basic Needs Trust Fund 10th cycle of the Caribbean Development Bank aim to enhance infrastructure and access to essential services in various districts. From educational facilities to water systems, these projects address critical needs and promote sustainable development in Belize. While some projects are well underway, others are in the early stages, with significant investments planned to ensure their successful completion.

The Basic Needs Trust Fund (BNTF) 10



EDUCATION

Project	Inauguration Date	Location, Cost (in BZ\$) & Other Details	Investment / Category
ITVET Infrastructure Project	N/A	Hope Creek Village, Stann Creek District Cost: \$1,400,000 Consultant/Engineer: Anthony Thurton & Associates	BNTF 10
Scope of Works		Direct Beneficiaries	SDG Alignment
<p>This project aims to improve access to quality vocational training and focuses on youth at risk, gender equality, and maintenance. It includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Renovating three ferro-concrete buildings: Admin Building, Culinary Arts, and Automotive Buildings. Structural repairs to roofs and walls. Electrical upgrades, bathroom repairs, and installations. Roof repairs and application of Roof Guard Premium Acrylic coating. Security grill repairs or replacements. Installation of epoxy concrete floor coating. Painting of all exposed surfaces. Construction of four new classrooms on the first floor of the Automotive and Trades Buildings. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School Community 	SDG 4 - Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.
Project	Inauguration Date	Location	Investment / Category
Gales Point Manatee Preschool and Primary School	N/A	Gales Point Village Cost: > \$1,150,000 Consultant/Engineer: Anthony Thurton & Associates Contractor: CM Construction Supplies	BNTF 10
Scope of Works		Direct Beneficiaries	SDG Alignment
<p>The project contract, signed in March 2024, has the following outputs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A 1,600 sq. ft. facility with open classroom space, kitchenette, storage, restrooms, shower facility, and covered verandah. Installation of an access ramp for individuals with physical disabilities. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School Community & Ministry of Education Persons with Disabilities 	SDG 4 - Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outfitting the preschool with essential furniture, toys, and equipment. Surrounding the compound with a chain-link fence for security. 			learning opportunities for all.
Project	Inauguration Date	Location	Investment / Category
Santa Elena Preschool (Replacement)		Santa Elena Town, Cayo District Cost: BZ\$1,283,880 Consultant/Engineer: Mitchell Moody Associates	BNTF 10
Scope of Works		Direct Beneficiaries	SDG Alignment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Construction of a new preschool building with bathroom facilities, office space, and storage. Two open concept classroom spaces with kitchenette, restrooms, showers, and an access ramp. Provision of furniture, toys, and equipment. Installation of electrical, plumbing, water supply, and wastewater systems. Construction of site fencing, walkways, earthworks, and landscaping services. Project consultancy completed and at the tendering stage. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School Community Ministry of Education Persons with disabilities 	SDG 4 - Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.
Project	Inauguration Date	Location	Investment / Category
Santa Cruz Government Primary and Pre-Primary School (Substitution)	N/A	Santa Cruz Village, Orange Walk District Cost: \$1,400,000 Consultant/Engineer: Young's Engineering Consultancy Ltd.	BNTF 10
Scope of Works		Direct Beneficiaries	SDG Alignment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relocation due to climate change vulnerability. Construction of a four-classroom primary school building and an open classroom pre-primary building with bathroom facilities, office space, and storage. Project at consultancy stage, finalizing design with a projected start date in June 2024. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School Community Parent-Teachers Association 	SDG 4 - Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ministry of Education Community 	for all.
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RURAL TRANSFORMATION PROJECTS			
Project	Inauguration Date	Location, Cost (in BZ\$) & Other Details	Investment / Category
Santa Cruz Rural Water System	N/A	Santa Cruz Village, Stann Creek District Estimated Cost: \$602,000. Consultant/Engineer: Anthony Thurton & Associates	BNTF 10
Scope of Works		Direct Beneficiaries	SDG Alignment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expansion and upgrade of the service network to include 700 service connections. Rehabilitation of a 13,000-gallon elevated concrete storage tank, generator house, and pump/chlorinating house. Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene Education Training (WASH). Currently at the consultancy stage, finalizing the design. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Santa Cruz Community 	SDG 6 - Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.
Project	Inauguration Date	Location	Investment / Category
Mabil Ha Rural Water System	N/A	Mabil Ha, Toledo District Cost: \$1,400,000 Consultant/Engineer: Anthony Thurton & Associates Contractor: FT Williams and Associates Ltd.	BNTF 10
Scope of Works		Direct Beneficiaries	SDG Alignment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A pre-bid meeting was held with potential contractors on February 12th, 2024. Installation of transmission and distribution 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mabil Ha Community 	SDG 6 - Ensure availability

<p>lines, service connections, and water meters.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construction of a reinforced masonry pump house with a chain-link fence. • Provision for a standby generator, pumping and chlorinating systems, and two 5,000-gallon water storage tanks. • Groundbreaking ceremony expected in June 2024. 			<p>and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all. SDG 7 - Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.</p>
Project	Inauguration Date	Location	Investment / Category
Mafredi Rural Water System	N/A	Mafredi, Toledo District Cost: \$1,400,000 Consultant/Engineer: Anthony Thurton & Associates	BNTF 10
Scope of Works		Direct Beneficiaries	SDG Alignment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-bid meeting held on March 7th, 2024. • Installation of seventy service connections, water meters, and distribution lines. • Construction of a reinforced masonry pump house with a chain-link fence. • Installation of two 5,000-gallon water storage tanks and a pumping and chlorinating system. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mafredi Community 	<p>SDG 6 - Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.</p>

The CARICOM Development Fund (CDF)

The CDF is an important mechanism aimed at supporting economic and social development in Caribbean Community (CARICOM) member states, including Belize. By addressing both immediate needs and long-term development goals, the CDF plays a crucial role in helping Belize achieve sustainable growth and development by providing financial and technical assistance. The CDF works closely with the Government



of Belize and local organizations to ensure the effective Implementation of projects.



CDF responded to a request from the Government of Belize for the implementation of a Rudimentary Water System— Component 6 of the Belize Country Assistance Programme (CAP) for Cycle 2. The project's goal was to enhance the quality and supply of water to at least nine hundred households in four disadvantaged communities in Belize, namely: San Antonio Village in the Toledo District, Georgeville Village in the Cayo District, Mahogany Heights Community in the Belize District, and Chunox Village in the Corozal District. The project's intent is to provide a safe and reliable water supply for domestic and productive purposes.

CARICOM DEVELOPMENT FUND (CDF)			
Project	Inauguration Date	Location, Cost (in BZ\$) & Other Details	Investment / Category
CDF	Project Start: April 17, 2023; Planned completion: July 15, 2024.	Georgeville, Cayo District Mahogany Heights, Cayo District Chunox Village, Corozal District San Antonio Village, Toledo District Cost: \$951,976.36	CDF
Scope of Works		Direct Beneficiaries	SDG Alignment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Installing water measuring and control devices in each of the targeted communities. • Installing new pumping systems, chlorinators, and upgrading electrical systems in Georgeville, Mahogany Heights, and Chunox Village. • Rehabilitating the storage tank in Georgeville. • Installing a reverse osmosis water purification system in Georgeville. • Rehabilitating the existing piping network in San Antonio, Toledo District, included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ January 28, 2024 – Inauguration of the San Antonio water system. ○ Three hundred ninety-six (396) house service connections, bringing clean water directly to the households and addressing the water supply needs of the San Antonio community. ○ Five thousand five hundred (5,500) linear feet of transmission and distribution lines installed to efficiently transport water throughout the village. ○ A high-performance three-inch water meter installed to accurately measure 		Communities (Work breakdown - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mahogany Heights: Contractors: FT Williams & Associates Ltd. (Meters Installation): \$90,566.97 Ramirez AC & Electrical (Pump House Electrical Upgrade): \$28,922.17 Cost: \$119,489.14 • Chunox Contractors: FT Williams & Associates Ltd. (Meters Installation): \$91,120.00 FT Williams & Associates Ltd. (Reverse Osmosis System): \$410,584.24 Cost: \$501,704.24 • Georgeville Contractors: FT Williams & Associates Ltd. (Meters Installation): BZ\$ 59,850.00, (Water Tank Rehabilitation): \$38,816.87 Ramirez AC & Electrical (Pump House 	SDG 6 - Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.

and monitor water usage.

- Air release valves now regulate air in the pipelines and ensure efficient water flow.
- Provision of training for the water boards in these communities on governance, rate setting, fiscal management, communications, data collection, analysis of water usage, detection of non-paying consumers, and minimizing water theft.



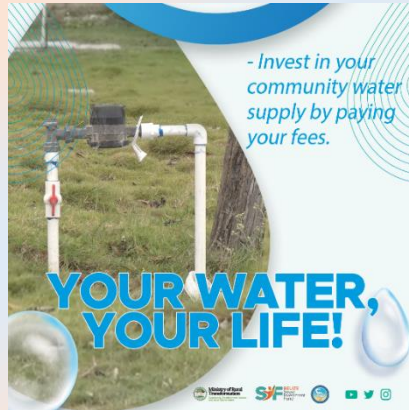
Electrical Upgrade): BZ\$47,794.23

Cost: BZ\$146,461.10

- San Antonio

Contractor: FT Williams & Associates Ltd.

Cost: BZ\$184,321.87)



IDB WATER DISINFECTION PROJECT



The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) has partnered with the Government of Belize to implement a water disinfection project valued at approximately \$1.4 million. This initiative aims to install disinfection systems in communities across the country to improve water quality. The Belize SIF and the Ministry of Rural Transformation,

Community Development, Labour, and Local Government participated in several consultations with the IDB. These meetings resulted in the list of potential beneficiary communities which were submitted to the BSIF Board of Directors for approval.

The targeted communities include:

- Corozal District: San Narciso, Progreso, and Patchakan
- Orange Walk District: August Pine Ridge, San Estevan, Carmelita, and San Antonio
- Belize District: La Democracia and Rock Stone Pond
- Cayo District: San Antonio, Armenia, Cristo Rey, and Valley of Peace
- Stann Creek District: Santa Rosa/San Roman, Red Bank, Hope Creek, and Pomona
- Toledo District: San Pedro Columbia, San Jose/Na Lumm Ca, Big Falls, and Bella Vista

In January 2024, inspections were conducted across these communities to assess existing infrastructure and confirm the scope of work needed to enhance water quality.



New River Pilot Project

In addition to the water disinfection project, the IDB is also conducting a pilot project on the New River in the Orange Walk District. This project aims to disinfect water in a designated area of the river to mitigate the perennial hazards and unpleasant odours emanating from the river.

In February 2024, a delegation from the IDB, along with BSIF management and engineers, visited several communities in the north. They toured the New River and engaged with stakeholders to discuss the project and its potential impact on the riverine environment.

Both the water disinfection project and the New River pilot project are crucial steps towards enhancing water quality and public health in Belize, demonstrating the ongoing commitment of the IDB and the Government of Belize to sustainable development and community well-being.



ORGANIZATIONAL STRENGTHENING

Climate Resilient and Sustainable Agriculture Project (CRESAP)



In June 2022, the Government of Belize (GOB) secured a loan from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) of the World Bank to fund the Climate Resilient and Sustainable Agriculture Project (CRESAP) for 2022-2027. This project aims to enhance agricultural productivity, promote climate-smart practices, and respond to crises or emergencies.

CRESAP supports farmers in adopting climate-resilient practices and technologies, focusing on crops and livestock such as maize, onions, sweet peppers, beef cattle, and sugarcane. It aids smallholder farmers transitioning to commercial production and established farmers adopting sustainable practices. The project also aims to strengthen agricultural institutions' capacity to assist farmers in using

Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA) methods.

A key component involves financial institutions (PFIs) participating in climate-smart agricultural investments through a Matching Grant Program, funded by CRESAP, PFIs, and beneficiaries. This provides financing for CSA technologies, boosting productivity, income, and resilience to climate change. The project also offers collective infrastructural assets to support CSA investments.



Operating in Belize's northern districts—Corozal, Orange Walk, Belize, and Cayo — CRESAP

targets small to large farmers and producer organizations in the commercial production of various crops and livestock, including national targets for banana and citrus producers.



During the fiscal period from April 2023 to March 2024, the Climate Resilient and Sustainable Agriculture Project (CRESAP) achieved significant milestones and initiated several key activities.

1. Procurement and Training

Completed procurement for laptops, pickup trucks, motorcycles, tablets, and other office supplies.

Completed procurement for laptops, pickup trucks,

Implemented Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Training to enhance knowledge of project stakeholders, including CRESAP PIU staff and national partners, on key tools for designing the M&E system.

Conducted Climate Smart and gender training for farmers, financial institutions, and public institutions in collaboration with stakeholders.



2. Environmental and Social Management

Developed an Environmental and Social Management System for Blue Creek Credit Union and La Immaculada Credit Union.

Finalized seven Environmental and Social Instruments.



2024. The Matching Grant Operations Manual, will be submitted to the World Bank for approval by May of 2024 with planned roll-out of the program set for mid-July 2024. Constituted both the Matching Grant Approval Committee and the Project Steering Committee.

5. Project Governance and Documentation

Signed a Memorandum of Understanding with MAFSE, PCB, BAHA, BMDC, UB-CF, and NMS to support project implementation.

3. Financial Institution Collaboration

Built a rapport with potential Participating Financial Institutions (PFIs): Blue Creek Credit Union, La Immaculada Credit Union, and the Development Finance Corporation (DFC). These institutions have been approved by the World Bank to promote the Matching Grant Program.

Blue Creek Credit Union signed a participation agreement on December 15, 2023.

La Immaculada Credit Union and the DFC are set to sign participation agreements in the week of June 17, 2024.

4. Matching Grant Program

The Matching Grant Program was initiated in 2023, earlier than the planned start in





Prepared the Monitoring and Evaluation Manual.
Held three high-level meetings with the World Bank.

6. Emergency Preparedness

The Contingency Emergency Response Manual and Emergency Action Plan are scheduled for completion by September 2024.

The project has made significant strides, successfully implementing key activities, meeting collaboration milestones, and receiving positive stakeholder feedback. Challenges have been effectively addressed, keeping the project on track, and demonstrating strong commitment to timelines and deliverables.

GCF Accreditation

The Belize SIF has embarked on a journey toward Green Climate Fund (GCF) accreditation. It is being realized under the project, “Enhancing Access for Climate Finance Opportunities, through pre-accreditation support to the Belize SIF and the Ministry of Economic Development-Belize and technical support for Belize National Protected Areas (BNPAS) Entities, Belize.”

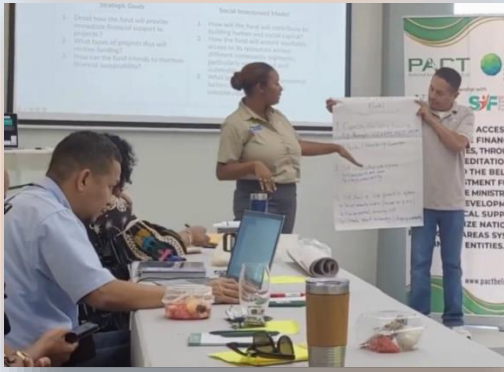


BSIF has benefited from four pivotal consultancies aimed at advancing the implementing agency closer to GCF accreditation. One significant consultancy involved the development of BSIF's Strategic Plan. Through a series of workshops with Asesoramiento Ambiental Estratégico, a Uruguayan firm, BSIF successfully crafted this strategic plan, which was finalized in August 2023.



Ongoing Consultancies and Framework Development

Currently, BSIF is engaged in three ongoing consultancies focused on developing essential frameworks to be incorporated into its operations:



- Financial Management Framework by Bro Consulting
- Grant Award Mechanism by Waight Worldwide Consulting
- Environmental Social Gender Management Framework by the Centre for Applied Development Studies

These consultancies are expected to be finalized by June 2024, marking a significant milestone in BSIF's journey toward GCF accreditation.

Stakeholder Engagement Activities

Canada-CARICOM Expert Deployment Mechanism (CCEDM)



The Canada-CARICOM Expert Deployment Mechanism (CCEDM) is a four-year initiative aimed at supporting Caribbean countries, including Belize, in policy development and implementation, operational efficiency and effectiveness, and communications. The program's objectives are to diversify and strengthen local economies, build stronger and climate-resilient communities, and reduce gender and economic inequalities. In Belize, CCEDM will facilitate approximately 30 short-term technical assistance opportunities over the four years of the initiative (2021-

2025).

In August 2023, community leaders and members of the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) from Gales Point Manatee Village participated in a proposal writing, budgeting, and grant writing training session for small businesses. This training, facilitated by Allan Clarke from CCEDM, equipped local entrepreneurs with essential skills. As a result, participants developed two proposals:

- Land Reclamation and Economic Zone Development: This project aims to transform reclaimed land into an economic zone focused on tourism activities and climate change mitigation.
- Multipurpose Auditorium Construction: This project proposes the construction of a multipurpose auditorium to serve community needs.



In October 2023, BSIF conducted a monitoring and evaluation session led by Raymond Gervais. Participants learned how to write concept notes and gained insights into the components of a logical framework, risk analysis, and monitoring and evaluation processes from planning to results. Additionally, there was a session on climate resilience design for buildings, which emphasized climate-smart technologies and the identification of natural and human-caused hazards.



A significant monitoring and evaluation session was held at the Stann Creek Institute for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (ITVET) in Hope Creek Village. During this session, stakeholders engaged in learning how to plan and monitor projects effectively, assess success or failure, and implement strategies to mitigate risks.

BSIF Contractors' Forum

The first quarter of 2024 marked a significant milestone for the Belize SIF with the hosting of two inaugural Contractors' Forums aimed at fostering engagement, transparency, and collaboration within the contracting community. These forums, held on March 21st and March 26th, heralded a new era of dialogue and partnership between BSIF and contractors across Belize.

The initial session on March 21st, 2024, brought together representatives from the northern districts of Corozal and Orange Walk at the Escuela Secundaria Tecnica Mexico Conference Room in San Roman Village, Corozal. Despite logistical challenges, the event saw a commendable turnout of 28 individuals, including 16 contractors from a diverse range of small, medium, and large-scale operations. This inclusive gathering facilitated constructive discussions and provided valuable insights into the needs and aspirations of the local contracting community.



Following the success of the northern districts' forum, BSIF expanded its outreach to Belize City, hosting the second forum at the Best Western Plus Biltmore Plaza on March 26th, 2024.

This event attracted 42 participants, with 28 contractors representing prominent large-scale construction companies, engineering groups, and equipment/service providers. The diverse representation highlighted the broad interest and relevance of BSIF's initiatives within the contracting ecosystem.



Throughout both forums, BSIF provided comprehensive guidance on various aspects of the contracting process, including bidding procedures, requirements, financial obligations, and essential guidelines for successful project applications. The interactive sessions enabled meaningful exchanges of information, helping contractors gain invaluable insights and clarity on navigating the intricacies of BSIF projects.

Notably, these forums prioritized inclusivity, ensuring equitable access for all attendees, regardless of gender or organizational size. The active participation of both men and women underscored BSIF's commitment to promoting diversity and equal opportunities within the contracting landscape. These inaugural forums set the stage for enhanced collaboration and transparency between BSIF and the contracting community, paving the way for more effective and inclusive project implementation in the future.



iii. LESSONS LEARNT

The BSIF has followed up on plans made within the previous fiscal year, including following up critical contemporary issues with the GCF Accreditation and liaising in a significant way with contractors to enable best value for the projects being implemented.

iv. FUTURE PLANS AND PRIORITY AREAS

The Belize SIF has several projects to be completed or started soon, including:

- (i) Completion of All BNTF 10 projects
- (ii) Completion of SIF III projects - Dorothy Menzies Child Care Centre, Cristo Rey Pre- Primary School, Corazon Creek High School
- (iii) Start of the IDB Water disinfection project which will provide 21 communities with potable water and a Pilot Study on the New River, Orange Walk
- (iv) Hire a consultant to design the four SIF IV projects - Orange Walk Polyclinic, Caye Caulker Health Centre first floor construction, the Centre for the Investigation of Child and Domestic Abuse, and the Provision of Water to the Corozal Free Zone.

IV. Economic Development Council



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

i. INTRODUCTION

The Economic Development Council (EDC) is the Government of Belize's official mechanism for dialogue between the public and private sectors, providing advice to the Prime Minister and wider government with the objective of contributing to a business climate conducive to innovation and resilient growth. Since its establishment, through its Technical Secretariat, the Public-Private Desk (PPD) in the Office of the Prime Minister, the EDC has set a high standard of excellence, efficiency, diligence and impartiality in its mandated execution of critical reform initiatives. These efforts have contributed to productive and impactful working relationships across sectors and with key development partners such as the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, the Organization of American States, the Caribbean Development Bank and the Embassy of the Republic of China (Taiwan) among others.

The Public-Private Dialogue Unit

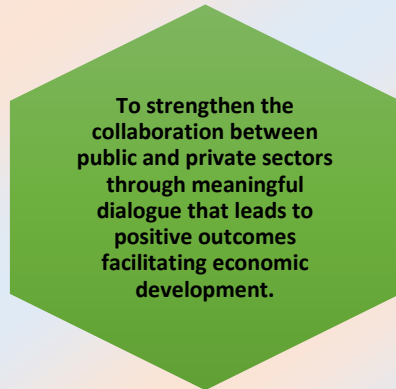
Beyond bridging the divide between the government and private-sector, the Public-Private Dialogue (PPD) Unit is particularly adept at ensuring effective communication within the public sector itself with the objective of creating linkages, avoiding duplication of effort and promoting greater efficiency, transparency and automation in the delivery of public services to have a positive impact on the ability to conduct legitimate business in Belize. The Public-Private Desk resides within the Office of the Prime Minister where it commands the respect and support of colleagues from across line ministries, statutory bodies, the business community and international development partners because of its proven track record of success in the delivery, through superior project management skills, of reform actions which encompass innovation, process reengineering and data-based decision-making. This small, dynamic team is currently comprised of an Executive Director, a Project Coordinator, a Project Officer and a Communication and Administration Officer.

Mandate of the EDC

The EDC was formed in 2011 and was legislated in 2017. The purpose of the EDC as outlined in the Economic Development Council Act No. 38 of 2017 includes the following:

- To serve as the primary forum for Public-Private Sector Dialogue.
- To recommend to the Prime Minister actions and reforms necessary for the improvement of the business climate.
- To facilitate the implementation of approved reforms.
- To promote a better understanding of business climate problems and provide solutions with input from the private sector.

Role of the EDC



EDC Composition (2021 – 2024)

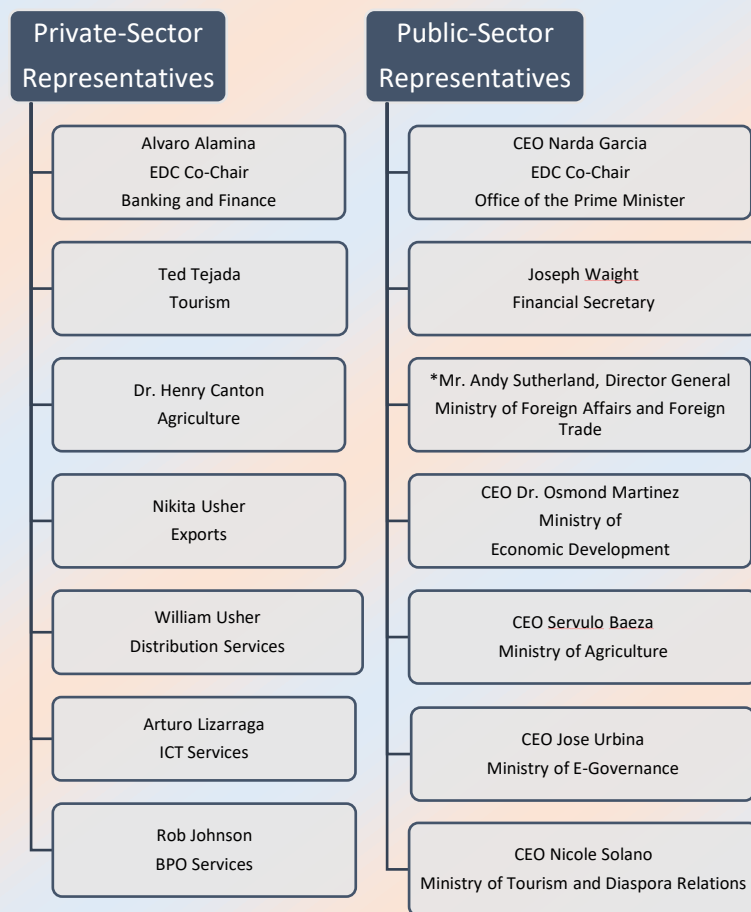
The Council is comprised of fourteen members, including seven senior managers from the public sector and seven representatives from the private sector. The EDC is co-chaired by a representative from the private sector and a counterpart from the public sector ensuring equal representation. The goal of the EDC is to foster sustainable economic development and competitiveness through an enabling investment and business climate.

Mission Statement and Strategic Goals

“Creating opportunities through dialogue, partnership and reform.”

The Medium-Term

Development Strategy - #planBelize, outlines specific actions geared at spreading growth nationally and creating opportunities. This now national strategy emphasizes the need to address ease of doing business challenges to promote investment attraction and facilitation. This is where the EDC’s guiding mantra plays a

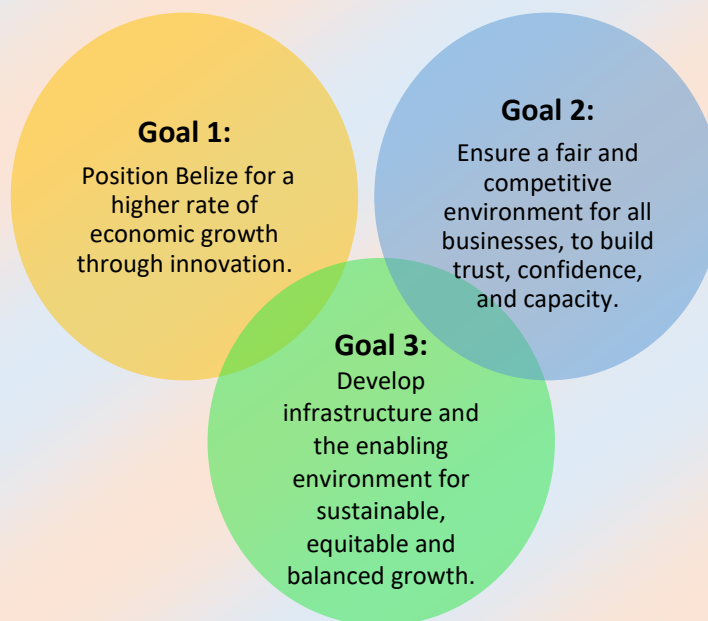


* For CEO Ambassador Amalia Mai

role in steering the work on GOB’s public-private dialogue mechanism as operationalized by the Public-Private Desk in the Office of the Prime Minister.

Strategic Goals

The overarching goal of the EDC is to foster and influence sustainable economic development and competitiveness by encouraging proactive leadership (social, business and citizenry) that is progressive and open to innovation resulting in an enabling investment and business climate. The EDC has three strategic goals:



The current period of work 2023 to 2024 has two additional goals integrated to strengthen the contribution of the EDC. These are a focus on i) the EDC’s Institutional and Governance Framework and its ii) Communication and Awareness Strategy. The planned outcomes are:

- Expansion of the EDC Mandate,
- Increasing Transparency and Openness in Government

ii. MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS 2023 - 2024

The Public Private Dialogue Unit, secretariat to the Economic Development Council (EDC), provided technical support to the development of various reform initiatives, projects, and interventions. In addition to the general support and representation on project steering committees and technical working groups, the EDC also led the process of consolidating the Belize Investment and Business Climate Action Plan (BIBCAP), an initiative of national importance.

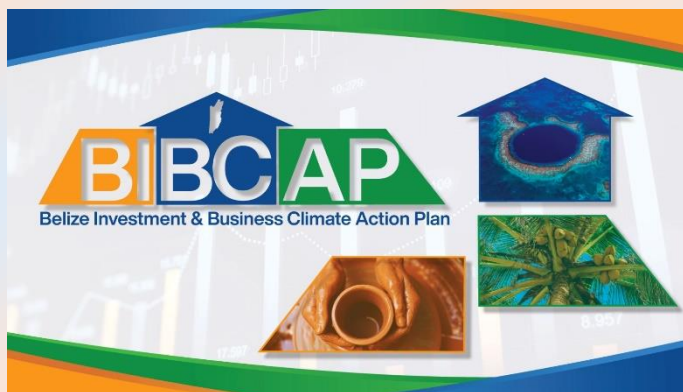
Major contributions and collaboration were provided on the initiatives below:

Belize Investment and Business Climate Action Plan Secretariat & TWGs	National Trade Negotiation Team (NTNT)	Secured Transaction and Collateral Registry Committee
Modernization of Belize's Debt Resolution Regime Committee	MSME Digital Revolution in Belize Project Steering Committee (BCCI)	Belize Investment Summit Steering Committee
Science, Technology, and Innovation Advisory Committee (STIAC)	National Financial Inclusion Strategy Working Group	E-governance Coordination (Digital Agenda)

BUSINESS CLIMATE REFORM

1. Belize Investment and Climate Action Plan (BIBCAP)

The Government of Belize, through the Office of the Prime Minister and Minister of Investment, launched and activated implementation of the Belize Investment and Climate Action Plan (BIBCAP) for Belize, in February 2024. BIBCAP, developed under the aegis of the Office of the Prime Minister, is a consolidation of three key development strategies of the country with the aim of creating efficiency in implementation.



The BIBCAP identifies nine key pillars that represent critical areas where reforms are needed

- I. Development of an Integrated National Strategy for promoting Export and Investment.
- II. Delivery of Government Services, Ethical Government, e-Government, e-Commerce, and Innovation.
- III. Delivery of financial services, and access to finance for investment and export, with a strong focus on meeting MSME needs.
- IV. Reform of the taxation system for sustaining private investment and business climate reform.
- V. Revision of the existing regulatory framework and Judicial System to make it more investment, export, and MSME friendly.
- VI. Reform of the business incentives framework.
- VII. Encourage the development of innovation and a skill supply adapted to the needs of national and international investors.
- VIII. Development of infrastructure and internal logistics.
- IX. Fostering of Economic Diplomacy.

The BIBCAP management structure was set in place for collaborative effort across the Economic Development Council, BELTRAIDE, and the IPCU. The Oversight Committee (Unit Heads and CEO of Investment), the Secretariat with EDC as the lead agency, and Technical Working Groups (TWGs) were established, and inception meetings were promptly planned.



The BIBCAP, an amalgamation of the National Investment Policy and Strategy (NIPS), the Export Competitiveness Roadmap (ECR) and the Micro, Small, Medium Enterprise (MSME) Strategy, aims to refine the framework for domestic and foreign investment, thereby fostering economic growth.

While the consolidation of the Belize Investment and Business Climate Action Plan (BIBCAP) and the activation of technical working groups under the leadership of the Office of the Prime Minister were taking place, between April 2023 and March 2024, several key activities from these strategies were undertaken.

The government took steps to enhance financial systems by passing a credit reporting act, working towards establishing a credit bureau, and creating a collateral registry. These measures are expected to increase the availability of financing for MSMEs, which are crucial for the economic development of Belize.

Digitalization projects were also a focus, with the government working on the digitalization of land and business registries, as well as firms and government services. This is part of the broader e-governance agenda that Belize is pursuing to modernize its economy and streamline processes for businesses.

Additionally, the government has been proactive in improving its anti-money laundering and combating the financing of terrorism (AML/CFT) framework. This was in preparation for the Mutual Evaluation by the Caribbean Financial Action Task Force scheduled for November 2023.

These activities reflect the government's commitment to creating a conducive business climate that encourages foreign direct investment and supports economic expansion. The initiatives have laid a foundation for sustainable economic growth and development in Belize.

2. Secured Transaction and Collateral Registry (STCR)

The EDC, as part of the Secured Transaction and Collateral Registry committee, has supported the work of developing a framework for an STCR in Belize. The IPCU sourced funding from the Financial Services Commission for the development of Secured Transactions Legislation and a Collateral Registry for Belize. During the period from April 2023 to March 2024, the committee for Belize's Secured Transaction and Collateral Registry focused on several key initiatives:

- Implementation of the Belize Companies (Amendment) Act, 2023 - This included ensuring compliance with new regulations, particularly those related to beneficial ownership and corporate governance.
- Enhancing Transparency - The committee improved the accuracy and timeliness of company records, aligning with international standards such as the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) recommendations.
- Public Meetings and Consultations - They held public meetings, such as the Joint Public Accounts Committee meeting on April 24, 2023, to discuss and review the progress and impact of these initiatives.

These efforts were aimed at strengthening Belize's business environment and ensuring better regulatory compliance.

The implementation of the Secured Transaction and Collateral Registry in Belize is anticipated to produce several outcomes, including:

- Increased Access to Credit - Studies have shown that the introduction of movable registries significantly improves access to finance, particularly for smaller firms. These businesses report fewer obstacles in obtaining credit.
- Economic Impact - The registry will facilitate economic growth by enabling businesses to leverage their movable assets more effectively, leading to increased investment and expansion.
- Transparency and Efficiency - The registry is enhancing the transparency and efficiency of secured transactions, making it easier for lenders to assess the creditworthiness of borrowers and reducing the risks associated with lending.

These outcomes highlight the positive impact of the Secured Transaction and Collateral Registry on Belize's financial infrastructure and business environment.

3. Modernization of Belize's Debt Resolution Regime Committee (Development of Insolvency, Bankruptcy and Netting Bill)

The PPD-EDC serves as the Secretariat for the Technical Working Group aimed at Modernizing Belize's Debt Resolution Regime. This project is being undertaken to modernize and strengthen the legal and regulatory framework governing and impacting businesses in the face of financial difficulties with the view to enabling a smooth, less costly, and timely access to restructuring and insolvency proceedings along with a strengthened set of bankruptcy proceedings.

A key deliverable under this consultancy is the development of a comprehensive Insolvency, Bankruptcy and Netting Bill. Schedule of activities included:

- Completion of 1st iteration of Insolvency Bill (IB) August 4, 2023
- Completion of 2nd iteration of IB by September 11, 2023
- Final Draft of IB completed by October 16, 2023
- Completion of 1st iteration of the Netting Bill (NB) by October 16, 2023

- Completion of 2nd iteration of the NB by November 17, 2023
- Final Draft with a consolidation of Insolvency, Bankruptcy and Netting Bill completed by December 21, 2023

The PPD-EDC assisted with the drafting of a Cabinet paper towards the approval of the proposed Bill.

TRADE AND OTHER COMMITTEE INTERVENTIONS

1. National Trade Negotiation Team (NTNT)

The National Trade Negotiation Team (NTNT) of Belize has been actively engaged in various initiatives from April 2023 to March 2024. Here are some key highlights:

- Trade Agreements - The NTNT has been negotiating and finalizing trade agreements with several countries to enhance Belize's trade relations and market access.
- Capacity Building - Numerous workshops and training sessions have been conducted to build the capacity of local businesses and stakeholders in understanding and leveraging trade agreements.
- Policy Development - The team has been involved in developing and updating trade policies to align with international standards and improve the ease of doing business in Belize.
- Stakeholder Engagement - Regular consultations with various stakeholders, including the private sector, government agencies, and civil society, have been a priority to ensure inclusive and comprehensive trade strategies.
- Trade Facilitation - Efforts have been made to streamline customs procedures and improve logistics to facilitate smoother and faster trade operations.

These initiatives are part of Belize's broader strategy to boost economic growth and integrate more effectively into the global economy.

The EDC is participant on various Sub-Committees of the NTNT including:

a. Technical Group for Investment Facilitation (TGIF)

The Government of Belize is actively pursuing expansion of trade within the region. The EDC contributes as part of this group - a sub-committee within the National Trade Negotiation Team supporting the review process of Bilateral Investment Treaties for Belize. The group has been active in negotiating with Guatemala and in discussions with Mexico.

The Government of Belize, Ministry of Foreign Trade has also engaged in political commitments with El Salvador to move negotiations forward towards finalizing a mutually beneficial trade agreement. Belize submitted a draft General Framework Agreement for the negotiation of a Partial Scope Agreement in November 2022. Comments were received from El Salvador, for consideration, and tentative timelines were established to finalize the Framework Agreement. In this reporting period, the EDC has been supporting in the negotiation procedures for this Partial Scope Agreement (PSA) with El Salvador, which are progressing well. The second round of negotiations is complete and significant progress has already been made. It is anticipated that the agreement will be concluded sometime this year.

This agreement aims to enhance trade relations between the two countries, promoting economic growth and cooperation. It is expected to create opportunities for increased trade, tourism, and agricultural collaboration.

- #### b. Investment Committee
- Under the Investment Committee, aimed at developing a multilateral framework on investment facilitation, the Economic Development Council (EDC) of Belize has been involved in the **World Trade Organization (WTO)** Investment Facilitation for Development (IFD)

agreement discussions over the past year. The EDC has participated in meetings and consultations assuring that Belize's interests and perspectives are represented in the negotiations. Our participation is crucial in shaping the agreement to better align with Belize's development goals and to attract sustainable investments that can drive economic growth and development. The negotiations reached a significant milestone in July 2023, with the finalization of the legal text of the agreement. This agreement is expected to benefit countries like Belize by attracting more sustainable and development-oriented investments.

A few key contributions and outcomes from Belize's participation are:

- i. **Advocacy for Transparency and Simplification:** The EDC has been a strong advocate for measures that enhance transparency and simplify investment procedures. This includes pushing for the publication of investment-related measures and the establishment of enquiry points to assist investors.
- ii. **Streamlining Administrative Processes:** Belize has emphasized the importance of streamlining and speeding up administrative procedures. This involves removing duplicative steps in approval processes and simplifying application procedures, which can significantly reduce the time and cost for investors.
- iii. **Capacity Building and Technical Assistance:** The EDC has highlighted the need for technical assistance and capacity-building initiatives to help Belize and other developing countries implement the IFD agreement effectively.
- iv. **Focus on Sustainable Investment:** Belize has been vocal about the importance of attracting sustainable and development-oriented investments. The EDC has worked to ensure that the agreement includes provisions that encourage responsible business conduct and investments that contribute to sustainable development.

These efforts have helped shape the final text of the IFD agreement, making it more aligned with the needs and priorities of developing countries like Belize. The agreement is expected to create a more conducive environment for foreign direct investment, which can drive economic growth and development in Belize.

2. Project BL-T1152 to Digitalize MSMEs, Belize Chamber of Commerce and Industry – IDB

In January 2023, the Belize Chamber of Commerce & Industry (BCCI) and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) Lab signed a Technical Cooperation Agreement for the project entitled "Promoting Sustainability and Driving Growth Through a MSME Digital Revolution in Belize". The project, valued at US\$638,000.00 and financed by both the IDB Lab and BCCI, is being implemented over a 30-month period.

The EDC-PPD team, as part of the Project Steering Committee, is supporting the execution of this important project. The objective of the project seeks to strategically drive digitalization in Belize's MSME sector to ensure the continuity of business operations and provide a gateway for MSMEs to realize the numerous advantages created through the implementation of digital transformation. The project has a focus on women-led MSMEs, through a program that combines technical assistance and financial support.

3. Belize Investment Summit

The Government of Belize (GoB) hosted the 2nd Belize Investment Summit (BIS) - a significant event aimed at showcasing Belize's potential as a prime investment destination. This 2-yearly economic initiative of the Government of Belize was initiated by the Office of the Prime Minister and the Ministry of Finance, Economic Development and Investment of Belize, with the convening of the Steering Committee comprised of the Investment Promotion and Compliance Unit (IPCU), the BELTRAIDE and the Economic Development Council (EDC), in early 2023.



“Belize Investment Summit 2023 – Endless Opportunities” took place on Ambergris Caye from August 30 to September 1, 2023. The purpose of the Summit being to accelerate investment growth aligned with the sustainable development goals; improve Belize’s fiscal position, reduce its debt burden, and improve economic prosperity.

Belize boasts exceptional and untapped growth potential and has a wealth of opportunities in many areas. The 2023 Summit focused on bringing support, investment, development, and growth opportunities, with a specific focus on the green, blue, and orange economies of Belize.

Some of the main outcomes of the Belize Investment Summit, 2023 included:

- Investment Opportunities - The summit emphasized various sectors ripe for investment, including renewable energy, agriculture, and the digitization of government services.
- Networking and Collaboration - The event provided a platform for networking among domestic and international investors, fostering potential collaborations and partnerships.
- Commitment of Government Support - Prime Minister John Briceño and other top officials underscored the government’s commitment to supporting strategic investments and improving service delivery to attract global investors.
- Industry-Specific Insights - Attendees benefited from presentations and panels that offered detailed insights into Belize’s current and future investment opportunities.
- Business Pitch Competition – A live business pitch competition, which facilitated potential collaborations between investors and provided an incentive to local businesses.

The Belize Investment Summit 2023 highlighted several key investment areas, focusing on sectors with significant growth potential. The main areas were:

- Green Economy - Investments in renewable energy and sustainable practices aiming to enhance Belize’s environmental sustainability.
- Blue Economy - This sector includes opportunities related to the ocean ecosystem, such as sustainable fisheries, marine conservation, and eco-tourism.
- Orange Economy - The creative industries, including arts, culture, and digital media, were highlighted as vibrant sectors for investment.
- Agritech - Innovations in agriculture technology to boost productivity and sustainability in farming practices.
- Tourism - Continued investment in tourism infrastructure and services to attract more visitors and enhance the overall experience.



- Global Digital Services - Expanding digital services and infrastructure to support global business operations and attract tech investments.
- Manufacturing - Opportunities in manufacturing, particularly in areas that leverage Belize's strategic location and resources.
- Ecosystem Services - Investments aimed at preserving and enhancing natural ecosystems, which are crucial for sustainable development.

These areas were chosen to leverage Belize's unique strengths and position the country as a competitive and attractive destination for global investors.

The Summit aimed to position Belize as an attractive and secure destination for sustainable investments, inviting investors worldwide to explore and engage with the country's vast potential. The next Belize Investment Summit will be held in 2025.

4. Science, Technology, and Innovation Advisory Committee (STIAC)

On January 12, 2024, a pro-tempore Science, Technology, and Innovation Advisory Committee (STIAC) was established. The purpose of the Committee is to guide the Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Technology (MoECST) in the development of Belize's first National Science, Technology, and Innovation Strategy (2024-2034).

With Dr Hon. Louis Zabaneh, Minister of State in the Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Technology (MoECST), serving as the chairperson of the STIAC, and representatives from the private, government, and academic sectors, with support from the Science and Technology Unit of the MoECST, UNDP, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, it is anticipated that the Strategy will enable Belize to prepare and move into the Fourth Industrial Revolution readily, with the goal of attaining sustainable human development.

The Public Private Dialogue Unit Executive Director, representing the Office of the Prime Minister, is Chair for the Innovation Sub-Committee and has been contributing to the development of this important science, technology, and innovation strategy for Belize.

5. National Financial Inclusion Strategy (NFIS)

The EDC sits on 2 of the National Financial Inclusion Strategy (NFIS) Task Forces. Task Force Four is focused on "Data Collection, Analysis and Reporting" and Task Force One focused on "Supporting ICT and Financial Infrastructure." Under the latter, the EDC was able to report on the successful completion of a Digital Signature Legislation which was developed through the support of funding from the Inter-American Bank under a



larger project titled “Leveraging Digital Technology to Improve the Business Climate in Belize.” This was enacted to enhance the acceleration of technology to support financial services.

6. E-governance Coordination (Digital Agenda)

The EDC has continued to support the country’s e-governance / digital agenda work, collaborating with the E-Governance and Digitalization Unit (EGDU) in the Ministry of Public Utilities, Energy, Logistics and E-Governance (MPUELE) and with other entities, during the reporting period on various initiatives and participation in stakeholder consultations.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

The Public Private Desk in the Office of the Prime Minister, secretariat to the Economic Development Council plays a significant role in the development of legislation or other matters of national importance, with a particular focus on those activities geared to maintaining and promoting an enhanced business environment in Belize. Government of Belize initiatives engaged in by our office, within the past year, have included:

1. The Designated Processing Areas (DPA) Legislative Amendments Stakeholder Consultation

On March 29, 2023, the Investment Policy, and Compliance Unit (IPCU) organized a consultation with companies benefiting from the DPA Act. Over 25 companies participated and expressed support for contemplated amendments to the DPA Act and Regulations. These amendments aimed to improve export-led growth and included new regulations specifically for aquaculture, global digital services, and the special border entertainment zone under the DPA.

The Economic Development Council (EDC) of Belize participated in the amendment process for the Designated Processing Areas (DPA) legislation. The EDC played a role in consultations and discussions related to the contemplated amendments, which aimed to enhance export-led growth and address specific sectors such as aquaculture and global digital services under the DPA Act.

2. ICR Consultations on Ambergris Caye

During this reporting period the Economic Development Council supported the Ministry of Economic Development with arranging ICR Consultations on Ambergris Caye. The ICR Consultancy has been actively involved in assessing the business environment for the tourism industry in North Ambergris Caye. A comprehensive report has been developed which includes a background on the intervention, acknowledging the need to study critical socio-environmental factors for sustainable growth, and a detailed methodology for the business environment assessment. The report highlights Ambergris Caye's strategic location and its significant tourism potential, being home to the Bacalar Chico National Park and Marine Reserve, a World Heritage Site, and the Hol Chan Marine Reserve.

The assessment covers various aspects such as the importance of the tourism sector for Ambergris Caye, the current state of the tourism industry, regulatory environment, infrastructure, human capital, and public-private dialogue. It also identifies investment areas and sectors of interest for tourism development. The intervention aims to establish a dialogue with key stakeholders to identify a development vision and strategies for North Ambergris Caye, increase knowledge regarding private investment plans, and address limitations to its implementation, including regulatory, infrastructure, and service improvement needs.

Furthermore, the ICR Consultancy has proposed recommendations to enable local authorities to reform key domains and prioritize actions for the sustainable development and growth of businesses on the island.

This initiative is part of a broader effort to support the sustainable development of Ambergris Caye through building a Sustainable Master Plan focused on the Northern area of the island.

3. International Collaboration

Maintaining positive and open communication with international partners operating within or outside of Belize, is part of the critical work of the EDC. These relationships support investment and economic growth as well as providing enabling opportunities for the public and private sector in Belize.

The World Bank's Country Partnership Framework agreement is a 5-year framework agreement through which the World Bank and the Government of Belize engage with each other; the Ministry of Finance (MOF) is the primary counterpart on behalf of the government. The previous **Country Partnership Framework (CPF)** for Belize covers the period 2018-2022. It presents the World Bank Group's program to support Belize in strengthening its economic resilience. The CPF agreement lays out the objectives and areas of work in which the WB is engaging in Belize, which are formulated based on Belize's stakeholders' input. The EDC, at its regular meeting in January 2024, participated in discussions with the World Bank as part of the new CPF Agreement stakeholder consultations. The PPD-EDC has also participated in the review of the Belize final draft Emergency Preparedness & Response (EP&R) Assessment.



4. Enhancing Trade and Investment Abroad

As part of enhancing trade and investment through Belize's diplomatic representation abroad, the EDC has improved engagement with them and has provided support to representation events during the period of this report.

The EDC served as a liaison between the Belize High Commission in London and Belizean entities, providing input to preparations for Belize to be well represented at the LACBEF, by the High Commission and high-ranking Government of Belize delegates.

- LACBEF - An Ireland-Latin America and the Caribbean Business and Economic Forum (LACBEF) was held on November 21, 2023, in Dublin Castle. The event, themed "Ireland and LAC – Expanding Opportunity," aimed to foster dialogue on business trends and opportunities between Ireland and the Latin America and Caribbean (LAC).

The forum featured over 250 attendees from both public and private sectors, including high-level representatives from various LAC countries. It was a significant step in Ireland's strategy to strengthen economic relations with the LAC region, showcasing innovation and potential for future growth across multiple sectors.

In addition to learning about Ireland’s strategy for the LAC region, the event provided a two-way opportunity for Ireland and Belize and other countries represented, to explore the potential of deepening linkages in trade, tourism, education, and research innovation. Ireland is specifically interested in exploring the potential to use its expertise on best practice policy in education and innovation and for trade and investment linkages in tourism, agri-food trade (dairy and meat sectors specifically) and projects that align and benefit from a digital alliance, green and circular economy focus.

- United Kingdom – The UK-Caribbean Trade and Investment Forum held on November 28, 2023, in London was organized in partnership with UK Export Finance and Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office. This Inaugural Summit, designed to encourage trade with, and attract investment into Caribbean economies, offered Belize and 14 Caribbean nations with the opportunity to present bankable projects.



Courtesy of Belize High Commission, London, and Launchpad Consulting

The Belize High Commissioner in London and Hon. Michel Chebat, Minister of Public Utilities, Energy, Logistics and E-Governance, participated in the Forum which focused on strengthening trade and investment ties between the UK and Caribbean nations. There was a significant level of interest in activities occurring in the blue and green economies and the potential to engage UK investors in those activities. The event brought together government officials, business leaders, and investors to discuss opportunities for economic collaboration and development.

Public Private Dialogue

The Economic Development Council (EDC) is supported by a secretariat, the Public Private Dialogue Unit in the Office of the Prime Minister, with the mission of “*Creating Opportunities through **Dialogue, Partnership and Reforms.***” The impetus on targeting and strengthening the public and private sector linkages and opportunities, during the period April 2023 to March 2024 continued, with the PPD Unit participating in other meetings and events:

1. **The Economic Development Council**, comprised of 7 private sector and 7 public sector representatives, were apprised of, and deliberated on various issues in their regular meetings, during the past year. These issues included:
 - a. “Front of Package Nutrition Label” system being developed by the Belize Bureau of Standards
 - b. Modernization of Belize’s Debt Resolution Regime
 - c. Belize Investment and Business Climate Action Plan
 - d. Belize Investment Summit 2023
 - e. MSME Roadshow 2024
 - f. Buy Belize Campaign
 - g. Orange Economy Ecosystem Strengthening and Access to Finance
 - h. BPO Higher Tier Services Initiative
 - i. Collaboration with diplomatic missions (Made in Belize Campaign)

2. Field Visits

With a view to enhanced responsiveness and support to private sector development needs and national economic growth through a various sectoral lens, the EDC Secretariat undertakes field visits on a regular basis to conduct preliminary assessment of the potential development areas.

During the period April 2023 to March 2024, site visits were undertaken to the ITVET Orange Walk - Following discussions with Orange Walk ITVET leadership on the institution’s development plans and challenges, the PPD-EDC was invited to visit the school and to attend the ITVET’s trade expo on April 28, 2023.



3. Meetings

Sub-Regional Policy Dialogue on Ecosystems of Entrepreneurship and Innovation

The Executive Director of the PPD-EDC attended the IDB Compete Caribbean’s 2023 Sub-Regional Policy Dialogue on Ecosystems of Entrepreneurship and Innovation Workshop held in Kingston, Jamaica from October 18 - 19, 2023, where he made a presentation on the topic “Role of the Business and Innovation Legal and Regulatory Framework in promoting innovative entrepreneurship – opportunities and challenges”, as it relates to the Belize environment.

iii. LESSONS LEARNT

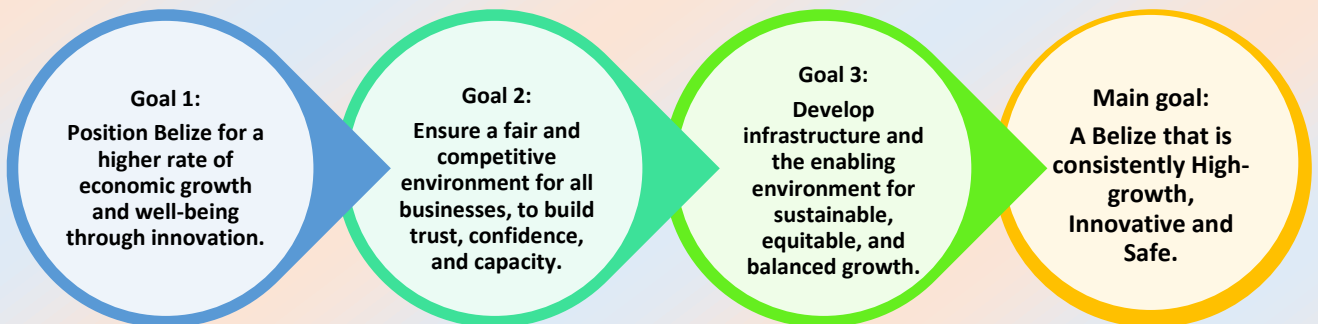
Challenges	Lessons Learned
Preparing, managing, and reinforcing change within institutions.	Coordination with the key public sector stakeholders to take ownership and drive reform.
Collaboration in sharing of public data from Government Ministries.	Engaging institutions at all levels through multiple platforms of communication. Create greater awareness of the Public Sector Data Sharing Legislation is needed.
The use of more dynamic and modern mechanisms and technology that support institutional knowledge and transfer.	Developing more interactive communication tools to communicate with and meet the needs of our stakeholders more effectively.

iv. FUTURE PLANS AND PRIORITY AREAS

The EDC’s Strategic Plan is focused on continuing to deliver on key priority reforms, aligned with the Medium-Term Development Plan - #planBelize - commitments vis-à-vis ease of doing business initiatives. Through the ongoing implementation of its strategic plan the EDC has been able to solidify its reform process and identify LESSONS LEARNT since its establishment. However, there is the need to expand the EDC’s mandate and to refine it to focus more, as recommended by its Council, on impacting Belize’s productive development through strategic policy and legislative reform.

The Economic Development Council (EDC) Strategic Plan has the overarching goal of contributing towards **“A Belize that is consistently High-growth, Innovative and Safe, through Proactive Leadership that**

Champions Change and Innovation.” The approved plan has 5 strategic goals and is accompanied by a work plan comprised of 54 key activities for implementation. Some of these interventions are referred to / are enconced within the merged strategies into BIBCAP and an exercise will be conducted to streamline the EDC Strategic Plan to create efficiency in implementing our program of activities.



The PPD Projects Unit and Support Staff

The Public Private Desk, Secretariat to the Economic Development Council, is staffed with an Executive Director, Project Coordinator, Project Officer and a Communication and Administration Officer. This resolute and dynamic team has been focusing on the strengthening and collaboration between private and public sectors through meaningful dialogue, and by facilitating economic development through the oversight of implemented reforms that improve doing business in Belize.

All members of the team have been privileged to engage in one or more professional development training courses that will enable enhanced contribution in the workplace. During the past year, training was undertaken in various areas including “Project Management & MS Project Basics,” “Effective Communication for NTFC Members,” “Capacity Building in Legal Drafting,” and a “Public Policy Analysis” online certificate course from the London School of Economics and Political Science. Continuous professional development is key for the Unit to continue to remain equipped to support new and trending environmental changes.

The EDC has over the course of its existence delivered on significant business climate reform accomplishments through continuous dialogue between public and private sectors with the primary aim of steering reforms within the Government of Belize to improve processes, systems and public services impacting the investor and business climates. The EDC’s secretariat (the PPD team) will also continue their donor engagement and coordination efforts with agencies such as the IDB for securing grant funds for projects that will have social and economic impact in Belize. The PPD-EDC’s extensive collaboration with the other Units within the Office of the Prime Minister will continue for continuously enhanced effectiveness of the Government of Belize’s development strategies.

V. Investment Policy and Compliance Unit (IPCU)

i. INTRODUCTION



Belize is a developing nation and there are various key elements that need to be improved to encourage and facilitate private investment in the country and contribute to the sustainable development of the economy and people. When the National Investment Policy and Strategy was created in 2022, the priority sectors identified were:

- “Tourism & Leisure,” including medical, cultural, nature-based, sun & beach, cruise and nautical and leisure/entertainment
- “Agriculture, Agribusiness and Agroprocessing”
- “Marine fisheries and aquaculture, blue economy”
- “(Light) Manufacturing”
- “Sustainable renewable energy, biofuels, Green infrastructures.”
- “Information Technology and export services,” including business process outsourcing (BPO), Professional services, real estate, logistics, Internet, and communication services.

The IPCU within the Ministry of Investment is mandated to develop policies designed to grow these priority sectors.

The IPCU was established in 2005 under the Ministry of National Development, Investment and Culture. Portfolios regulated by the IPCU included: Export Processing Zones (EPZ), Gaming, Lotteries (in tandem with the Treasury Department), and Fiscal Incentives (in tandem with Beltraide). In 2008 the IPCU was placed under the Ministry of Economic Development, and it administered the same Investment portfolios as previously under the Ministry of National Development. The IPCU thereafter was placed under the Ministry of Investment, Trade and Commerce.

In the end of year 2020, The Ministry of Finance, Economic Development and Investment was created under a new administration. After the re-structuring of the Ministry, it was determined that there is a need for the IPCU to focus more broadly on Investment policy development and enhancement, compliance for the Fiscal Incentive, Designated Processing Areas (previously Export Processing Zones), Gaming and Lotteries programs, project development relevant to improving the investment climate in Belize, technical assessments in all areas under the Ministry’s responsibility and other related investment climate policy initiatives.

With this need in mind, the original Unit evolved into the Ministry’s IPCU, with a much broader focus on policy planning and development, special project and program development and implementation, performance measurement of private proposals to Government, and compliance incentive regulations.

The original mandate and functions of the IPCU have evolved with a much broader focus. The key functions of the IPCU are:

- Provide investment policy planning, development, and guidelines
- Provide oversight on compliance with Investment Incentive Programs (Fiscal Incentives, Designated Processing Areas)
- Provide Policy guidelines for the Gaming and Lotteries Programs

- Ensure compliance with Gaming & Lotteries Policy and Revenue expectations from gaming operators
- Research emerging sectors and investment opportunities and develop respective policy
- Report on, review and update Investment Incentive Programs
- Conduct assessments on proposed investments for the programs mentioned above and other larger private investment/projects forwarded to Cabinet
- Performance measurement of private proposals to Government
- Conduct assessments on proposed investments for the DPA, FI, Gaming and Lotteries programs
- Special investment project and program development and implementation

Administrative changes undertaken:

1. To move forward, IPCU is at a crossroads where change and transformation is critical to its future. This requires a new mindset for future development and growth.
2. The modernization of the IPCU is a key element of a future designed to provide a client centric service and culture while enforcing compliance with the laws.
3. The process of talent development requires a restructuring of some of the key positions to manage with a high degree of accountability and efficiency. While one organization chart is proposed this will require various iterations over the years to promote an agile approach for future growth.
4. The separation of the service component which includes the inquiry, applications, and renewals for service away from the compliance of the regulations is critical to an efficient implementation at operational level.
5. The introduction of a project-oriented approach to the many challenges arising from *ad hoc* and unplanned activities placed on IPCU especially with the many initiatives promoted by Plan Belize which drives the country's strategy.

IPCU Talent (Reorganization)

The organization chart and the level of human resources that existed were not able to meet the demands of the future. The recent organigram fills the talent gap. The critical components will be time, resources, and the prioritization process. Key initiatives include:

1. Modernization
2. Client centric service and culture
3. Separation of Operations from Enforcement
4. Gaming and Lotteries restructuring
5. Upgrade of Admin roles and responsibilities

IPCU Organogram and Responsibilities

The core IPCU now includes the following sections:

- i) Administration and HR
- ii) Policy
- iii) Operations, and
- iv) Legal and Enforcement

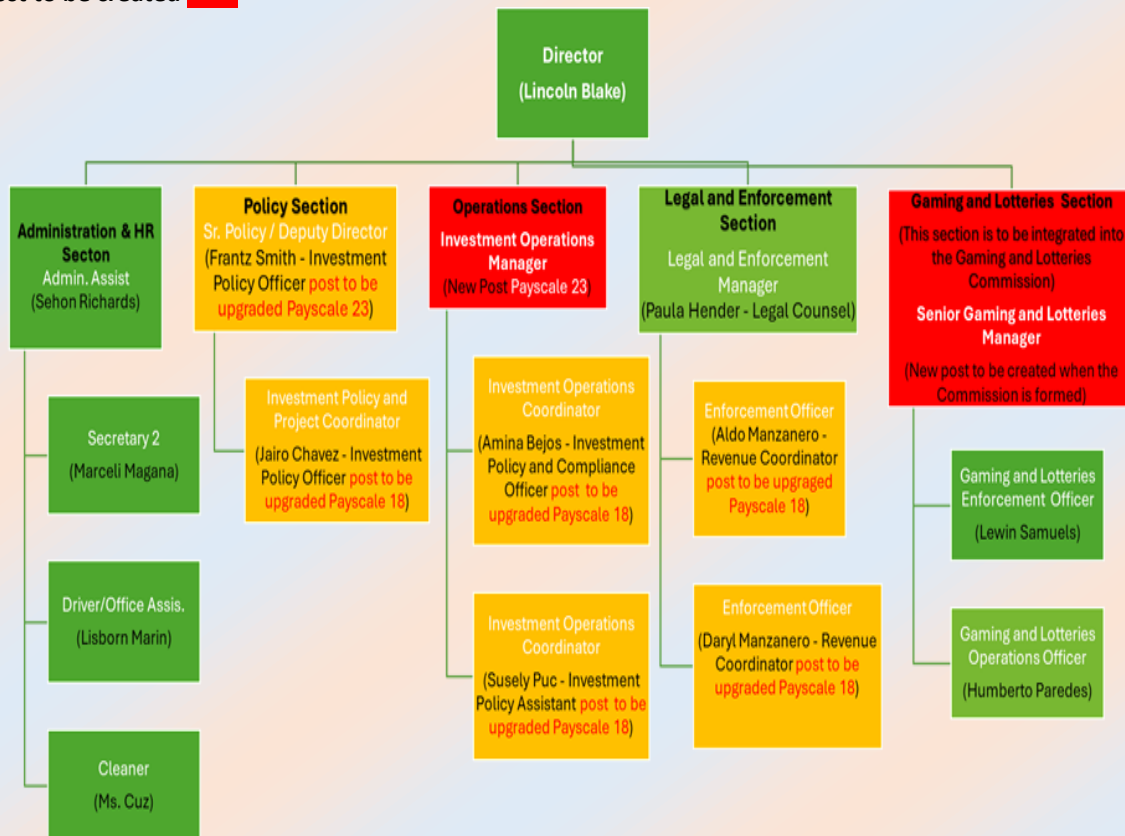
The Legal and Enforcement Section is headed by Legal Counsel, Paula Hender. The Gaming Lotteries Section is not a core IPCU section anymore, because this section will transition into the Gaming and Lotteries Commission. Posts for that section have been filled with personnel under contract. The proposed upgrades

and new posts being created have been forwarded to the Ministry of the Public Service’s Job Classification Unit.

Existing Post **Exist**

Post proposed for upgrade **New**

New Post to be created **■**



Mission statement and Priorities of the IPCU

VISION

The overall Vision of the IPCU is to contribute in the sustainable (Financial and Environmental) economic growth of Belize.

MISSION

1. Develop and monitor investment policy and incentive programs.
2. Monitor and assist in the improvement of the investment climate.
3. Ensure that investors fully comply with relevant incentive programmes’ regulations; and
4. Optimize economic benefits and employment obtained from private investments without compromising their sustainability.

Alignment with Plan Belize- Medium Term Development Strategy (MTDS)

	Policy Action (MTDS)	IPCU Corresponding Initiatives
1	Fast Track Private Sector Investments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DPA Protocols, Processes and Legislation Streamlining and administrative adjustments • FI Protocols, Processes and Legislation Streamlining and administrative adjustments • Turnaround time monitoring • FI Act has been amended to offer special incentive tools to MSMEs such as: multiyear duty exemptions for up to \$1 million, One Off duty exemptions which are for one time duty exemption requests, Business Tax Registration Amnesty program, MSME procurement program which GOB has earmarked 20% of its goods and services it consumes to registered MSMEs. • IPCU Modernization Project to monitor turnaround time of applications
2	Fast track private sector investments including requiring regulatory authorities and departments, to review and determine applications in real time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with relevant department such as DOE, CBA, Customs and Excise, Belize Tax Service, Ministry of Finance, Immigration, Labour, FIU and INTERPOL for investor background checks, Ministry of Agriculture and BAHA to facilitate and reduce turnaround time of clearances which affect implementation of private investment projects. • Implementation of the Belize National Investment Policy and Strategy (BNIPS) • Participating in the NEAC and in its reform measures
3	Reduce business tax on businesses engaged in export of goods or services to 1.5%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through the amendment of the Designated Processing Areas Act a tax on chargeable income (net income) of 1.75% is being implemented for all DPA companies.
4	Support local production and manufacturing by zero rating for GST purposes processed and unprocessed local produce and derivatives and charge standard 12.5% GST on import substitutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A brainstorming session is being planned by the IPCU to propose an initiative to executive of the Ministry of Investment to undertake this task.
5	Allow Belizeans and Belizean businesses to open US\$ accounts in Belize	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DPA companies are allowed to open US\$ bank accounts in Belize
6	Increased lending to export-oriented foreign exchange generating sectors and to small and medium enterprises (SMEs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secured Transactions and Collateral Registry (STCR) was conceptualized by the IPCU through the assistance of the World Bank's IFC, and funding was sought and found through the Financial Services Commission (FSC) • Implementation of the Corozal Economic Development Master

		Plan through the Corozal Think Tank
7	Facilitate and encourage investment and trading on international trading platforms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The IPCU forms part of the TNT and TTT which are responsible to negotiate trade agreements on behalf of Belize. The IPCU is the lead negotiator for the Investment Chapter of the trade agreements the country decides to undertake. • The Ministry of Investment has signed an MOU with the State of Quintana Roo in Mexico regarding investment initiatives and is in the process to implement it in partnership with the Belize Embassy in Mexico. • Working on a Bilateral Investment Treaty with Qatar, Taiwan, and El Salvador. • Working with the Belize Tax Service to prepare a Double Taxation Treaty with Taiwan and El Salvador
8	Given the limited foreign exchange reserves, particular focus will be given to supporting and enhancing tourism, agriculture and other export-oriented foreign exchange generating sectors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The FI Act has been amended to expand the priority sectors that are able to apply for incentives. • The DPA Act is being amended and specific regulations have been drafted for the Global Digital Services sector, the Aquaculture Sector, and a Special Entertainment Zone is to be in the Belize Mexico Border in Santa Elena, Corozal. The Special Entertainment Zone will facilitate not only entertainment activities but also logistics to accommodate the establishment of the Tren Maya that should have a station just across the border. • Participate in the Belize Ocean Spatial Plan Committee to support the development of the Blue Economy.
9	Establish a National Jobs Centre to act as a job skills registry, provide job search service and workforce development services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with the Labour Department on the Global Digital Services Policy and Strategy and the Higher Tier Services for the BPO sector project.
10	In the tourism sector, bring back at least 20,000 jobs by 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The amended FI Act to expand the priority sectors allows new activities most of which are in the tourism sector or are ancillary to it. • The DPA Act regulation for Special Entertainment Zone has as its objective to attract visitors from Mexico and access tourist visits the Mexican Riviera Maya through the Tren Maya. • The IPCU had prepared a concept to exempt the exit tax for Mexican of the 5 southern Mexican states of Mexico to facilitate more visitors to especially the northern districts of Corozal and Orange Walk. • Several tourism projects applied through the FI program for incentives and were supported by the IPCU, Beltraide and the Ministry.
11	In the services and technology sector, generate 20,000 jobs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The identification of funding and implementation of the Global Digital Services Policy and Strategy • Qualified for funding for the Higher Tier Services for BPOs and its ongoing implementation • Several BPO investments applied through the DPA program for

		<p>incentives and were supported by the IPCU, Beltraide and the Ministry.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DPA Act has been amended and specific regulations were drafted for the BPO sector which will now be called the Global Digital Services Sector • In the agriculture sector, generate more than 30,000 jobs. • Several agriculture and agro-processing companies and investments applied through the DPA program, FI program or One Off - Ministry of Finance for incentives and were supported by the IPCU, Beltraide and the Ministry.
12	Support MSMEs to create 5,000 new jobs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The BNIPS has been amended to include the MSME policy • The FI Act has been amended to accommodate more incentives for MSMEs and to streamline the process to make it easier to apply. • Emerging Sectors are being stimulated through small projects prepared and implemented by IPCU: the Vanilla Training projects, Animation training, Cell Phone repair, and Agro processing projects.
13	Eliminate environmental tax on inputs for products manufactured in Belize Zero rate import of capital goods and equipment and intermediary products for export or productive sector or manufacturing businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding has been identified for an Industrial Strategy with Green and Blue Industrial Policies
14	Index at least \$10 million from 'sin taxes' (cigarettes, alcohol, sweetened products) directly to NHI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of the establishment of a Gaming and Lotteries Commission that will properly monitor gaming and lottery revenues, and the taxes that are to be paid to Government. • Increase Gaming and Lotteries Tax to assist in funding NHI • Assisted in the start-up of the Belize Government Lotteries Limited

ii. MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS

Designated Processing Areas Program (DPA)

The IPCU serves as the Secretariat to the Designated Processing Areas Committee (DPAC) and administers, in conjunction with Beltraide, procedures to accept and process DPA applications, duty or tax exemption requests and compliance procedures in a manner that adheres to the DPA Act and Regulations. Applications are processed by the IPCU once submitted by Beltraide. An eligibility criteria assessment, benefit to cost assessment, due diligence check of beneficial owners is completed with the assistance of the FIU and Interpol; site visit reports and recommendations are forwarded to the executive and tabled to the DPAC. Today there are 46 companies in the DPA program.

DPAC Members appointed for the period February 15, 2023, to February 14, 2025:

Mr. Gilbert Canton Jr.	Chairman and representative of the Industrial Sector
Mrs. Narda Garcia	Representative of the Ministry with responsibility for Designated Processing Areas
Mr. Valentino Shal	Representative of the Ministry with responsibility for Labour
Mr. Duane Belisle	Representative of the Ministry with responsibility for Economic Development
Mr. Joseph Waight	Representative of the Ministry of Finance
Mr. Servulo Baeza	Representative of the Ministry with responsibility for Agriculture
Mr. Emile Mena	Representative from the Belize Chamber of Commerce and Industry
Mr. Naresh Punwani	Representative from the Special Designated Processing Areas
Ms. Nubia Ramirez	Representative from the Special Designated Processing Areas
Mr. Tomas Serrut	Representative from the Services Sector

DPA Achievements for Fiscal year 2023-2024

Five New DPA Applications Approved and Processed		
1	Think Teck Limited (Data Processing IT Enable Services - Priority Sector)	A special DPA status to provide services such as application development, IT solutions, cloud migration, software solutions, database and other related BPO services. They are seeking a 10-year exemption under the Data Enabled Services which will now be the Global Digital Services priority sector in the new legislation. The company will operate in San Ignacio, Cayo District. The location will be just an office space for their administrative section since they implement the work from home model. They currently have 25 contractors and intend to increase the number of contractors to one hundred over the next 5 years. The company is certified by Amazon Web Services, Azure and other cloud services. It will invest \$350,000.
2	Peak Outsourcing International BLZ Limited (Data Processing IT Enable Services - Priority Sector)	A special DPA status to provide services such as data processing including BPO, KPO and ITO. Peak Outsourcing is operating in Belize City. It currently has 47 employees and intends to increase this to 500 employees over the next 5 years. Peak has invested to date over \$450,000 and intends to invest an additional \$1.7 million over the next 5-year period.
3	Teleperformance Belize Ltd (Data Processing IT Enable Services - Priority Sector)	A special DPA status to provide services such as customer acquisition management, customer care, technical support, social media services, and other BPO related services. Teleperformance will operate in Belize City. Teleperformance expects to have 1,000 employees within 3 years of operation. The company projects to invest BZ\$10,740,000.00.
4	Customer HD Limited (Data Processing IT Enable Services - Priority Sector)	A special DPA status to provide customer support, technical support for networking issues for client hardware, HIPAA compliant support for healthcare lab results, order status and returns processing, voice mail support, email support, texting/SMS and chat support. Customer HD Limited has been operating since October 2021 and is seeking designation at their two operating locations. They currently have 450 employees and intend to employ 930 by

		year 2. Customer HD has invested to date over BZ\$1.5 million and intends to invest an additional BZ\$6 million over the next 10- year period.
5	Go Answer Belize Limited (Data Processing IT Enable Services - Priority Sector)	A special DPA status to provide inbound customer service via telephone, email chat, mail correspondence and SMS, legal intake, outbound campaigns, real estate management, environmental services, pharmaceutical and retail/e-commerce. Go Answer will operate in Belmopan City, Cayo District. Current employment is at 58 agents and projects to employ 782 by year 2032. Capital investment projected for the 10-year period is one million Belize dollars.
4 Variation Application Approved and Processed		
1	The Office Gurus Limited (Data Processing IT Enable Services - Priority Sector)	A variation application to amend its designated area. The company is seeking to increase its designated area in three locations, which include: #18 Street, Joseph Andrews Drive, San Ignacio Town; office building located at #2 Barton Creek Street, Belmopan; and a newly expanded location at #18 Bliss Parade, (David McKoy Business Center), Belmopan. The company has invested over BZ \$10 million and plans to invest an additional BZ\$ 5 million over the next 5 years. It currently employs 1,878 employees and expects to increase to 2,734 by year 2026.
	Travellers International Limited (Manufacturing Priority Sector)	A DPA status in the manufacturing priority sector to age and market rum for the international market. At the time of transitioning into the DPA program it was noticed that there was an error on the land documents and the designated area was incorrect. The company was required to amend their land documents, ECP, map location and site layout. They were also informed that they were required to resubmit the application with the correct parcel number and relevant documents. Travellers has now submitted a variation application to amend its designated area and its certificate of compliance to include the blending of rum.
	Infotel International Limited (Data Processing IT Enable Services - Priority Sector)	A variation application to amend its designated area. They are requesting to change their designated area from No. 160 Newtown Barracks, 2nd floor, Pickwick building to six suites in the Keystone building located on 304 Newtown Barracks, Beliz City. The company provides services such as processing of data, telemarketing, customer services support, and other call centre related services. They cater to American insurance and banking services. Infotel currently has 300 employees and expect to have 327 by year 2027. The capital investment projected was BZ\$3 million.
	Oristech Belize Limited (Data Processing IT Enable Services - Priority Sector)	Oristech engages in the processing of data and voice such as medical transcription, voice recognition, report editing, document support record sorting and summarization under the Data Processing/Information Technology Enabled Services priority sector. They have now submitted a variation application to amend its designated area. They are requesting to expand their designated area to include a new site. The company is operating in San Ignacio Town, Cayo District. The company has invested to date BZ\$225,000.00 and plans to invest an additional BZ\$375,000.00 over the next five years. Current employment is 185 agents and expect to increase to 300 by year 2027.

2 DPA renewal applications approved and processed	
Ready Call Center Limited (Data Processing IT Enable Services - Priority Sector)	Ready Call Center applied to renew its DPA status. It is one of the largest BPO companies in Belize which operates from Belize City. It is expanding its operations to include 3 more locations in Belize City, 1 in Orange Walk Town, and 2 in San Ignacio. This expansion is to increase the number of employees from 2,500 to 4,000.
Royal Mayan Shrimp Farms Ltd.'s (Aquaculture Priority Sector)	The company requested for an extension of their DPA status and was granted the extension of their benefits until December 31, 2021. They further requested for another extension which was approved and expired on December 31st, 2022. Royal Mayan Shrimp Farms has now submitted a renewal application to engage in the culturing and processing of shrimp. RMSFL has changed the dynamics of the industry and is seeking a 10-year exemption under the Aquaculture priority sector to reinvest in an intensive system, which is made up of small 1 acre, lined, aerated, centre-drained ponds. The company is in Independence village, Stann Creek District. To date the company has invested \$1 million and will invest an additional \$2 million over the next 5 years. They currently have 25 employees and intend to increase to 100 employees over the next 10 years.

Other Key DPA Activities Achieved

- The IPCU legal counsel and technical officers prepared the draft DPA Amendment Act and its Regulations. A cabinet paper was prepared and forwarded to Cabinet for approval.
- A total of \$134,076.65 was collected in Industrial Roof Space fee and \$32,500.00 DPA non-refundable application fee and \$92,500.00 for application processing fee collected for FY 2022 -2024.
- 11 DPA companies submitted a request to be granted DPA duty free fuel quota as allowed by the DPA legislation. To process the applications, the IPCU assesses the historical usage of fuel of the company and weighs it against its production for the past year and then analyses the production that is being projected before a recommendation is made for approval.
- 4 DPA conditional approvals were processed that allow BPO companies needing to expand their current space of operation within a short time due to new campaigns being undertaken. These requests are accommodated and given priority because it means that additional employment is being generated in the location where the BPO is located.
- 11 DPAs were measured to identify the actual Industrial Roof Space (IRS) area. The IPCU conducts a site visit of the DPA designated area and measures the built area of the designation to calculate the IRS. The IPCU uses the definition of IRS in the act to finalize the calculation.
- The IPCU processed 32 requests from DPA companies red flagged by Beltraide. The Unit's staff reviewed whether the items being imported and requested for Duty waiver are intimately related to the activities approved by the DPAC.

Fiscal Incentives and Gaming Activities for Fiscal Year 2022-2023

Program / Project Title: FISCAL INCENTIVES (FI)		
<p>There are a total of 41 companies operating within the FI Program and are administered by both the IPCU and Beltraide.</p> <p>The IPCU engages in assessment of applications and compliance activities of the program. Applications are processed by the IPCU once submitted by Beltraide. The Unit prepares assessments of applications, revenue neutrality and benefit to cost assessments, due diligence check of beneficial owners is completed with the assistance of the FIU and Interpol, site visit reports and recommendations are forwarded to the Minister for a decision.</p>	Key Legislative and Policy work included:	1
	New applications: <u>2023</u> 1. HNH Company Limited 2. Belize Hotel Limited 3. Gallon Jug Agro Industry Limited 4. Hidden Valley Inn Limited 5. Point Beach Resort Limited (MSME) 6. Works Belizean Holdings Limited 7. Banks at Sleeping Giant Limited 8. Villas at Coco Plum Limited 9. Crop Solutions	9
	Application in process: 1. On the Go Auto Rental 2. Caribbean Inspired Development Limited 3. Caye Chapel Co. Limited 4. Sri Luck Plastics Ltd	4
	Renewal Applications 1. Safari Limited 2. Tropic Air Limited	2
	Variation Applications 1. Royal Kahal Limited	1
	One Off Applications processed	2
<p>Fiscal Incentive Act was signed into law on March 3rd, 2023. The legislation underwent substantial amendments to streamline the fiscal incentive programme, improve the regulatory functions, allow foreign companies to apply for incentives; offer new fiscal incentives such as One Off, Procurement earmarking, MSME formalization, MSME duty exemption; and improve access to incentives for MSMEs.</p>		
Program / Project Title: GAMING		
<p>The IPCU is responsible for ensuring compliance with the Gaming Control Act and functions as the secretariat of the Gaming Control Board. It processes applications, conducts background checks on principals, conducts compliance site visits and issues licenses on behalf of the Gaming Control Board. The Unit also processes applications to import gaming</p>	Approved Gaming Premise Licenses: 1. Princess Entertainment Free Zone Limited 2. Princess Vegas Entertainment Limited 3. Princess Entertainment Belize Limited 4. Princess International San Ignacio Limited 5. Casino Tropicana Company Limited	7

machines and gaming tables, move gaming machines and gaming tables within a casino's premises, and dispose of Gaming machines.	6. GMK Sky Limited 7. San Pedro Partner's Limited	
	Approved Gaming Online Licenses:	1
	Approved Gaming Machine Licenses	340 machines 26 gaming establishments
	Gaming Control Board Meetings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May 26, 2023 • August 3, 2023 • October 5, 2023 • November 15, 2023 • December 04, 2023 • March 27, 2024 	6
	Revenue generation (gaming fees): From across Gaming Premises New Applications; Gaming Establishment New Applications; Gaming Establishments; Gaming Premises (Casino); Gaming Machine Movement and Imports. Other activities include Online Gaming and Fines but revenues for these remained at 0.	\$1,834,800.00
	A total of 10 import licenses were processed for 253 gaming machines. A total of 466 gaming machines were moved and 46 gaming machines were destroyed during this fiscal year.	
<p>Other Activities</p> <p>Illegal Gaming: The IPCU is currently investigating 1 reported case of Online Gaming. Currently no license has been approved by the Gaming control Board to operate any Online Gaming License.</p> <p>Gaming and Lotteries Commission</p> <p>The IPCU has gotten budgetary approval to establish the Gaming and Lotteries Commission that is to be staffed with trained professionals and equipped with the tools and technology for proper monitoring and audit of casino and lottery operators and testing of gaming and lottery equipment and systems. Two persons have been contracted and are being trained to start the transition to establish the Commission.</p> <p>This IPCU legal counsel has started drafting the Gaming and Lotteries Commission Act. The new Act will amalgamate the Gaming Control Act and Lotteries Control Act</p>		
Program / Project Title: LOTTERIES		
The IPCU acts as secretariat of the Lotteries working with the Lotteries Secretary who is now established within the IPCU. But day to day supervision of the Government Lottery	Lotteries Committee Meetings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • April 20, 2023 • April 25, 2023 • July 06, 2023 • August 17, 2023 	7

draws is conducted by representatives of the Treasury Department which also collects the stipulated fees and taxes along with the Belize Tax Service. The Ministry of Investment’s CEO is the Chairperson of the Lotteries Committee.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> September 28, 2023 October 05, 2023 February 1, 2024 	
	<p>Lottery Activities: To date there are a total of 5 companies with clearance to operate but without a license. License is pending compliance on specific issues.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 369 Gaming Company Limited – Pick 3 – approved subject to conditions Caribbean Gaming Co. Ltd. - Fantasy 5 – approved to conditions JD Financials Belize Limited - Mega Bingo – approved Lucky Dalla Limited- Scratch and Win – being reviewed 	
	Lottery License Revenues	\$125,000.00
Other Investment Activities		
One Off Duty Exemption Requests	The IPCU processed 20 One Off Duty Exemption requests. These requests are processed and submitted to Ministry of Finance because the request comes from companies or persons that are in process to receive a DPA or FI status, or companies with an incentive that are requesting for goods that do not qualify for duty exemption under the program. The process includes the calculation of the revenue forgone by government and compliance with other requirements.	
Policy Papers Drafted	<p>Cabinet Paper #1: Exemption of Exit Tax for 5 states of southern Mexico- The purpose of this paper was to request Cabinet’s consideration of an initiative to facilitate an increase of visitors from the Mexican states of Campeche, Yucatan, Tabasco, Chiapas, and Quintana Roo to Belize by making it easier for them to cross the Belize Mexico border in Santa Elena, Corozal. Cabinet approved the paper and its recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remove the border exit taxes (Border Development Fee, Conservation fee, and the Belize Departure Tax) for up to 7 days stay in Belize for all persons residing in Mexican states of Campeche, Yucatan, Tabasco, Chiapas, and Quintana Roo. The visitor’s border card offered only to residents from Othon P. Blanco, Quintana Roo be extended to all residents from the Mexican states of Campeche, Yucatan, Tabasco, Chiapas, and Quintana Roo with no charge, and the card is to be issued in one day and valid for 2 years. Increase the stay with the border card from 3 days to 7 days. Any person with a border card from the Mexican states of Campeche, Yucatan, Tabasco, Chiapas, and Quintana Roo visiting Belize will be able to travel with his/her 	

private vehicle with no charges of import duties, fees, or levies.

- Establish a website with all the information and advertise the tax exemptions and visitor's card to residents of the Mexican states of Campeche, Yucatan, Tabasco, Chiapas, and Quintana Roo; and
- Insurance and OIRSA spraying fees will still be required from all visitors including from the Mexican states of Campeche, Yucatan, Tabasco, Chiapas, and Quintana Roo.

Cabinet Paper #2:

Amendments to the DPA Act and Regulations - The IPCU prepared a Cabinet memorandum seeking Cabinet's approval of amendments to the Designated Processing Areas (DPA) Act and its draft Regulations. The proposed legislative amendments aim to continue assisting the main growth sectors in the DPA program. These being the Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) or Global Digital Services which had much potential to grow even more, Aquaculture with the need of assistance to ensure its survival, and the Special Border Entertainment Zone which also has a potential to develop with much success. After the first draft of the amendments to the DPA Act and regulations was complete, consultations were carried out with relevant Government regulators and beneficiaries. The first consultation was held with regulators on 24th March 2023. A second consultation was held on 29th March 2023 with beneficiaries, and a third consultation was held on 5th December 2023 with all stakeholders. The draft legislation is at the Attorney General's Ministry for legal review and forwarding to the National Assembly for approval.

Cabinet Paper #3:

Amendments to the FI Act to update the definition of an MSME - The purpose of this memorandum was to seek Cabinet's approval to revise the definition of Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSME) in the Fiscal Incentive Act. In a meeting with the World Bank, Belize was informed of the opportunity to access additional funding for MSME financing, if its definition was consistent with that of the International Finance Corporation (IFC), the private sector arm of the World Bank.

Cabinet Paper #4: Development of a Secured Transactions Law and Policy

The IPCU reviewed and made recommendations to the paper that was prepared by the Financial Services Commission that proposed legislation to develop a Secured Transactions Law and Policy. The Moveable Property Security Rights Bill aims to mitigate lending risks, improve access to finance for MSMEs, establish an efficient and

	affordable regime for creating and registering proprietary moveable asset security rights, define the parameters of proprietary rights arising from granted security, ensure effective enforcement of security measures, maintain the enforceability of security rights in insolvency scenarios, keep costs manageable, and ensure accessibility to security for all types of movable assets, debts, entities and individuals, in line with Belize's commercial needs.
National Environmental Appraisal Committee (NEAC)	The IPCU is part of the NEAC. The Unit reviews projects submitted to the NEAC and gives its position, specifically on the economic impact of the project. A total of 6 projects were reviewed in FY2023-24.
Trade Negotiations with El Salvador and Taiwan	The IPCU as the lead for the Belize delegation of the Investment Chapter of the Partial Scope Agreement with El Salvador, it completed the negotiations of the chapter and is in the process to draft and negotiate the modernizing of the Bilateral Investment Treaty and negotiate a new Avoidance of Double Tax Treaty with that country.
Taiwan Partial Scope Agreement	The IPCU as the lead for the Belize delegation of the Investment Chapter of the Partial Scope Agreement with Taiwan, it is in the process to draft and negotiate the modernizing of its Bilateral Investment Treaty and negotiate a new Avoidance of Double Tax Treaty with that country.
The Belize Investment Summit 2023	Assisted in planning, organizing, and implementing the Belize Investment Summit 2023 along with BELTRAIDE and the EDC. The IPCU was engaged in organizing and coordinating government to business and business to business meetings.
Collaboration with BPO Association	Coordinate collaboration with the BPO Association and Minister Dr Zabaneh to organize - Job Interview Simulation Exercises in Dangriga. Coordinate collaboration with the BPO Association and Labour Department to organize - Job Interview Simulation Exercises in Punta Gorda.
Hemp Industry Oversight Committee	The IPCU and Ministry of Agriculture assisted Ministry of Home Affairs and New Growth Industries to convene the Hemp Industry Oversight Committee to discuss pivotal developments in the hemp sector, including the role of agencies in monitoring hemp developments in Belize and legislation. The Committee also reviewed an application for hemp research. A key focus of the meeting was the policy for approving hemp for research and investments in Belize. The Committee's meeting was a significant step towards enhancing the research and development framework for hemp in Belize. It aims to establish a robust environment for scientific research and investment in this beneficial sector by improving the application procedure and regulations.
Belize Investment and Business Climate Action Plan (BIBCAP)	The IPCU is key player in implementing the BIBCAP. The 9 key policy pillars outlined in the Belize Investment and Business Climate Action Plan (BIBCAP) form the cornerstone of our economic agenda and are aimed at fostering a resilient and dynamic economy. The Government of Belize remains resolute in its commitment to MSME development,

	export competitiveness, and strategic investment as integral components of our economic vision. By prioritizing the BIBCAP's 9 key policy pillars, we are poised to unlock unprecedented opportunities, drive sustainable growth, and secure a prosperous future for all Belizeans. The IPCU is responsible to lead 3 and to monitor 9 of the key pillars in BIBCAP.
MSME Procurement Policy	A procurement policy for MSMEs is being developed by the IPCU. This initiative is derived from the Government policy to earmark 20% of its recurrent expenditures to MSMEs. Meetings have been held with the Financial Secretary and the Ministry of Finance Procurement Unit. A survey is being conducted with MSME's that produce goods that have a high demand in Government.
Mexican Investors with Interest to Invest in Belize	The IPCU has coordinated over 15 visits and meetings of Mexican investors with interest to invest in tourism, green energy, industrial hemp, agriculture, and agro- processing.
BPO Survey	A survey is being undertaken by the IPCU on BPOs. The information of this survey will be used to have a clear understanding of the size of the sector and the level of employment it generates in Belize.
Belize Marine Spatial Plan	The IPCU forms part of the steering committee and working group of the Marine Spatial Plan. This is to ensure that Belize commitments that it has of its blue space are complied with, and that economic benefit and activity are generated.
Modernization of Belize's Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT)	The IPCU in collaboration with the UN Trade and Development Agency (UNCTAD) organized the workshop to allow the local and foreign partners to clarify the text of the new model BIT and provide justification for the departures from older text and terms. The new text is in line with the current legal environment and puts Belize in a stronger investment attraction position while shielding the nation from any possible frivolous litigation. As Belize is in the process of negotiating various International Investment Agreements (IIAs), which include BITs with several countries, the revision of the standard BIT text has been a monumental accomplishment as it serves as a benchmark to be used to accelerate and expand investment in Belize. The personnel from UNCTAD indicated that in conducting this exercise, Belize is becoming a best practice in taking proactive steps to promote modern FDI practices and bringing together all relevant Government agencies to review the IIA text.

Other Projects and Initiatives to support the Investment Ecosystem

1. Stimulating Export Led Economic Growth in the Corozal District

In 2019, an analysis and plan were completed in an IDB study to identify specific opportunities for export-led development in Corozal. There are opportunities that have been identified for the Corozal District to jump start its export-led growth and increase its employment rate. The opportunities can be divided into four clusters: Food and Beverage, Light manufacturing, Tourism and Professional

Services (BPO services). A Corozal Think Tank made up of professionals of several backgrounds from the Corozal district was formed to steer the actions of the plan. The IPCU is the secretariat of this the Think Tank. Several projects or actions were identified and implemented to stimulate an export-led growth of the Corozal District's economy to increase employment and economic development. The actions being implemented include:

- a. **Training of Students in Crop Cultivation and Processing** is a project implemented by the Belize Adventist College in the Corozal district. The project is funded by the Ministry of Investment. The cost of the project totals \$37,405.05. The main objective of the project is to train students in vegetable and tree crops husbandry and processing. The project will take 14 months for implementation with a start date of January 12th, 2024, and completion date for March 2025.
- b. **Hatchery and Poultry Production Initiative** is a project implemented by the Centro Escolar Mexico Junior College in the Corozal district. The project is funded by the Ministry of Investment. The cost of the project totals \$10,065.00. The main objective of the project is to provide training on poultry production to 30 girls and women of the Corozal District in 3 sessions. The project will take 3 months for implementation with a start date of May 10th, 2024, and completion date for August 10th, 2025.
- c. **The "Cell Phone Repair Course for Women and Youth."** is a project being implemented due to the need for technicians who are skilled in the upkeep, cleaning, and overall maintenance and repair of cell phone devices. Not only is there is currently no training course of this kind in Belize, but the accessibility of cell phone repair services is lacking in various parts of country. This is a project implemented by Jarvis Fix from Chetumal, Quintana Roo, Mexico. The project is funded by the Ministry of Investment. The cost of the project totals BZ \$13,578.75. The main objective of the project is to train 14 women from the Corozal District in cell phone repair course to help improve their income. The project will take 2 weeks for implementation with a start date of June 26th, 2024, and completion date for August 2024.
- d. **Animation Bootcamp for Belizean Women and Girls in Corozal** is a project to provide opportunities for women in the Corozal to learn basic digital skills in graphic art and animation, for participants to be able to produce short, animated movies. The demand for these skills utilized in the Orange Economy is increasing across various industries, including film, television, gaming, advertising, and marketing. The project is being implemented by Creative Imageries Animation Studios. The project is funded by the Ministry of Investment. The cost of the project totals BZ \$4,509.00. The main objective of the project is to provide training Animation booth camp to improve earnings for 30 women and youth. The project will take 3 weeks for implementation with a start date of July 4th, 2024, and completion date for August 2024.
- e. In identifying new emerging economic activity for Corozal a **second phase of the Vanilla Cultivation in the Corozal District** was completed to do a send round of training of farmers in the Corozal District to cultivate vanilla. There were 30 women participants from the Corozal District. The project is being implemented by the Centro Escolar Mexico Junior College in the Corozal district. The project is funded by the Ministry of Investment. The cost of the project totals \$20,800.00. The main objective of the project is to train and provide vanilla cuttings to a nursery at CEMJC and 30 female farmers in the Corozal District. The project will take 14 months for implementation with a start date of August 23rd, 2022, and completion date for 30th November 2023.

2. Animation Bootcamp for Belizean Women and Girls in Orange Walk and Belize Districts

Animation Bootcamp for Belizean Women and Girls in Orange Walk and Belize Districts is a project to provide opportunities for women in these two districts to learn basic digital skills in graphic art and animation, for participants to be able to produce short, animated movies. The demand for these skills utilized in the Orange Economy is increasing across various industries, including film, television, gaming,

advertising, and marketing. The project is being implemented by Creative Imageries Animation Studios. The project is funded by the Taiwan Technical Mission in collaboration with the Ministry of Investment. The cost of the project totals BZ \$41,680.71. The main objective of the project is to provide training Animation booth camp to improve earnings for 60 women and youth in Orange Walk and Corozal. The project will take 6 weeks for implementation with a start date of July 25th, 2024, and completion date for August 2024.

3. Establishment of a Secured Transaction and Collateral Registry

The IPCU had developed the project to establish a Secured Transaction and Collateral Registry for Belize with the objective to improve the access to capital for Micro, Small and Medium-size Enterprises using movable assets. A modern and functional secured transactions system facilitates access to credit for all sectors and types of economic actors, particularly for MSMEs, as well as in the manufacturing, agriculture, and productive sectors. Secured transactions reform facilitate greater financial inclusion and support an enabling environment for businesses to formalize and grow. Whilst there were difficulties in securing funding for this project, the Financial Services Commission (FSC) expressed interest in funding and implementing the initiative. The project was handed over to the FSC and full project implementation has started with the drafting of the legislation.

4. Modernization Project to automate major aspects of the daily operations of the IPCU

The Ministry is embarking on a Modernization Project Phase I which will see the introduction of a system that will automate major aspects of the daily operations of the IPCU. The primary objective is to provide access to ministry personnel and stakeholders via a centralized, web-based, cross-platform system accessible anywhere there is network/Internet connectivity. This system aims at improving the management and coordination of all the Incentive Programmes. Phase 1 will encompass a core system that will be developed which will allow for the sharing of information, centralized storage of data and flexibility in the event of growth or change of functionality.

This Management Information System (MIS) system would reduce the time and effort currently being utilized to perform these activities manually. Several processes and procedures in all the IPCU portfolios will be automated. These include: DPA, FI, Gaming and Lotteries. It would also allow for greater focus to be spent on fulfilling the mandate of the IPCU which is to effect and enforce compliance. Additionally, and most importantly, this system should enhance the efficiency and accuracy in producing reports that will enable timely decision making and effectively assist in the enforcement of compliance within the incentive programs it manages. An agreement between the Government of Belize and KYN Consulting was signed on Friday, March 10th, 2023, for Software and Web Development. Significant Progress has been made by the development team and the Ministry plans to fully launch the system by the end of 2024.

5. Belize Industrial Strategy with Green and Blue Industrial Policies

In 2021, the Ministry began working on a project concept and road map for the development of the Belize Industrial Strategy with Green and Blue Industrial Policies. The objective is to have an Industrial Policy and Strategy that would support the transition to economic structures that balance environmental sustainability, competitive advantages, and wealth creation to help catalyse development in a sustainable way. In achieving this, Belize would be able to increase economic growth, protect the environment and reduce the poverty rate. Belize can take advantage of the opportunity to forge an Industrial Policy to promote productivity and competitiveness by increasing resource efficiency and growing the economy through industrialization, but in an environmentally sustainable way. A new addition in a Green Industrial Policy for Belize is to include the Blue Economy, because of the importance of its marine resources for its

economy. This will allow for the country to implement an Industrial Policy while meeting its commitments under its various international climate change agreements, and the national goals. In December 2023, UNIDO did a scoping mission to Belize and committed to assisting in the development of its industrial policy. The concept paper prepared by both Belize and UNIDO has been sent to Japan for it to be considered for funding.

6. Pilot Project and Policy for Higher Tier Global Digital Services from Belize

On June 5th, the IPCU in the Ministry of Investment received confirmation from the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) that a proposal titled, “Pilot Project and Policy for Higher Tier Global Digital Services from Belize” was selected for funding under the Economic Growth in the Caribbean programme. The Economic Growth programme is an Initiative from the IDB, designed to identify and finance innovative solutions that will help unleash private investment in Latin America and the Caribbean. Of the 111 project concepts in the competition, the proposal submitted by the Belize BPO Association and the IPCU was among the 8 selected for funding from across the region.

Over the coming months, 40-50 training sessions countrywide will be held, with the goal of providing young Belizeans with essential skills to succeed in the Global Digital Services (GDS) environment thus increasing employment retention by 50%. Massive training will allow industry leaders to target and upskill hundreds of students and enable many more young people from all areas of the country to get jobs at BPO call centres. The increased numbers of personnel with higher tier skills will allow better salaries and widening the footprint of the industry to more geographical areas. It is envisioned that training in Tier Two skills such as Amazon Web Services (AWS) will be offered to the most dedicated trainees at schools.

7. Belize's Global Digital Services Investment Policy with focus on the Orange Economy

The IPCU prepared a concept paper which the IDB is supporting to develop and fund. The objective of this consultancy is to develop a strategic approach to transform the local Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) industry in Belize into a Global Digital Services industry, with higher tier services. The approach is to identify measures (policies and legislation) as well as programs and activities which will facilitate an enabling environment for the development and growth of the Global Digital Services with focus on the Orange Economy in Belize.

The project consists of four main elements:

- a) **Diagnostic study.** Identify within the global industry services where the country’s industry stands in terms of current and future performance and to define and prioritize policy intervention areas and the segments with higher potential growth (KPOs, among others) in Belize. The firm should:
 - a. categorize the digital sectors, including the orange economy.
 - b. analyse the global trends, iii) map the availability of Belizean statistics, and other sources of information like the observatory of the economic complexity.
- b) **Define a strategy** to develop the high growth segment identified before. Based on the results and insights of the diagnostic study, a strategy focusing on what to do will be developed together with the Ministry of Investment and other relevant Ministries.
- c) **This will be followed by a Global Digital Services policy** and attendant policy instruments to describe how the policy goals set out in the strategy, will be met. One of the main goals is the diversification of the sector into higher tier services. The policy design requires a clearly outlined theory of change.
- d) The policy will include **an action plan with the stakeholders and resources identification** to implement it. The action plan for each segment of the policy will include Key Performance Indicators that will assist in the monitoring and evaluation.

After the completion of the diagnostic and the policy and strategy documents, **policy makers will be trained and a policy infrastructure (Intelligence Unit) will be established**, both with a view to strengthening the policy making capacity and process.

8. Vanilla training of women, girls and female university students in the west and south of Belize

The Ministry has identified vanilla as being a crop that has great potential for both local and foreign investors. There are presently five entities in Belize cultivating vanilla for commercial purposes: Silk Grass Farms, Coridgeree Farm, Copal Tree Lodge, Belize Agroforestry Development Services and Belize Permaculture & Renewable Energy, Ltd. Together, they have about 25 acres planted, and they are all planning or in the process of expanding their cultivations to export. Noting the opportunities for export earnings, the Ministry of Investment has embarked along with Belize Permaculture & Renewable Energy, Ltd. to develop the vanilla industry over the next 3 years. The IPCU through this project will facilitate training and establishing vanilla nurseries in the Cayo and Stann Creek districts. The Belize Permaculture & Renewable Energy, Ltd. to develop both projects. Vanilla vines will be distributed 60 women and girls, and vines will be established on vegetation and at the nurseries that are planned. The Taiwan Technical Mission will be funding this initiative valued at \$37,247.00 (including \$2000.00 unforeseen cost).

iii. LESSONS LEARNT

1. Start of Industrial Policy with support from UNIDO with the objective to stimulate investment in manufacturing and agro-processing and identify emerging economic activities. New emerging sectors have been identified.
2. Financing identified for Collateral Registry project with objective to diversify financing sources for MSMEs. The identification of FSC as a source of funding is an important find.
3. GDS policy and strategy funding identified to stimulate investment and growth in the BPO sector. The ability for the country to sustain this sector's growth is important for its future development.
4. BPO higher tier project funding IDB stimulates investment and growth in the BPO sector. The skills training needed is an important drive for the sustained growth of the sector.
5. Corozal Master Plan started implementation. The plan needs to go into another phase which is to seek strategic large investment that would be supported by IFIs.
6. Modernization of the IPCU and its reorganization has started. Its implementation has as its objective to reduce the turnaround time of applications and to have the data readily available for policy adjustments. The changes needed to modernize the system are substantial and cross cutting.
7. Belize Investment Summit 2023: Facilitation of 80 b2b and b2g meetings. The summit is an important meeting place where investors, Government and entrepreneurs can network,
8. Establishment and operationalization of BGLL. The generation of income to support the national safety nets such as the NHI is important and a priority.
9. FI Act and Regulations amendments enacted. Amendments are necessary to conform with today's business realities and opportunities.
10. DPA information sharing workshop. Consultation is important to obtain buy in.

iv. FUTURE PLANS AND PRIORITIES

IPCU Objectives FY2024 - 2025

1. Complete phase one of the Modernization of the IPCU and its reorganization. The objective is to reduce the turnaround time for applications from 60 to 50 working days and to have the data readily available for policy adjustments. Initiatives: increase compliance to 80% for all programs regulated by IPCU, reduce turnaround time to 50 working days for applications, DPA reports submitted electronic, site visit reports done electronic, and compliance letters and assessments standardized.

2. Industrial Policy and Strategy implementation: diagnostic completed, at least 2 strategic sectors identified, and investment policies developed, propose legislation to support the strategic sectors. The objective is to stimulate investment in manufacturing, Blue economy, Orange economy, and agro processing, and identify new emerging economic activities.
3. Completion of the Global Digital Services policy and strategy with focus on Orange Economy. The initiatives that will take place include the completion of the policy, strategy, and budget. The objective is to stimulate investment and growth in the BPO sector with higher tier services.
4. Implement the BPO higher tier IDB project through Compete Caribbean to stimulate investment and growth in the BPO sector and complete the BPO survey. The review of the current situation and the creation of a curriculum for training and skills development will be completed. The objective is to facilitate growth and investment in the BPO sector.
5. Continue implementation of the Corozal Master Plan with the following initiatives: Vanilla project phase 3; Poultry project phase 2; Agriculture project Adventist college phase 2; visual arts program Adventist College; Relief of Exit Tax for Mexicans from Quintana Roo; Training in cell phone, tablet, laptop repair and other skills using Mexican trainers; and BPO training Adventist College. The objective is to diversify the Corozal economy, investments, and exports.
6. Establishment of the Gaming and Lotteries Commission: legislation drafted funds allocated for operation of Commission. The objective is to improve revenue collection, standards, monitoring, regulation, and data collection from the gaming and lotteries sectors.
7. Double Taxation treaty with Taiwan, and El Salvador prepared as stated in the PSAs to facilitate investment with these countries.
8. MSME Roadshow 2024: MSME survey; initiative to allow participation of high schools, 6th Forms and Universities promoting innovation and entrepreneurship; business plan development using Universities; and the development of the Government MSME procurement program.
9. Amend the DPA Act and Regulations with the objective to update the legislation to facilitate growth in the priority sectors with potential.
10. Complete a Bilateral Investment Treaty with Qatar and El Salvador. The objective is to stimulate investment and cooperation between the two countries.
11. FI information sharing workshop with the objective to inform beneficiaries of their responsibilities and rights under the program.
12. Establishment of the Special Entertainment Zone in Santa Elena, Corozal with the objective to facilitate investment and trade with Mexico.
13. Investor Immigration Permit program developed to substitute work permits required from investors to check on their investments in Belize. The objective is to make it easier for investors to apply for a permit to stay in Belize extended periods, and to allow the investors to visit Belize as many times as they require to check on their investments.
14. Investment Chapter under a Partial Scope Agreement completed with El Salvador. The objective is to facilitate investments, and investment related information sharing and cooperation between both countries.

VI. Belize Trade and Investment Development Service



i. INTRODUCTION

The Belize Trade and Investment Development Service (BELTRAIDE) is a statutory body of the Government of Belize which falls under the purview of the Ministry of Investment, oversight for which rests with the Office of the Prime Minister. BELTRAIDE is the country's nationally mandated investment promotion agency with the mission to enhance Belize's prosperity by fostering investor confidence, entrepreneurship, business growth and innovation. Furthermore, BELTRAIDE has a vision to enable a dynamic and competitive business environment for Belize's socio-economic development.

The technical units of BELTRAIDE are the Belize Training and Employment Centre (BTEC), Small Business Development Centre (SBDC Belize), BelizeInvest, and ExportBelize. These units have collectively focused on the implementation of activities and projects that correspond to the objectives of #PlanBelize in the priority elements involving investment attraction and enterprise support. Outlined below are snapshots of each unit's main accomplishments.

ii. MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS

A. Belize Training and Employment Center (BTEC)

The BTEC is focused on providing demand-driven training in consultation with the private sector and based on their specific needs. The range of capacity-building services provided by BTEC is aimed at satisfying the Belize's labour force needs and to increase the marketability of individuals seeking employment. The results of the BTEC's interventions are summarized in the below table:

BTEC	Fiscal Year 2022 – 2023
Activities	Results
Capacity Building Workshops	62
Job Preparedness Trainings	6
Training Agreements	14
Trained Individuals	813

Capacity Building Workshops

Capacity-building workshop sessions range from 3-6 hours and are targeted to employed persons who are seeking to increase their professional working knowledge. The courses facilitated for Fiscal Year 2023 – 2024 include:

- Public Relations Management
- Art of Public Speaking
- Introduction to Report Writing
- Project Management Basics
- Monitoring and Evaluation
- Introduction to Human Relations
- Resume Building and Interview Skills

- Customer Service Excellence
- Healthy Self Image
- Advanced Customer Care
- Professional Etiquette
- Team Building and work culture development
- Introduction to Project Management
- Building Organizational Strategies for Decision Making
- Leadership and Influence
- Introduction to Report Writing
- Realizing the Power of Emotional Intelligence
- Improving Internal Communications
- Personal Goal Setting
- Managing Personal Finance
- Leadership and Influence
- Building Positive Workplace Culture
- Time Management
- Emotional Intelligence for Women in Leadership

Job Preparedness Training (JPT)

BTEC also provides a Job Preparedness Training (JPT), which is intended to equip participants with skills that will increase their employability rate. The 3 components of the training programs are soft skills, customer service, and technical industry practices. The trainings for the fiscal year 2023-2024 include business process outsourcing and the development of resume, interview skills and professional etiquette.

Type of JPT	Beneficiary	Total Trained	Impact
Business Process Outsourcing (two weeks)	Orange Walk residents seeking employment	18	3 acquired employment with Alta Resource ad Ready Call Center
Administrative Assistant (five-days)	Fourth Form Students at the Anglican Cathedral College	75	A more competitive labour market with skills in Professional Etiquette, Customer Service, Time Management, Critical Thinking, Interview Preparation and Career Management
Business Process Outsourcing (2-weeks)	Job seekers	15	Trained in soft skills and technical skills like speed typing, sales technique, web navigation, campaign scripts and customer service
Administrative Assistant (2 weeks in February 2024)	Job seekers	10	Soft and Technical skills built to the practices of an administrative assistant
Business Process Outsourcing (2-weeks in March 2024)	Job seekers in Santa Elena, Cayo	17	Soft and Technical skills built relevant to BPO sector in speed typing, sales technique, web navigation, campaign scripts and customer service
Administrative Assistant	Job seekers in Belize City	15	A more competitive labour market with skills in Professional Etiquette, Customer Service, critical thinking, Microsoft Word, minute taking, budgeting and planning

Training Agreements (TA) Summary			
Beltraide – Labour Department TA (3-month training held in April 2023)	Employment Officers and Supervisors	15	Professional development series covering key aspects of building team relationships and SWOT analysis development. Submission to the Labour Commissioner of a report covering areas of overall departmental improvement.
Beltraide – Women Family Support Department	Women job seekers	29	Skills built in professional etiquette and resume building and interview skills training.
Beltraide – Ya'axche Conservation Trust	Management and Staff	15	Participant's skills enhanced in areas of Public Speaking, Human Relations, Public Relations, Report Writing, Report Writing and Tam Building
Beltraide- Information Technology Team of the University of Belize	Staff Members	16	Strengthening team's relationship and encourage a positive work culture
Beltraide- Blu Zen Resort	Management and Staff	25	Built skills in Leadership, Communication Skills, Report Writing and Customer Service Excellence
Beltraide- G.A Roe and Sons Ltd	Office Professionals	21	Participants built capacity in leadership and influence
Beltraide- Belize Tourism Board	Concierge Staff	23	Built capacity in the art of sales, effective communication skills, customer service and professional etiquette
<p>Highlights of the Trainings provided:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Training Agreement with the Women and family Support Department and the National Council for Aging to conduct a Home Health JPT for women job seekers. The training collaboration involves BTEC executing component one of the job preparedness trainings, a five-day soft skills training. ➤ As an initiative for the National Competitiveness Month (NCM), BTEC will execute a 2-day Career Growth Accelerator Training. The training will focus on key elements and tools to help individuals remain competitive in the labour market. It will cover elements of GRIT, Self-Branding, Goal Setting, and Adopting to Change. ➤ In collaboration with ILO, BTEC will facilitate a five-day training in green entrepreneurship. The training will be executed through the Sarteneja Alliance for Conservation Development in Sarteneja Village in Corozal. The training is a requirement for trainers to become certified in Green Entrepreneurship. ➤ Upcoming trainings for quarter one of FY2024-2025 are Supervisory Skills Development, BPO Job Preparedness Training, and Advanced Administrative Assistant Practices and Customer Service Excellence. 			

Small Business Development Centre (SBDC Belize)

The SBDC Belize model is designed to support the development of Micro, Small, and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs) in Belize through business advisory services and business capacity building. The main objective is to increase MSMEs' competitiveness by providing them with these services. Key results emanating from the work carried out by SBDCBelize are the following:

SBDCBelize	Fiscal Year 2023-2024
Activities	Results
Business Advisory Service	1,021.09 Hours
Clients Advised	382
New Clients Receiving Advisory Support	179

Projects – Supporting MSME Development

SBDC has collaborated on significant socio-economic projects geared towards the improvement of the economic and living conditions of the most vulnerable populations, some of the projects include:

SBDCBelize Projects Fiscal Year 2023 – 2024	
Project	Description
Belize Enterprise Revolving Funds (BERF)	Supported 4 MSME beneficiaries from the maturing category with the investment plan for funding from the Caribbean Development Bank through the administration of the Development Finance Corporation. BERF phase 2 will serve as a mechanism to offer financial solutions that meet recipients' needs and promote business growth and development through a combination of grant and loan funding with concessionary interest rates and appropriate loan terms for startups and maturing enterprises.
Sustainable and Inclusive Project- IDB	Participated in consultation meetings to learn about the project. Members of the BELTRAIDE team were identified to participate in business plan development virtual training complimented by a final face-to-face training session for business advisors for tourism- and agriculture-related business. Lastly, participate in a stakeholder consultation to develop the skills ecosystem for agriculture and tourism.
Digitization Project - IDB	Developed TOR for CDP, met Innoos Lead Consultants, underwent MEALS training, evaluated procurement, conducted interviews, reviewed MEALS Strategy deliverable, participated in software training, reviewed digital checkup survey for IDB, assessed Gender Awareness Campaign.
Help for Progress	Facilitated business development training for 25 participants for the 10th cohort to receive \$1,500 in seed capital. At the end of the training, all the participants have created a plan to open a business.
Get Ahead Training ILO- methodology (Belize City, Independence, Red Bank)	BELTRAIDE implemented the Get Ahead Training ILO-methodology, empowering communities with skills and knowledge to foster economic growth and employment opportunities to drive sustainable development. The SBDCBelize team had 55 participants completing the three cohorts. Additionally, 6 MSMEs are receiving coaching services per the program's design.

Financial Services Commission- Movable Collateral Registry	Provided oral and written feedback on the ACT currently being developed related to movable assets for MSMEs to access capital.
National outreach program for clients	The National Client Outreach is organized during the 4th quarter of the fiscal year and structured to provide real-time business advisory service. This allows us to capture footage of clients at their business establishments for testimonial purposes. It aims to support the collection of client growth assessment forms based on intervention provided throughout the fiscal year by the centre to quantify its impact.
Belize Investment and Business Climate Action Plan (BIBCAP)	The launch of BIBCAP, which includes consolidated policies and strategies to position Belize as a strategic player within the global investment community and to create the appreciation and recognition of Belize as the destination for national and international investments, is scheduled for February 2024.
I-CUBE 2.0- Digital Connect Center	Start-ups will have access to the physical infrastructure that will enable them to operate with adequate resources to penetrate the market and generate sales. An open call for applications will be designed in January 2024. Conversely, the public can access the equipment and amenities offered at the Digital Connect Center located at SBDCBelize. Follow-up for the other locations is to take place next year.
LISTO – Digital Marketing Training	The digital marketing session is designed to be highly engaging, providing participants with practical tools and strategies they can immediately apply in real-time to enhance their digital marketing efforts, to be executed in Q4- 2024. Through a comprehensive digital audit, participants will establish a baseline for their online position. This baseline will enable them to effectively track and measure the impact of implementing the newly acquired tools and strategies on their digital platforms.
My Green Enterprise	This ILO methodology involves greening existing enterprises, focusing on the production process, and promoting green enterprises in producing environmental goods and services. Green enterprise development results in greener, environmentally friendly, safer, and more productive workplaces. Training and business advisory services are to be offered in this area for MSME clients of BETLRAIDE.
WIPO Project IP and Women in Entrepreneurship	The project focuses on supporting women entrepreneurs in harnessing the power of Intellectual Property (IP) to enhance their businesses. It aims to achieve this by providing training, mentorship, and access to networks and partnerships. Partnering with BELIPO, CIPO, Registry office, and Intellectual, the project intends to empower women entrepreneurs, facilitate collaborations, and foster business growth through effective IP management. The timeline spans from planning in Nov-Dec 2023, to communication and reporting in May-Jun 2024, with phases dedicated to training, mentorship, and ongoing support. The project aims to enable businesses to protect innovations, establish market positions, and access revenue streams on national, regional, and global scales by employing IP rights. The initiative includes one-to-one business strategy support for a selected group of 45 women, utilizing IP strategies to elevate their businesses; the program requires BELTRAIDE promotion to our client database and application process.

All these projects at their core include capacity building, business advice, and guidance geared towards the sustainability of new and existing businesses, providing them with the tools necessary for them to thrive.

MSME Enhancement Program (MEP)

SBDC has also administered the MSME Enhancement Program (MEP) which will strengthen the competitiveness of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSME) through the waiver of Customs Import Duty. The core objectives of the program include the promotion of the MSME's by identifying potential clients of the program, strengthening the relationship with municipalities so they serve as referral agents, and assisting the MSME's with their formalization process. It is because of this that the core results of the program have been the following:

SBDCBelize	Fiscal Year 2022 – 2023
Activities	Results
Clients	35
Investment	\$1,865,497.48
Revenue Foregone	\$237,089
Taxes Paid	\$289,388
Jobs Retained	660
Jobs Created	131

Highlights

- National Competitiveness Month (NCM) is an occasion to highlight the importance of enhancing Belize's economic competitiveness on both national and international fronts. Through various events and initiatives, we aim to foster a culture of innovation, efficiency, and collaboration among businesses of all sizes.
- Launch of the 2024-2024 Training Calendar. This comprehensive calendar will unveil a diverse array of training programs designed to equip MSMEs with the knowledge, skills, and resources needed to thrive in today's dynamic business landscape.
- As agricultural resilience remains a cornerstone of Belize's economy, SBDC Belize will participate in the National Agricultural & Trade Show. This annual event celebrates Belize's agricultural heritage while providing MSMEs with opportunities to explore new markets, forge partnerships, and access vital resources and support.
- Made in Belize Trade Show, an initiative that celebrates the ingenuity and craftsmanship of Belizean entrepreneurs. Through this event, we aim to promote locally made products, stimulate economic growth, and showcase Belize's rich cultural heritage to the world.

BelizeINVEST

BelizeINVEST continues to promote and administer the existing Fiscal Incentive (FI) and Designated Processing Areas (DPA) Concession Holders that remain under BELTRAIDE. Currently, BELTRAIDE has 36 FI Concession Holders and 39 DPA Concession Holders that it administrates investment incentives for, including the Customs ASYCUDA System. BelizeINVEST fostered 89 interests/queries. The team's annual benchmark goals include

leads in the sectors of Tourism, Light Manufacturing, and Renewable Energy, with other priority investment sectors, particularly the Offshore Outsourcing sector.

17 investment accounts were concluded that totaled an investment of BZD \$296.37 million with an associated employment opportunity projected at 2,786 slots. The rate of fruition to date is mainly in the Tourism and Leisure sector, Business Processing Outsourcing (BPO) and the Aquaculture sector. Meanwhile, the Unit has 32 applications lodged at the Investment, Policy, and Compliance Unit. The rate of fruition is concentrated in Tourism & Leisure, BPO and Manufacturing with a total investment of BZ \$506.73 million and employment generation of an additional 3,677 new slots.

Projects – Development of Belize

Below is a listing of some of our projects in support of the development of Belize:

Belize INVEST Projects Fiscal Year 2023 – 2024	
Project	Description
Belize Investment and Business Climate Action Plan (BIBCAP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BIBCAP was officially launched February 15th, 2024, at Biltmore in Belize City. • BELTRAIDE is responsible for Pillar 1 - Development of an integrated national strategy for promoting export and investment, Pillar 7- Encourage the development of innovation and a skill supply adapted to the needs of national and international investors and Pillar 9- Fostering of Economic Diplomacy. • Belize INVEST is leading Pillar 1 and will also participate in Pillar 5 - Revision of existing regulatory framework and judicial system, and Pillar - Reform of the business incentives framework.
Trade and Investment Facilitation Program for Belize	<p>The general objective of the project is to promote Belize’s foreign direct investment (FDI) and trade performance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The final report for the mapping exercise was prepared by lead consultant Iria Buxan Raposo. The agencies covered were SSB, BCCAR, BTS, Belize City Council and BELTRAIDE. • A consultant has drafted a TOR for the Investment Promotion program. Currently, in the process of reviewing and finalizing.
Single Investment Window (SIW)	<p>The objective of the SIW is to facilitate investments through the implementation of a SIW.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A consultant was procured to draft the TOR for the person that will be hired to develop the Single Investment Window. • Upon completion of the recruitment process, the consultant will be responsible to lead the designing, functionality, and implementation of the SIW for Belize in accordance with the approved timeline.
Client Relations Management (CRM)	<p>The objective of the CRM is to monitor FDI promotion programs (including lead generation, facilitation, and aftercare services) through the adoption of new digital tools, and institutional strengthening.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A report was shared with Jose Luis, Consultant, about the issues and modifications to be done. The IDB approved and will undergo the Technical Cooperation (TC). • The TC for the HubSpot CRM enhancements will be coming on stream soon.

Blue Economy Investment Promotion Strategy	<p>The objective of the Technical Cooperation (TC) is to increase capacity to attract private sector investment into the Blue Economy in the Caribbean to generate employment, growth, diversification of the economy and the reach of SDGs targets.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The consultants met with various stakeholders to develop the strategy. • The Capacity Building sessions will be held April 4th and 5th. • The draft strategy was submitted to IDB for review and will be shared with us after completing their review.
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BelizeINVEST continues its promotional endeavors through its Strategic Marketing Initiatives, such as the monthly Investment Spotlight Newsletter to highlight investment opportunities. BelizeINVEST also continues to engage its stakeholders under the Belize Investment Portfolio for matchmaking and investment purposes while further advancing BELTRAIDE’s Investment Services Network (BISN). BelizeINVEST will continue its outreach initiative to various Ministries across the six priority investment sectors to validate and verify statistical information and investment opportunities for promotion within its presentation materials.

Highlights

- Time Release Study
- Public Private Partnership (PPP) Workshop
- Academia Outreach – Sacred Heart Junior College, Cayo
- BTB Meeting with Simone Bell
- Avis Meeting – (Customs and IPCU joined)
- Marine Committee led by BTB
- IPCU FI Consultations
- BIBCAP Launch
- Skills Ecosystem Workshop
- Digital Service Providers Cluster Workshop
- Webinars - engaging in various online sessions for capacity building.
 - ✓ Belize Seaweed Webinar Series
 - ✓ Finca Chocolate Investment Opportunities
 - ✓ CLIC Pre-Event Launch
 - ✓ OCO Global - Global Digital Services Trainings
- Impact Investment Forum in Merida
- Department of Environment Information Session
- Central Building Authority Information Session
- Customs Brokers Association Information Session

EXPORTBelize

EXPORTBelize serves as the unit under BELTRAIDE that focuses on a customized and tailored provision of services to businesses in the areas of export development and export promotion. The unit’s vision, founded on principles of quality, innovation, and customer orientation, enables a dynamic and competitive export sector. The unit’s mission is to foster an enabling environment that promotes diversification and competitiveness of the country’s export sector.

Capacity Building for Clients

Capacity Building for Clients Export Marketing and Sales Training - As clients continue to explore trade opportunities for the growth of their enterprise, Export Marketing and Sales Training was organized to provide

them with the applicable knowledge and background on the key requirements to export. The session was facilitated by Mr. Jody Williams, Chief Marketing & Sales Director, Marie Sharp’s Fine Foods Ltd., via four sessions held on October 24th and 26th, 2023 and October 31st and November 2nd, 2023, respectively. His extensive experience as an established exporter, currently exporting to over 23 countries, was most beneficial to attendees. A total of 30 enterprises participated in all sessions. Thematic areas covered in the training included the following:

- Introduction to Exporting and why export?
- Export Readiness and Assessment
- Developing an Export Plan from Scratch
- Market research and Market intelligence and tools
- Assessment of Target Market
- Export Pricing and INCOTERMS
- Shipping and Logistics
- Payment terms
- Market Strategy and Action Plan
- Review Action Result

Projects – Development of Belize

Throughout the fiscal year of 2023-2024, the unit has engaged in various projects centred around solidifying the Belizean export sector. Some of the most notable projects are described below:

Export Development and Promotion Projects/Initiatives Fiscal Year 2023 – 2024	
Project	Description
My Green Enterprise	<p>Participated in the MGE Training of Trainers from September 7th to October 4th. It comprised of two Modules/Course: Starting My Green Enterprise (targeting start-ups) Greening my Enterprise (targeting existing enterprises).</p> <p>Next Steps: Over the next 5-6 months training courses will be executed for the targeted attendees. The workplan was approved for execution of the training at the end of May 2024.</p>
Belize Enterprise Revolving Fund (BERF)	<p>All participants submitted their required documents and obtained funding of \$40,000. Funds have been invested.</p> <p>Clients who obtained funding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mark Jacob (Bamboo Straw) - \$40,000 disbursed • Wilana Oldham (Hot Manas/Aunt Sadies) \$40,000 Disbursed • Elder De Leon (Lions Family) – \$40,000 Disbursed <p>Next steps: BERF Promotional Video Shoot at client/participants’ facilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hot Mama’s Video Shoot – April 11th • Elder de Leon Video Shoot - April 17th • DML Bamboo Straws – April 19th

Packaging & Labelling of Pre-Packaged Foods: National, Regional (CARICOM) and Europe.	A workshop was made possible with the collaboration of BAHA, IICA and FAO to bring awareness on packing and labelling for pre-packaged food. The workshop was facilitated by Belize bureau of standards, and they gave an overview of how we stand as a country when it comes to the standards as compared to other regional. Once of the main highlights were that we are not that far off when it comes to labelling requirement. If a company's labelling is examined and is compliant, they are in a good position to be complaint internationally and may just need to complete other steps such as language and additional nutritional facts.
Good Manufacturing Practices & Sanitation Standard Operation Procedures	GMP/SSOP workshop was held in Orange Walk Town. The event was made possible with the collaboration between BELTRAIDE, BAHA and other stakeholders. The workshop was facilitated by Mr. Sosa who is very knowledge in the area as he has been in the food and safety sector for several years. Company presents were Caribbean Chicken, Northern Heat, Framer Daughter, Cuello's Distillery Ltd, Caribbean International Brewery, Quality shrimp and others. It is important to keep our client awareness of the different methods to safely guard their product and us as consumers and workshops like this help in letting everyone see the bigger picture. Also, it helps in sharing of information from companies that have a system in place and give advice to smaller business who will one day reach that level.
Mariculture Inception Workshop	Participants: Beltraide, Belize Fisheries Department, Sea Food Companies, Other Stakeholders On the 20th of March 2024, the Fisheries Department facilitated a Mariculture Inception Workshop. The workshop was held to identify key sources of critical technical, environmental, legal, and social information. In the workshop, a brief presentation of the key elements of the consultancy to identify mariculture opportunities in Belize was provided by Mr. Flores. Mr. Alejandro Flores is the international consultant in charge of the project. The second stage of the mariculture workshop is the use of the stakeholder identification matrix. A discussion between all stakeholders in the meeting was held to cover and determine what would be the best mariculture species on which Belize can capitalize. Some of the species mentioned were snapper, oysters, eel, grouper, catfish, and seaweed. The discussion took most of the remaining time. The meeting then ended with a date selection where the consultant will come to Belize to get a better understanding of our mariculture.
Trademark protection for Exporters	The virtual trademark protection for Exporters was facilitated by representatives of BELIPO on January 10, 2024. They provided an overview of the importance of trademark protection, requirements, and timeframe for obtaining a trademark protection, and particularly the Madrid Protocol. There was a total of 52 in attendance. It was an opportunity for clients to ask further questions on the procedures for both local and international requirements and other queries and concerns.

Covid Relief Women in Emerging Industries Project	<p>Clients are currently finalizing investments and the reporting phase, which is to be completed by the end of October. Assistance was provided to participants through the reporting of investment of grant funds, completion and submission of grant agreements, and other relevant documents. Support was also provided to clients through the development of relevant information for the upcoming Seaweed catalogue under the COVID Relief Project. The project participants have all submitted their grant agreement and other relevant documents required.</p> <p>Activities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Development of a TOR to outsource the development of a Seaweed Catalogue for an external consultant (September to November). 2. Mini videos for all music and seaweed participants 3. Taste of Seaweed Linkage initiative 4. Brochure catalogue 5. Closing ceremony
Taiwan Seafood and Cacao Trade Mission to Belize	<p>As requested by the Embassy of Taiwan and CATO, EXPORTBelize personnel facilitated the Trade Mission by Organizing site visits to seafood and cacao clients, hotel bookings, and through the creation and printing of Mission Itineraries. EXPORTBelize personnel then accompanied the delegation on the site visits and acted as support to CATO and the Taiwanese Embassy.</p>
Seaweed Aquaculture Symposium	<p>On March 5th EXPORTBelize personnel (OC, LT, DH, WH, NA) attended the event, which is to foster knowledge sharing and networking on seaweed cultivation techniques, relevant aquaculture policies and regulations, market opportunities, among other topics. A presentation on the COVID Relief for Women in Emerging Industries (CRWEI) was given by the Project Unit, detailing the project outcomes. EXPORTBelize also facilitated by provided a list of seaweed entrepreneurs that were able to showcase their products at the booth display/mini expo area. On March 6th, OC also attended a site visit with visiting delegation to the Turneffe Atoll to visit an operating seaweed farm, vital information and methodologies were shared with the delegation.</p>
Academia Outreach	<p>The EXPORTBelize unit organized academia outreach to high schools in the Cayo District during the months of February and March 2024. The presentation was an interactive session for students to understand the role that BELTRAIDE has as the trade and Investment agency for Belize, introduce local products/services, and encourage entrepreneurship mindset. The outreach opened the door for further networking and training opportunities for students and lectures offered by SBDCBelize and BTEC.</p>
Completed Chocolatiers of Belize	<p>The Chocolate Producers Catalogue serves as collateral material used to bring exposure to the chocolate producers of Belize. The team was tasked to update that catalogue to determine which of the companies in the catalogue are still currently operating and potentially find new players in the chocolate producer's market. All companies in the present catalogue were given a call to determine if they are still in operation. Additionally, after conducting research we noted that new chocolate producers have entered the market. The team then drafted and sent an email to the producers that showed interest. The email requested information regarding the company such as a contact person, email address of the contact person or company, Products, images of the different products, and the address of the business. To conclude, the EXPORTBelize team carefully read through all the information gathered before submitting the MCU. A work order was then made to MCU to develop a new design for the chocolatier catalogue using the information and images that the team provided.</p>

<p>Seaweed Mariculture Financing Scheme</p>	<p>Rebel Consulting Group has been contracted by Compete Caribbean to develop a Seaweed Mariculture Financing Scheme. Three stakeholder consultation sessions were conducted by consultants in Belize City, Belmopan, and Placencia. To move forward with the findings, the consulting team had proposed a shift in the scope of the project that would focus on developing a roadmap for the seaweed industry, however, this was not endorsed, and the initial project scope remains. On November 29th, a follow-up debriefing session was organized and executed, which included BELTRAIDE, Rebel Consulting, Ministry of Blue Economy and Civil Aviation, Fisheries Department, and Compete Caribbean. Feedback was provided on public consultations and, a new workplan for project execution was provided by Rebel Consulting. The project is expected to be completed in February 2024 with draft deliverables to be submitted on December 31st.</p>
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EXPORTBelize had 135 client engagements for FY 2023-2024 and supported other initiatives such as:

- National Agriculture Trade Show (NATS 2023)
- Time Release Study with Customs (TRS)
- Cacao Symposium – Cacao Festival 2023
- Commonwealth Visit to Belize
- Cacao Research Center Annual Research & Development Symposium
- Made in Belize Expo 2023
- Directorate General for Foreign Trade Sensitization Session
- OUTSOURCE2LAC
- Training of Trainers (ToT) Program
- Kaohsiung Food Show
- EXPOFER, Chetumal, Quintana Roo, Mx.
- Taiwan International Coffee, Tea, and Wine Show
- Quality Management System ISO 9001:2015
- BCCAR Sensitization for BELTRAIDE Staff
- Investment and Trade Mission Mexico (led by IPCU)
- Galen’s University Annual Eagle Day
- Our lady of Guadalupe Career Day
- Capacity Building in Digital Security, Responsible Information Management and Gender Focus on the Use of Information Technologies for Advisors – El Salvador

Throughout the coming fiscal year, EXPORTBelize will continue exploring new avenues to strengthen the Belizean export sector and will diligently work in the continued implementation of viable projects which have been determined as successful. Results in export development and export promotion will continue to be at the centre of all efforts undertaken by EXPORTBelize.

Highlights

- Seaweed Webinar Series: Financing Opportunities for Seaweed Mariculture Production
- BIBCAP Meeting Pillar 1
- BIBCAP Meeting Pillar 9
- LAC Flavors 2024, Manaus Brazil
- Made in Belize Expo Participation/Client Support/Booth Judging
- Cacao Fest 2024
- BL – 1040 Suppliers Development Program Inbound Mission
- BL – 1040 Trainings
- ✓ Workshop 1: Fundamentals of digital technology FDI

- ✓ Workshop 2: Sector Deep Dives
- ✓ Workshop 3: Developing a unique investor offer
- ✓ Workshop 4: Ensuring gender parity in digital sector job creation
- Internal Communications Training
- National Competitiveness Month Launch
- WIPO Project Closing Event
- IDB Procurement Training
- Taipei International Food Show
- Taichung Food Show Product Procurement
- FinTech Forum
- National Agriculture Trade Show
- Taiwan Seafood Inbound Mission
- National MSME Roadshow

Featured Events

Belize Investment Summit (BIS) 2023

As a response to strengthen women's investment opportunities, and enhance the livelihood of Belizeans, the Office of the Prime Minister and the Ministry of Finance, Economic Development & Investment hosted the Belize Investment Summit.

The Belize Investment Summit took place over three days on August 30 – September 1, 2023, at the Grand Caribe Resort, Ambergris Caye, San Pedro, Belize. The event, hosted by the Office of the Prime Minister brought together government officials, policymakers, entrepreneurs, ambassadors, and business leaders from Guatemala, Mexico, Taiwan, Korea, and from the Caribbean Guyana & St. Kitts to connect, engage in thoughtful discussions, and explore the multitude of investment opportunities in Belize.

The event featured keynote speaker former President of Colombia, Ivan Duque Marquez highlighting the potential economic benefits for the orange economy in Belize. The former president recognized Belize as "a burgeoning land of opportunity, enriched with cultural diversity and undergoing rapid development". He further emphasized the need for Belize to establish a dedicated cabinet that would strategize on maximizing the value derived from the orange economy.

The Prime Minister signed a collaborative agreement with the Inter-American Development Bank for the Promotion of Sustainable Growth in the Blue Economy. The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) approved a \$7 million loan to Belize to help sustainably expand its blue economy. The program's overall objectives are to increase the earning potential of artisanal fishers and keep fishery exports high while promoting sustainable use of the country's commercial marine resources.

Initially, 5 entrepreneurs were to be shortlisted in each category so they could present their pitches. However, due to the limited number of submissions in the start-up category, only 3 startups passed to the shortlisted phase. A total of 13 entrepreneurs presented their business pitches, 5 in the Near Export-Export Ready category, 5 in the maturing category, and three in the startup category.

iii. FUTURE PLANS AND PRIORITIES

National MSME Roadshow (NMR) 2024

The National MSME Roadshow 2024 will be organized by BELTRAIDE under the Office of the Prime Minister to support MSMEs countrywide. The Roadshow supports the creation of an environment that is favourable for MSME development, enhancing MSMEs' access to markets and the development of business relationships, encourage local buying to aid in the economic recovery, increase the amount of MSME products and services that the public and private sectors purchases, facilitates MSME sector access to affordable financing, and elevates the business acumen of MSMEs.

Like NMR 2022, there are a few activities held under the 3-day roadshow:

- A Boot Camp that provides company development training in business models, marketing, customer service, goal setting, and money management.
- A formalization clinic permitting important government organizations and financial institutions a place to give MSMEs services and pertinent information, including live registration and discussion on government policies and incentives.
- A Showcase/Pop Up Shop that provides MSMEs an opportunity to market and sell their products while enabling supply chain connections with the Tourism Sector.

Entrepreneurship Convention (ENTRECON) 2024



BELTRAIDE, through its technical unit, the Small Business Development Centre Belize (SBDCBelize) and EXPORTBelize, this event is expected to launch in November of 2024, concluding the NMR 2024, the National Entrepreneurship Convention [#EntreCon] is the leading entrepreneurship event aimed to gather all industry stakeholders, including government, business support agencies, professionals and academia, to discuss trends and challenges facing entrepreneurs in Belize. The convention is also intended to provide the audience with advice from professional and experts in selected entrepreneurial discussions.

VII. Blue Bond and Finance Permanence Unit (BBFPU)

i. INTRODUCTION

In November 2021, The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and the Government of Belize (GOB) finalized the single largest debt conversion agreement through the Blue Loan Agreement (BLA) and the Conservation Funding Agreement (CFA). These agreements referred to as the Belize Blue Bonds has enabled the country to reduce its debt burden and increase its long-term investment in Ocean conservation for the next 20 years with a commitment to protect up to 30% of Belize Ocean. The Belize Blue Bonds are contingent on eight Conservation Milestones and other conservation commitments that span the mandate of several Government Ministries.



The principal objective of the BBFP Unit is to, on behalf of the Government of Belize (GoB), coordinate the delivery of Governments’ obligations under the BLA and CFA.

ii. MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS

The table below provides the achievements of the Milestones and other Conservation Commitments delivered in the 2023-2024 fiscal year.

Table 1: Achievements from Milestones and Conservation Commitments under the CFA (2023-2024).

Item	Achievements
Milestone 4: Expand Biodiversity Protection Zones to 25% of Belize’s Total Ocean Space.	A workplan for the delivery of Milestone 4 has been prepared in collaboration with the Fisheries Department (FiD) for the designation of the new Biodiversity Protection Zones (BPZs). The plan has been approved by the Belize Sustainable Ocean Plan (BSOP) Core Team and Steering Committee. The Coastal Zone Management Authority and Institute (CZMAI), the BSOP lead agency, in partnership with the FiD is responsible for the identification, rationalization, and validation of the additional 4.7% of Belize’s Ocean Space for the designation of the BPZs expansion to meet the 25% Milestone 4 goal. To date, a preliminary list of potential BPZs of interest has been prepared and presented to FiD and other ocean users for their further input and prioritization; this list was prepared through the utilization of the BSOP stakeholder driven process.
Milestone 5: Revised Coastal Zone Management Act (CZM) and Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) Plan	A consultancy to complete the legislative revision of the CZM Act and ICZM Plan is in the pipeline for delivery by Q4 of the 2024/2025 fiscal year. To date, the first round of inaugural meetings of the Coastal Advisory Committees (CACs) were completed in eight of the coastal planning regions. The meetings were designed to outline the specific requirement and planning for the updated ICZM Plan.

1.2 Marine Spatial Planning Process in Belize

The delivery of the Belize's marine spatial plan formally known as the Belize Sustainable Ocean Plan (BSOP) and Revised Integrated Coastal Zone Management Plan are two of the major deliverables for Belize under the Blue Bonds. Together, these plans will provide a coherent and stakeholder-driven framework that will support the delivery of a sustainable blue economy for Belize.

1.3 Government Strategic Allocation (GSA)

The GSA is earmarked for the GoB and its agencies to support the delivery of the milestones and conservation commitments included in the CFA. The BBFP is the single government entity responsible for the development and implementation of the GSA proposals to the conservation fund Belize Fund for a Sustainable Future (Belize Fund) which was developed as part of the Blue Bonds.

The coordination with the key Government agencies is ongoing as it relates to the GSA implementation. The first GSA project is being executed over a three (3) year period from 2023-2025 with a total budget of \$11,692,815.20 BZD.

Main achievements of the GSA project for the period 2023-2024 are as follows:

1.3.1 Fisheries – Domestic Fisheries

- As part of strengthening Belize's Fisheries Governance and Management Effectiveness in Belize's Blue Space, the GSA project supported the Fisheries Department (FiD) with equipment and resources to effectively monitor and ensure compliance of the fisheries laws which is vital to protecting Belize's valuable marine areas and fisheries.
- Patrols within the Fisheries Department increased by approximately 36% through an additional eight thousand two hundred and sixteen gallons (8216 gal) of fuel allocated to the department in the sum of BZD \$105 K allocated to strengthening compliance and monitoring patrols in fishing Areas 2, 3 and 8.
- The project enhanced the FiD's capacity in GIS by training ten technical and enforcement officers in ARCGIS Pro to aid with the processing of data and information. Knowledge of ARCGIS Pro will assist the officers with the necessary analysis and representation of data to create greater effectiveness with their monitoring programs and activities.
- A National Enforcement Strategy and Action Plan is being developed through a four phased approach in partnership with the Belize Coast Guard (BCG). The initiative is being supported by the BBFP Unit, The Nature Conservancy, and the Belize Fund. To date, Phase 1 (Planning and Design) has been completed and Phase 2 (National Stakeholder engagement and formulation of National Enforcement strategy) are currently ongoing. A consultant to evaluate the status of fisheries and conservation enforcement within Belize's ocean Space has been engaged to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of the current enforcement initiatives/programs within the MPAs and ocean space.

1.3.2 Fisheries – High Seas Fisheries

- Approximately BZD 1.2 million was allocated to strengthen the capacity of the High Seas Fisheries Unit with an Electronic Monitoring Program (EMP). The EMP is intended to modernize the way the BHSFU monitors and manages high seas fisheries to ensure greater accuracy, transparency, and efficiency in the high seas. The program will improve the collection of electronic observer data to meet the reporting requirement of Regional Fisheries management organizations and enhanced monitoring, control, and surveillance of Belize's distant water fishing vessels.
- The EMP is supported by a Financial Strategy designed to create finance permanence to support the sustainability of the program through the establishment of a Revolving Fund to be managed by the Financial Services Commission of Belize.

1.3.3 Enhancing BCG operational capabilities

- Two Unmanned Air Vehicles (UAVs) were procured to support long-range aerial patrols in the marine space. The UAVs is new technology being piloted in country by the BCG to support maritime enforcement of Belize's blue space. The UAVs have a maximum endurance of approximately five hours fly time with no payload and approximately three hours if payload is included dependent on weight of payload. The UAVs have a maximum cruise speed of approximately 36 mph and comes equipped with a NextVision NighHawk2 camera which delivers powerful long range visible and thermal imagery to support night patrols.
- A Drone Squadron consisting of eight persons has been formed by the BCG to complement the Coast Guard's maritime fleet by establishing an aerial fleet to create greater effectiveness in the monitoring and enforcement of Belize's fisheries and conservation areas in its Total Ocean Space.

1.3.4 Blue Carbon

- BZD 1.6 million through the GSA has been allocated to the Belize Forest Department to support the data collection process and the estimation of carbon removals and emissions in mangrove forests.
- Capacities have been built within the Forest Department (FD) to improve the ability to monitor annual mangrove cover through high-resolution imagery as well as data collection on the sequestration of carbon by mangroves stands through the expansion of six (6) permanent sample plots to improve on the datasets that provide carbon estimates for Mangroves and to complement the annual mangrove cover mapping exercise.
- A new forest level report has been submitted to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change containing comprehensive data on forest cover and carbon estimates which now includes mangroves.
- The updating of the shapefiles for the 2020 to 2023 reference period has been validated with the ground truthing pending completion by the end of Q1 of 2024.
- A Climate Change and Carbon Markets Initiative Bill (inclusive of Blue Carbon) is currently under development through the Government of Belize. This initiative is being led by the Ministry of Sustainable Development and Climate Change with support from the BBFP. The Bill will outline the rules, modalities, and procedures for interested parties to engage in the sale, trade, and purchase of carbon credits within the jurisdiction of Belize.

1.3.5 Implementation and Socialization of the Belize Blue Bond

- The BBFP Unit hosted the Blue Finance for Nature and People Event as part of the Blue Bonds Program Socialization. The Blue Finance for Nature and People event was planned to socialize two years into implementation of the Blue Bonds Program since the signing of the Blue Bonds. The 2022/2023 annual report¹ was disseminated to the public at the Blue Finance for Nature and People event hosted with all stakeholders and partners in Belize City.
A Signature and a Partner video were produced and aired nationally throughout the country. Both videos were aired countrywide. As part of a national campaign for the socialization of the Blue Bonds Program. The countrywide campaign utilized radio ads, tv ads, educational fairs and morning shows to promote the work of the Blue Bonds Program.
- The United Nations System in Belize through the Resident Coordinator participated in a two-day field mission to understand the Blue Bonds investments. The mission provided an overview of the collaboration between state and non-state actors to strengthen enforcement and the framework for the optimal use of fisheries resources in Belize's blue space. The mission created opportunities for greater collaboration and partnership between the Government of Belize and the United Nations System in Belize for the further leveraging of the Belize Blue Bonds.
- The BBFP participated alongside the FiD on a joint mission to meet with on the ground partners in Southern Belize who are grantees from the conservation funding under the Belize Blue Bonds. The mission has created opportunities for greater collaboration and partnership between the Government of Belize and on-the-ground NGO partners to maintain the health and functional integrity of Belize's ocean space for the benefit of nature and people.
- A Communication Strategy and Implementation Plan is being developed to increase the overall visibility, knowledge, and awareness about partnership initiatives between stakeholders, public and private sector with special emphasis on the socialization of the Blue Bonds Program.

¹ Belize Blue Bonds (2021-2023) Report <https://2ly.link/1vxUt>

1.4 Resilient Bold Belize (RBB) - Project Finance for Permanence (PFP) Initiative

The Resilient Bold Belize (RBB), Belize's Project Finance for Permanence (PFP), is an innovative financial strategy that enables governments and local communities, in partnership with funders and NGOs, to secure long-term management and financing for networks of conservation areas in the form of a deal with a single closing agreement.

The RBB is Government led, with a national commitment to implement the comprehensive PFP Conservation Plan that seeks to meet national conservation and sustainable development targets through the scaling up of nature-based solutions that safeguards Belize's marine and coastal ecosystems and addresses the risk of biodiversity loss and ecosystem collapse.

The RBB will strengthen Belize's ability to:

1. Contribute to the Global Biodiversity Framework targets of the Convention on Biological Diversity.
2. Strengthen Belize's ability to meet its NDCs commitments under the United Nations Framework Convention for Climate Change.
3. Contribute to the sustainable livelihoods and improved wellbeing of all resource users and vulnerable communities in Belize.
4. Ensure Belize can meet its national targets of 30% ecosystem representation within the National Protected Areas System (NPAS), and other National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) targets.
5. Contribute towards a successful Blue Economy contributing to the sustainable development and national economy of Belize.
6. Provide long-term investment into Belize marine and coastal protected areas, ensuring Belize is recognized as an effective and innovative leader in management of its marine resources.

During this period, the GoB and WWF in partnership with the Development Finance Corporation of Belize (DFC) and Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) launched the Artisanal Fishing Loan Pilot Program designed to improve the livelihoods of small-scale artisanal fishers and strengthen stewardship for sustainable fisheries in Belize, as a part of the RBB. The program was co-designed with fishers from Dangriga, Hopkins and Sarteneja who use Fishing Area 8².

This pilot loan program has 4 components:

1. Loans - Loan issued by DFC tailored to the needs of licensed artisanal fishers to help them to fish smarter and sustainably. The loans can be used to finance fishing trips, new engines, gear, and boats.
2. Financial management training - Financial management and resilience training to empower fishers to make more informed financial decisions, increase their financial resiliency, and see the connections between their business model and ocean sustainability.
3. Fisheries management training - WCS will be conducting training sessions in fisheries regulations and sustainability best practices.
4. Fisheries management data collection - Together with the FiD, fisheries data will be collected and shared with fishers to improve their understanding about the status of fisheries resources.

The pilot program targets fishers in Glover's Reef Marine Reserve with loan packages ranging from BZ \$3,000 to BZ \$150,000 for periods of 12 months to 7 years. Through the loan program, DFC is offering a lower interest rate for women fishers ranging from 8% to 11% to encourage their participation. The pilot program is set to roll out to the other fishing areas upon the single closing of the PFP in 2025.

²[Fishing Areas of Belize](#)

In 2023, The first draft of the Conservation Plan and the Financial Model were completed with input from conservation working groups stakeholders. The Conservation Plan is a core component of the RBB, an innovative model designed to secure the policies, capacity, institutional arrangements, and full funding for the effective and long-term protection of the country's marine and coastal protected areas and connected ecosystems. The 2nd version of the Conservation Plan and Financial Model along with the first version of the Operating Manual, institutional agreements for implementation are to be completed in July 2024. Single Closing for the RBB is expected to be signed by the Government of Belize in 2025 which will mark the commencement of its implementation.

1.5 Resource Mobilization

1.5.1 Blue & Green Islands GEF8 Integrated Program Child Project: Resilient Bold Belize

Under the Global Environment Facility (GEF-8), the Resilient Bold Belize (RBB) Child Project was approved. The proposal was jointly developed by the BBFP and WWF with its primary objective to achieve effectively managed and increasingly resilient marine and coastal ecosystems that support the wellbeing of Belizeans. The Belize project will catalyse the RBB, Belize's Project Finance for Permanence (PFP) Initiative currently being developed by BBFP and WWF. The project will be divided into three main components, which are as follows:

Component 1: Strengthening the enabling environment for improved sustainability of Belize's marine and coastal ecosystems, benefiting the fisheries and tourism sectors.

Component 2: Scaling up Nature-based Solutions in coastal and marine Protected Areas and in key ecosystems outside of Protected Areas.

Component 3: Communications and Knowledge Management in alignment with the Blue and Green Islands (BGI) Integrated Program.

Activities under this project will include effective management of coastal and marine protected areas improving fisher and tourism livelihoods, improved enforcement supporting a sustainable fishery, support for income diversification opportunities that assist fishers in improving the sustainable use of marine resources.

Value: BZ \$9,485,928

Duration: 5 years

1.5.2 GEF-RBB Special Climate Change Fund "Improving Stewardship and Sustainable Livelihoods" Project

The BBFP has partnered with WWF for the development of the GEF Special Climate Change Fund (SCCF) project entitled "Improving Stewardship and Sustainable Livelihoods" aligned with the GEF8 BGI IP Child Project and the larger RBB. The SCCF objective is to serve adaptation needs of SIDs, directly targeting increased resiliency of people. The SCCF project aims to strengthen resilience of fisherfolk and fishing communities most vulnerable to climate change.

Component 1: Creating an enabling environment for fisherfolk to participate in policy making and increase uptake of sustainable fishing practices through capacity building in target communities.

Component 2: Scaling up nature-based solutions to improve livelihoods in marine and coastal protected areas and in key ecosystems outside of protected areas.

Component 3: Knowledge management, coordination, and communications.

Value: BZ \$6,000,000

Duration: 5 years

1.5.3 People, Planet, Prosperity- Belize Pilot Natural Capital Project

The BBFP and the Ministry of Economic Development are coordinating with the IDB and The Natural Capital project at Stanford University to implement the GEF Project: People, Planet, Prosperity, Mainstreaming Nature in Policy & Investment Decisions. Belize has been selected as one of the pilot projects with an aim of securing and monitoring Belize's natural capital to achieve targets set by results-based financing in 2024. It is expected that the pilot project will build on Belize's success with blue finance and intends to expand on its use of innovative finance mechanisms using natural capital approaches to benefit both its people and the planet. The project will develop key performance indicators (KPIs) for high-priority, results-based blue finance mechanisms, setting the goalposts for tracking the country's progress toward achieving the targets on which these finance mechanisms are based. The project team will also develop a monitoring, reporting, and verification (MRV) process for these indicators, and develop capacity within Belize to implement these measures.

Key Activities

- Identify and define a suite of KPIs to track progress towards targets set by finance and policy mechanisms.
- Define a monitoring and reporting approach using tools such as InVEST to monitor KPIs.
- Identify a verification process for these KPIs including pathways and key actors for implementing an MRV process.
- Further develop capacity to continue using natural capital assessments to inform expansion of marine protected areas, and to report on progress in achieving targets set in results-based financing instruments.
- Scale impact by sharing innovative approach and lessons learned with other countries and financial institutions around the world.

The team will proceed with the collection of data from various sources to validate the natural capital assessments in Belize and decide on the use of funds (BZ \$ 100,000). The team will also seek to align the project with other currently funded projects and initiatives and build a dashboard for data visualization.

1.6 Main Contributions to #planBelize

The fulfilment of Belize's Blue Bonds and the successful design of the Resilient Bold Belize (Belize's PfP) are geared towards the conservation, sustainable development, and use of Belize's coastal and marine resources. This aligns with the #planBelize key pillars 1, 2, and 5 which are focused on Poverty Reduction, Economic transformation and growth, and the Protection of the Environment and Natural Resources, respectively. These initiatives are also expected to deliver on the People-Centric Conservation Agenda endorsed by Cabinet in September of 2023 and contribute to Belize meeting its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement and Sustainable Development Goals.

Financial contributions supporting these activities under #planBelize are as follows:

Blue Bond Agreements: BZ \$360,000,000.00 (20 years: 2020-2040)

RBB PFP: ~ BZ\$ 200,000,000.00 (10 years: 2025-2035)

iii. LESSONS LEARNT

The implementation of the Blue Bonds underscores the need for better interministerial intersectoral coordination. Despite great success in the delivery of the conservation commitments under the Blue Bonds there is still a need for Government to better understand the interrelation between the various priorities and programs across Government and their contribution to the broader development plans. The accountability by respective Ministries and Government Agencies for the delivery of the milestones should be underscored.

In terms of improving the operations of the conservation fund developed as a deliverable under the Blue Bonds, the Government should strengthen their representation on the Board of Directors of the Belize Fund to strengthen the operation and activities of the conservation fund. The following areas were identified for such engagement:

- There is a need for the BFSF to establish a project preparation grant (PPG) to facilitate future GSA project proposal development to allow for all required plans (Gender Action Plan, Environmental and Social Risk Management Plan, Stakeholder Engagement Plan etc) be drafted at project design which will ensure activities will be costed and approved as part of the approved GSA project proposal. Having a PPG for the development of future GSA proposals will allow for the completion of all necessary plans to ensure the safeguards and fund requirements are integrated and mainstreamed during project design.
- The fund should not take the role of an implementing partner having to approve annual workplans and expenditures above a specific threshold. This results in a delay to project implementation and project timelines. As per the Conservation Fund Terms outlined in Exhibit B of the agreement there is no article that speaks to implementation. The agreement refers to a grants award program manual which does not refer to the implementation modality.
- The Fund should actively facilitate better access by communities and groups who depends on the resources within Belize's Blue Space for their livelihoods. Any Conservation initiative must include as its utmost priority the sustainable livelihood of affected people from any conservation action or decision. The uptake from the fund has been dominated primarily by the NGO and conservation sector.
- The rules and regulations that constitutes and govern these trusts funds must be carefully crafted so that the social goals of communities and affected persons are zealously pursued and that the guardrails are not breached.
- The representation of government on the Fund should be safeguarded given that they represent the people and the movement to further decrease government representation on the board puts in jeopardy the people centric conservation agenda of the government and undermines the democratic nature of representation on the Fund.
- The representation by the Government on the Fund should be more coordinated and more meaningful. To date the representation by the government CEOs have been inconsistent, uncoordinated, and weak.

iv. FUTURE PLANS AND PRIORITIES

The continued implementation of the Belize Blue Bonds will see further achievements in marine and coastal conservation and the strengthening of the policy and institutional framework to safeguard the functional integrity of nature and their ecosystems services which are central to a thriving Blue Economy and the livelihoods of Belizeans.

4.1 Resilient Bold Belize

The completion of the RBB Conservation Plan and Financial Model is scheduled for 2024 and will constitute the components for the Single Closing in 2025. The BBFP along with the WWF will be coordinating with the various stakeholders both Government and non-government to ensure that these two deliverables have benefitted from their input and reflects the priority areas for the Conservation Plan and the necessary costs estimates for achieving the activity-based conservation goals in the long-term, implementation of the RBB will commence in 2025.

The BBFP and WWF will continue with the development of the full project document for the Blue and Green Islands GEF8 Integrated Program RBB Child Project submission to the GEF in July of 2024 and implementation in 2025. The GEF project will be executed over a five (5) year period from 2025-2030.

The BBFP and WWF will utilize the GEF one step process for its application to the GEF SCCF. The GEF SCCF Project CEO Endorsement Request Documents will be submitted in quarter one of 2025 with the project’s implementation starting shortly after the Single Closing of the PfP. The GEF SCCF like the GEF BGI-Ip project will have a five-year implementation period from 2025 to 2030.

This Strategic Partnership between the RBB and the DFC is meant to leverage the livelihoods component of the RBB and to create a tested model for supporting to the livelihoods of fishers in Belize and encouraging good stewardship and sustainable use best practices in Belize’s small-scale fisheries sector. The BBFP along with the WWF will also be coordinating with the InterAmerican Development Bank (IDB) to align areas of the 5769/OC-BL Promoting Sustainable Growth in the Blue Economy focusing on livelihoods support and the identification of opportunities for further leveraging and complementarity with the RBB and the Fisher Fund Loan Program.

4.3 Blue Bond Agreement Delivery: Milestones and Conservation Commitments

The GoB remains committed to meeting its obligations under the BLA and CFA and will continue its work with all partners and stakeholders in delivering the remaining milestones. The BBFP remains on schedule to ensure that the GoB delivers on the other timebound Milestones and other conservation commitments. Upcoming Milestones are as follows with accompanying formal reporting to the BIC on these deliveries:

Table 1: Timebound Milestones and percentage of Belize’s Ocean under Protection.

Milestone No.	Milestone Summary Description	Time after signing the Agreement	% of Ocean in High Protection	% of Ocean in Medium Protection	Total % of Ocean in Biodiversity Protection
4	Expand Biodiversity Protection Zones to 25% of the Ocean	3 years (Nov. 2024)	Add 4.7% more in total across either Medium and/or High Zones		25%
5	Implementation of Integrated Coastal Zone Management Plan (ICZMP)	4 years (Nov. 2025)			
6	Complete Biodiversity Protection Zones, MSP signed into law and implemented	5 years (Nov. 2026)	Add up to 5% more in total across either Medium and/or High zones		30%
7	At least 3 IUCN Green List Applications Submitted	6 years (Nov. 2027)			
8	Approved Management Plans	8 years (Nov. 2029)			

4.6 Marine Spatial Planning Process in Belize

The BBFP’s role is to coordinate the delivery of BSOP along with CZMAI and partners to ensure a participatory, inclusive, and transparent process. The future priority areas relating to the BSOP are the Legislative Framework for ICZM in Belize (November 2025), revision of the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations (to support the BSOP), and the up to 30% informed expansion of BPZs within Belize’s total ocean space (November 2026).

VIII. Public Private Partnership Unit



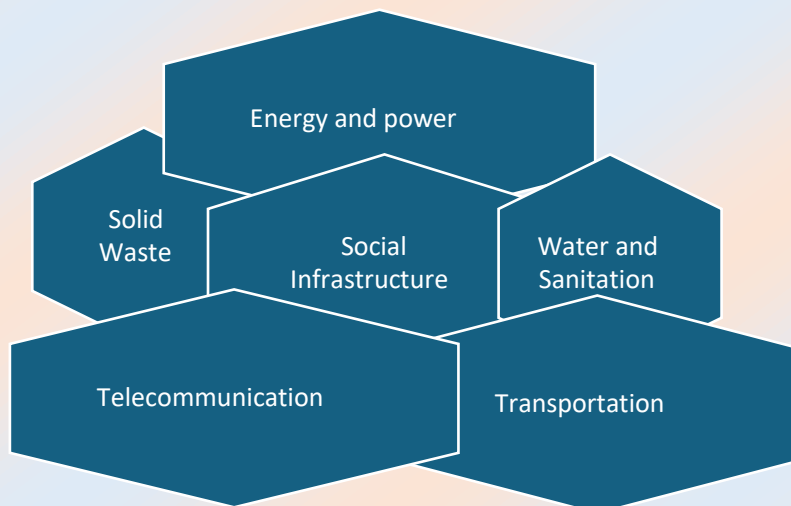
**ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT
COUNCIL**

i. INTRODUCTION

The Government of Belize (GOB) is dedicated to enhancing the amount and quality of social and economic infrastructure across Belize, recognizing the difficulties in balancing the demands of public service with the preservation of macroeconomic stability, improvement of fiscal space, and sustainability of debt. In October 2021, the National PPP Policy was approved by the Cabinet as part of the GOB's efforts to investigate developing a robust Public Private Partnership (PPP) Program. Following this, a PPP Unit was established to mobilize private sector capital to support largescale investments in infrastructure and other development projects that are in line with government policy priorities for the benefit of the public.

PPPs are long-term partnerships between public and private entities that enable the private sector to contribute resources, capital, and experience to infrastructure initiatives. By achieving greater Value-for-Money (VFM) in assets and/or services of public interest within, but not limited to, the following sectors, the GOB seeks to promote new infrastructure projects that help in delivering the prioritized action in its Medium-Term Development Strategy (MTDS) objectives, national infrastructure investment plans, or any other pertinent strategic plan for the government.

Sectors



It is intended that the PPP Unit, in the Office of the Prime Minister, collaborates closely with relevant Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) to ensure the private sector's involvement in the development and implementation of Belize's PPP program. The PPP Unit serves as the hub for the day-to-day operations of the PPP program and assists MDAs and the multi-agency PPP Project Teams in ensuring the long-term viability of each PPP project.

ii. MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS:

2.1 Unit's Structure

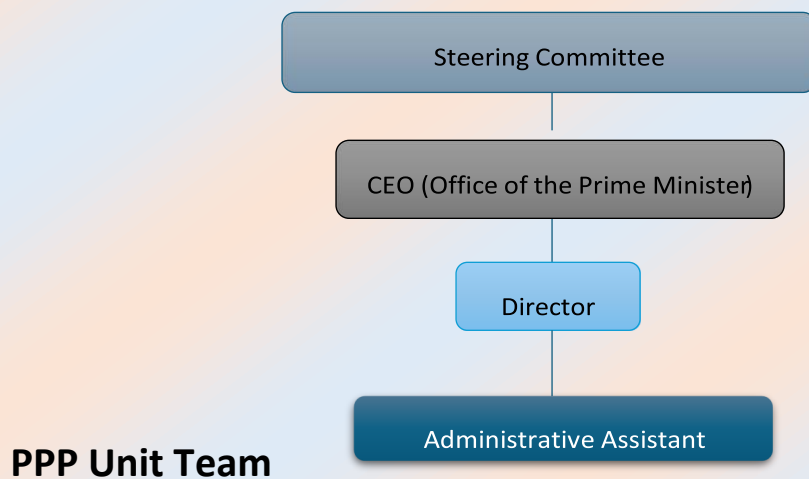
The guidance and administration of the GOB PPP Program is separated into:

- i. Strategic responsibilities: including the approval of policies and strategies for the PPP program, taking into consideration the alignment of the policy with MTDS and/or other relevant strategic infrastructure plans. Responsibilities will include discussing and approving the PPP Policy and PPP pipeline.
- ii. Operational responsibilities: day-to-day administration of the PPP program, including project assessment and preparation, management of transactions, and oversight of the projects.

The Economic Development Council (EDC) within the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) started the recruitment process with the issuance of the Request for Expressions of Interest for the positions of the PPP Unit Director and the Administrative Assistant, both of whom provide support through the established PPP Unit.

Following the evaluation and shortlisting of applications, interviews were conducted in June 2023, and those who were successful were extended employment offers. Following their acceptance of these offers, the PPP Unit opened its office on October 2, 2023. The PPP Unit Director and Administrative Assistant positions have been filled, meeting the unit's existing staffing requirements. The operational duty falls to the PPP Unit.

A PPP Steering Committee has been set up to monitor the creation and execution of each PPP and to provide guidance to the PPP program. The PPP program's strategic duties are assigned to the Steering Committee.



**Steering Committee
Members**



2.2 Budget

The PPP budget was allocated from reprogrammed monies from the OPM's authorized FY 2023–2024 budget for the period of October 1, 2023, to March 31, 2024. This amount was only used for equipment purchases and salaries. For the PPP Unit, two completely furnished workstations were created. The Office of the Prime Minister (Belize City Office), situated on the Eleanor Hall Building's third floor on Lake Independence Boulevard, is home to the PPP Unit office.

Following submission of the PPP Unit's FY 2024–2025 budget, the following budget was approved:

**Public Private Partnership (PPP) Unit, Office of the Prime Minister
Operating Budget, FY: 2024-2025**

Description	FY 2024/2025
	BZ\$
Income:	
GOB Subvention funds	626,089.00
Total Unit Income	626,089.00
Recurrent Expenditure	
Staff Expenses	298,677.00

Travel and Subsistence	15,264.00
Material and Supplies	24,927.00
Operating Costs	194,584.00
Maintenance Costs	5,037.00
Training	2,400.00
Public Utilities	10,200.00
Total Recurrent Expenses	551,089.00
Cap2 Expenditure	
Computers & Peripherals	12,000.00
Purchase of Vehicle	63,000.00
Total Capital Expenses	75,000.00
Total Expenses	626,089.00

STRATEGIC PLANS AND OBJECTIVES:

The PPP Unit in its pursuit of fulfilling its mandate, has developed the following strategic plan, for each goal, for the period April 2023 – March 2024:

Strategy	Activity	Description
Goal 1: Administration & Management		
Identify the needs of the office, prepare fully equipped working stations for staff	Procuring of Office Equipment, i.e. printers, computers and filing cabinets	Ensuring that the staff is fully equipped and creating a clean safe workstation / workspace will increase efficiency and productivity
Institute an Internal Capacity Building Program	1. Identify and implement training opportunities 2. Work with local and international partners to identify regional/ international training for staff	Providing training to staff in areas to enhance their existing capabilities. QuickBooks and Project Management (Administrative Assistant), Executive Leadership (Director)

Strengthen Human Resources Management	Design structure of the PPP Unit and identify the area of expertise needed, aligned with the needs identified	Increase staff by 2 to meet the expertise needs identified for the unit. New hire to be done by end April 2024.
Strengthen Planning, Staff Development and Communications	Conduct weekly staff briefing	Monday morning staff briefing. Updates on the week before activities and accomplishment and brief on the current activities
Maintain and improve workstations and unit's assets	Conduct routine maintenance and servicing of equipment	Ensure that all staff have a safe physical environment and have access to good working condition equipment to perform duties and tasks effectively
Goal 2: Institutional Strengthening		
Established strong regulatory frameworks governing PPPs	Conduct Steering Committee Meetings as needed regularly	Constitute the most effective foundation on which success in later categories are typically built
Building Institutional Capacity	With the support from IDB, workshops will be conducted, with MDA's technical personnel, on the PPP Policy, key concepts, and implications for different Government units	Emphasize the importance of legal and regulatory frameworks, institutional capacity, and coordination across the preparation, implementation, and oversight of PPPs
	Support provided to strengthen the PPP institutional framework, with focus on preparation capacities, interinstitutional coordination, and project supervision and evaluation	Improve across project preparation, financing, risk management and ex-post evaluations.
Goal 3: Financial Management		
Establish and develop financial system for the PPP Unit	Prepare supplemental budget for FY 2023/2024 and submit for Approval	To guarantee that financial management systems are adequate.
Forecast Cash Flow, Operational Budgets, Balance Sheet, Profit and Loss	Prepare supplemental budget for FY 2024/2025 Submit for Approval	Establishing sufficient funds to implement projects

	Provide 'best practice' guidelines for financial operations at all times	Ensuring ongoing financial viability for all activities
Goal 4: Projects Development		
Engage with respective MDAs	PPP Project Prioritization implementation	Develop and apply a PPP project prioritization tool that could be implemented (and delivered for future use of Belize PPP unit) to identify an initial candidate for business case development (next stage)
	PPP Business case development	Upon the identification of a prioritized PPP project, support the development of an initial PPP business case for the selected project
Review Project documents	Set timeline for Project Tender process	

iii. LESSONS LEARNT

4. UPDATES- ACTIVITIES IN SUPPORT OF NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLANS:

I. The Inter-American Development Bank's support to the Government of Belize's PPP Program:

Belize has been accepted as a beneficiary country of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB)'s regional technical cooperation "Fostering the development of sustainable and resilient infrastructure in the Caribbean region (RG-T4220)." This program responds to the IDB's commitment to support the development of National Infrastructure Investment Plans (NIIP) in seven Caribbean countries, including Belize, for which it has already made non-reimbursable resources available.

The GOB acknowledges that closing the infrastructure gap in the country is essential to advancing the Sustainable Development Goals and climate commitments made under the country's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). The Belize NIIP will support the government in identifying and prioritizing the infrastructure projects needed to close this gap. The preparation of the NIIP will have a strong focus on the Transport, Water and Sanitation, and Energy sectors. It is envisioned to progress in five phases:

1) update/preparation of sector Master Plans; 2) project identification; 3) project prioritization; 4) design and endorsement of the Investment Plan; and 5) project preparation activities.

Progress: A kick-off meeting was held on March 21st, 2024, with the Ministry of Infrastructure Development and Housing's (MIDH) Chief Executive Officer as a first step in coordinating their initial cooperation to progress the planning and execution of the NIIP.

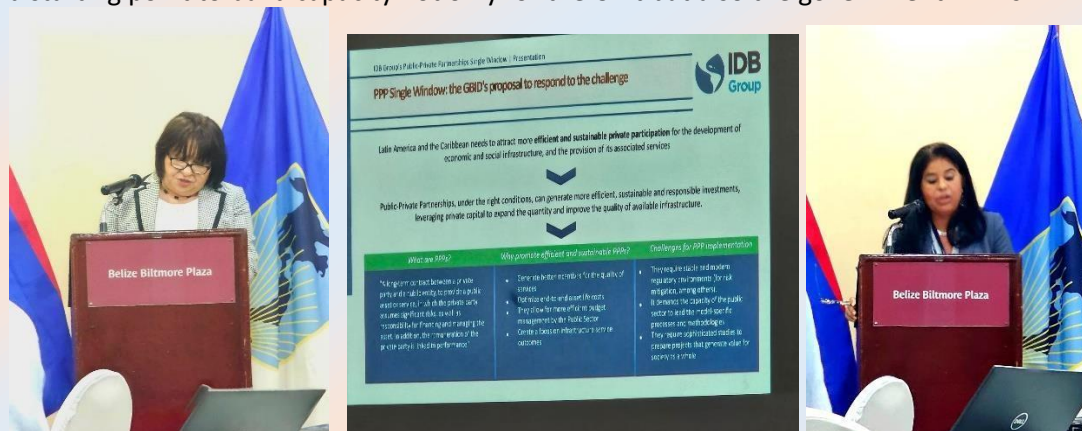
Next Steps:

A meeting is scheduled for April 2024 to present to MIDH focusing on PPP Contracts for Rehabilitation and Maintenance (CREAM) in the road sector in Belize and the possibility to develop a business case for PPP Roads. The presentation will include the following points:

1. Service level agreement for road asset operation, rehab, and maintenance, with extensive experience in LAC
2. Private sector replaces traditional public management in road maintenance
3. Private sector is responsible for management- rehabilitation and maintenance
4. Public sector compensates through availability payments linked to key performance indicators
5. Encourages innovation and efficiency (continuous improvement by maintaining quality standards)

In parallel, the IDB has also committed to support with the strengthening of the PPP Unit and the various government sectors, MDAs, with PPP capacity-building activities and the strengthening of PPP regulatory framework by identifying ad hoc financing mechanisms to guide toward increased private sector financing.

Progress: In February, with support from IDB, the unit held the 2-Days workshop with the members of the focus sectors, Transport, MIDH, Energy, Water and Sanitation, among others. The workshop focused on the definition of PPP, discussed the different models, presented the overview of the PPP policy. This initiative was a starting point to build capacity not only for the Unit but also the government MDAs.



Next Steps: Two activities are in the planning stage for capacity building and the strengthening of the PPP regulatory framework.

- i) PPP Unit participation in a PPP Conference in July
- ii) Start with the developing of the PPP regulations at GOB's request

II. PPP Unit support to the UNDP Electric Vehicle Pilot Project

The Government of Belize accessed 4.5 million Euros in grant funding under the European Union's Development Fund (EDF-11). These funds support

- i) The piloting of electric vehicle technology within Belize's Public
- ii) Transport System - The development of an enabling environment that supports the accelerated penetration of electric vehicles in Belize.

Through the e-Mobility Pilot Project, as part of the technical team, the PPP unit was invited to participate in Caribbean Sustainable Energy Forum (CSEF) 2023. The focus on the forum was sustainable energy production, delivery, and application within the transport sector.



The Government acquired three (3) e-buses for piloted operations between municipalities and the installation of the necessary electric charging infrastructure is in progress. New bus routes have been designated for the pilot project. The Government through the Ministry of Youth, Sports, and Transport (MYST) wishes to engage with private partner(s) to manage, operate and maintain the Electric Buses, while GOB will remain owner of the buses.

The PPP Unit was first contacted and asked to join the technical working group (TWG) to provide advice and consultation regarding the feasibility of utilizing a PPP model to operate the three electric buses that will operate on the northern and western corridors. Technical staff from the UNDP, PPP Unit, Ministries of Public Utilities, Energy, Logistics & E-Governance, (MPUELE), and Youth, Sports, and Transportation (MYST) comprise the TWG.

The PPP unit has supported and continues to support the project, even though the criteria did not meet those of a PPP model as defined by the national policy.

The Attorney General's Ministry has conducted legal review of the management contract draft bidding agreement that the PPP Unit delivered to the Ministry and recommendations made have been addressed. This management contract's goal is to collect data needed to conduct the feasibility study needed for developing the business case and defining key commercial terms to possibly execute a PPP transaction, guided by the country's PPP policy in its assessment and implementation.

Next Steps: The PPP Unit will continue to support the Ministry with the tendering process of the Management contract.

iv. FUTURE PLANS AND PRIORITY AREAS

The PPP Unit continues its efforts to develop and institutionalize the PPP Policy. In addition, it will also oversee the PPP Program by making sure that it is followed while assisting in the creation of each PPP project. The PPP unit is minimally staffed; however, but it is creating a design framework that will align with the existing strategic plan. An increase in staff is expected by mid-fiscal year 2024-2025.

One of Belize's top priorities is to close the infrastructure gap and mobilize resources from the private sector for sustainable development. PPPs are therefore an essential element for achieving efficient, sustainable, fiscally responsible projects with a high positive impact in socioeconomic terms while at the same time being highly attractive to the private sector. The IDB is committed to assisting the PPP unit of the government of Belize in the development of the complementary regulation of the PPP Policy for the identification, prioritization, preparation, procurement, and management of PPP contracts.

The appropriate MDAs are still being consulted as support is provided to update their sector expert plans. This will help in identifying and prioritizing projects for private funding and involving each sector to expand the pipeline. The development of an initial PPP business case for the selected project(s) will start as soon as a prioritized PPP project or projects have been identified.

IX. Belize Broadcasting Authority (BBA)

i. INTRODUCTION

The [BBA](#) is governed by a Board of Directors comprising eight (8) members appointed by the Minister responsible for broadcasting. The purpose of the BBA is to monitor and regulate broadcasting services in Belize, ensuring that they are of high quality and in compliance with the broadcasting laws of the country.



The relevant pieces of legislation and policies which touch and concern the broadcasting industry directly are:

- Broadcasting and Television Act (Cap 227)
- Broadcasting and Television Regulations (Cap 227S)
- Belize Telecommunications Act (Cap 229)
- Copyright Act (Cap 252)

ii. MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS

Performance during the period April 2022 to March 2023 of the BBA included the review of existing licenses, the approval of new applications, and the collection of respective fees.

Activities - Licenses	No. of Operators	No. of Operators
	2022-2023	2023-2024
Cable	15	16
Radio	41	41
On Air Television	9	9
Radio – 1 New application & provisional approval on March 1, 2024 (Life Radio)	2	3
On Air Television – 1 New application was received (East Television); Clarifications pending on rebroadcasting of copyrighted content included in the daily scheduled program before the Board can decide.		

Total revenue collected:

Activities – Fees	Revenue Collected	
	2022-2023	2023-2024
Cable License	\$166,000.00	\$143,000.00
Radio License	\$91,050.00	\$58,000.00
Television License	\$46,000.00	\$34,000.00
Application Fee	\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00
Total	\$304,050.00	\$236,000.00

iii. LESSONS LEARNT

Belize’s regulatory framework for the broadcasting industry has fallen behind due to changes in technology and changes in the business of broadcasting globally without commensurate changes to legislation in Belize.

In 2022, the BBA retained an attorney to help with the drafting of the Belize National Broadcasting Policy. The Policy seeks to establish policy recommendations and guidelines to strengthen Belize’s broadcasting industry. In 2022, the Office of the Prime Minister outlined the Belize National Broadcasting Policy (BNBP) which establishes and analyses policy pillars, goals, considerations and makes recommendations to strengthen Belize’s broadcasting industry. Chief among the recommendations is a comprehensive review of the current version of the Broadcasting and Television Act to encompass new technologies and to increase the ability of regulators to enforce and deter non-compliance. The BNBP and its successful implementation rest on the 3 main policy pillars outlined, that is:

- a. Belize’s compliance with international treaty obligations, and by extension international standards, in the broadcasting industry.
- b. Belize’s global reputation regarding respect for intellectual property rights, particularly its enforcement approach to broadcast piracy.
- c. Belize’s management of the convergence between broadcasting and telecommunications.

iv. FUTURE PLANS AND PRIORITY AREAS

The BBA has engaged in the modernization of the Belize Broadcasting and Television Act (Chapter Revised Edition 2011) with the Belize National Broadcasting Policy (BNBP) and its recommendations in mind. Chief among the recommendations was a comprehensive review of the current version of the Broadcasting and Television Act to encompass new technologies and to increase the ability of regulators to enforce and deter non-compliance.

In March of 2023, the Belize Broadcasting Industry Improvement Survey was distributed to all broadcasters, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the wider public. The data would assist in creating the appropriate proposed changes to properly fit the Belizean Broadcasting environment. A stakeholder consultation followed in April, to discuss and get feedback from the public regarding the proposed changes.

The BBA has been and is actively engaged in modernizing its current Broadcasting and Television Act. In addition to consulting Attorney Marissa Longworth, the Authority has enlisted the expertise of Mr. Mark Palchick from Lerman Senter PLLC, who is the Attorney for the Caribbean Cable Cooperative. His industry

insight has been invaluable in crafting the initial draft of the revised Broadcasting and Television Act, Chapter 227, which the BBA has now received.

The Authority's subcommittee has thoroughly reviewed this draft and is set to present its recommendations to the Board at the next scheduled meeting in July 2024. Following this, an in-person meeting will be organized with the Attorney to address and resolve any outstanding issues with the initial drafts. Subsequently, stakeholder consultations will take place in September to gather comprehensive feedback.

Upon completion of these consultations, an analysis will be conducted, and the final drafts of the legislation, along with a Cabinet Paper, will be prepared and submitted to the BBA.

X. Constituency Development Fund (CDF)

i. INTRODUCTION

In September 2021, the Cabinet granted approval for the establishment of the CDF. This program was devised with the primary aim of entrusting funds to the Area Representatives of the thirty-one constituencies, empowering them to execute localized community projects and offer support to their respective communities and residents through various means. The Office of the Prime Minister was entrusted with the administration of this Program and adequate budgetary provisions have been made to ensure its smooth functioning and service provision at the local level.



ii. MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS

Allocations are made by electoral division (all thirty-one divisions – including to the divisions represented by the Opposition). The allocation amounts are determined based on the number of registered electors, utilizing the following formula:

1. \$500,000 per month cumulatively.
2. By division:
 - a. < 3,000 registered electors: \$10,000 per month
 - b. = or > 3000 and < 7,000: \$15,000 per month
 - c. 7,000: \$20,000 per month

Allocations for each constituency, based on this formula are below:

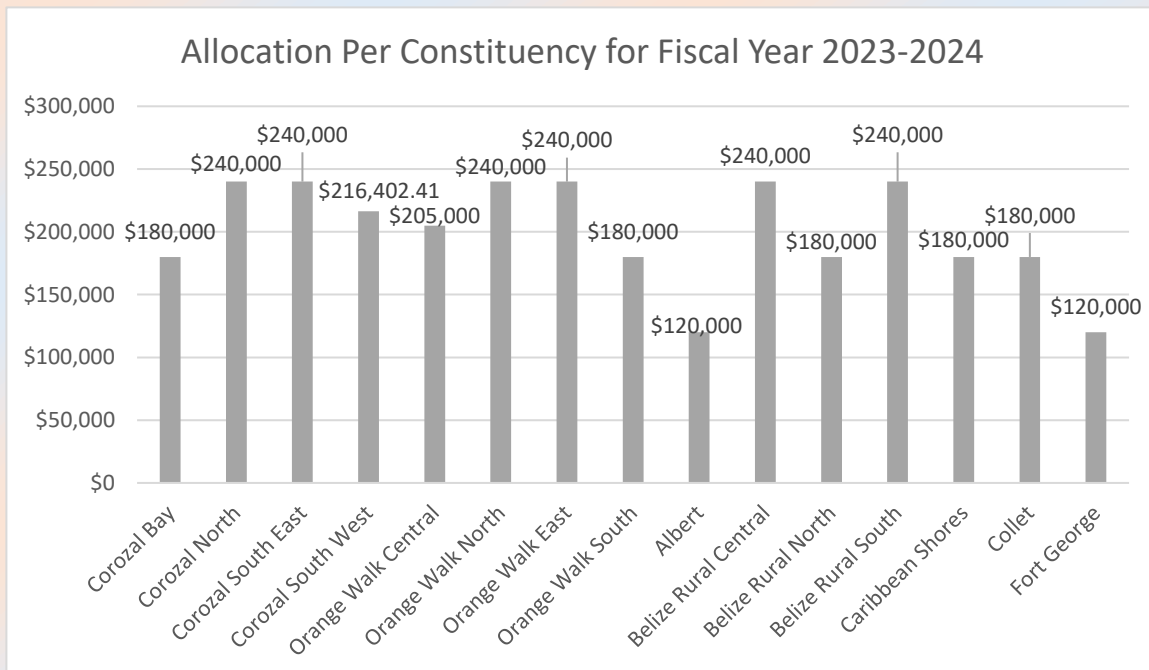
Area	Total Electors, July 2021	Monthly Allocation
Freetown	3,851	\$ 15,000
Caribbean Shores	4,417	\$ 15,000
Pickstock	3,995	\$ 15,000
Fort George	1,946	\$ 10,000
Albert	2,870	\$ 10,000
Queen's Square	2,787	\$ 10,000
Mesopotamia	2,288	\$ 10,000
Lake Independence	4,951	\$ 15,000
Collet	3,764	\$ 15,000
Port Loyola	4,707	\$ 15,000
Belize Rural North	4,718	\$ 15,000
Belize Rural Central	7,428	\$ 20,000
Belize Rural South	9,177	\$ 20,000
Corozal Bay	5,721	\$ 15,000
Corozal North	7,121	\$ 20,000
Corozal Southeast	7,052	\$ 20,000
Corozal Southwest	5,919	\$ 15,000
Orange Walk Central	6,121	\$ 15,000

Orange Walk North	7,896	\$ 20,000
Orange Walk East	7,167	\$ 20,000
Orange Walk South	6,915	\$ 15,000
Cayo North	8,234	\$ 20,000
Cayo Central	8,232	\$ 20,000
Cayo West	6,643	\$ 15,000
Cayo South	7,209	\$ 20,000
Cayo Northeast	5,764	\$ 15,000
Belmopan	9,213	\$ 20,000
Dangriga	5,665	\$ 15,000
Stann Creek West	10,003	\$ 20,000
Toledo East	7,082	\$ 20,000
Toledo West	7,514	\$ 20,000
TOTAL	186,370	\$ 510,000

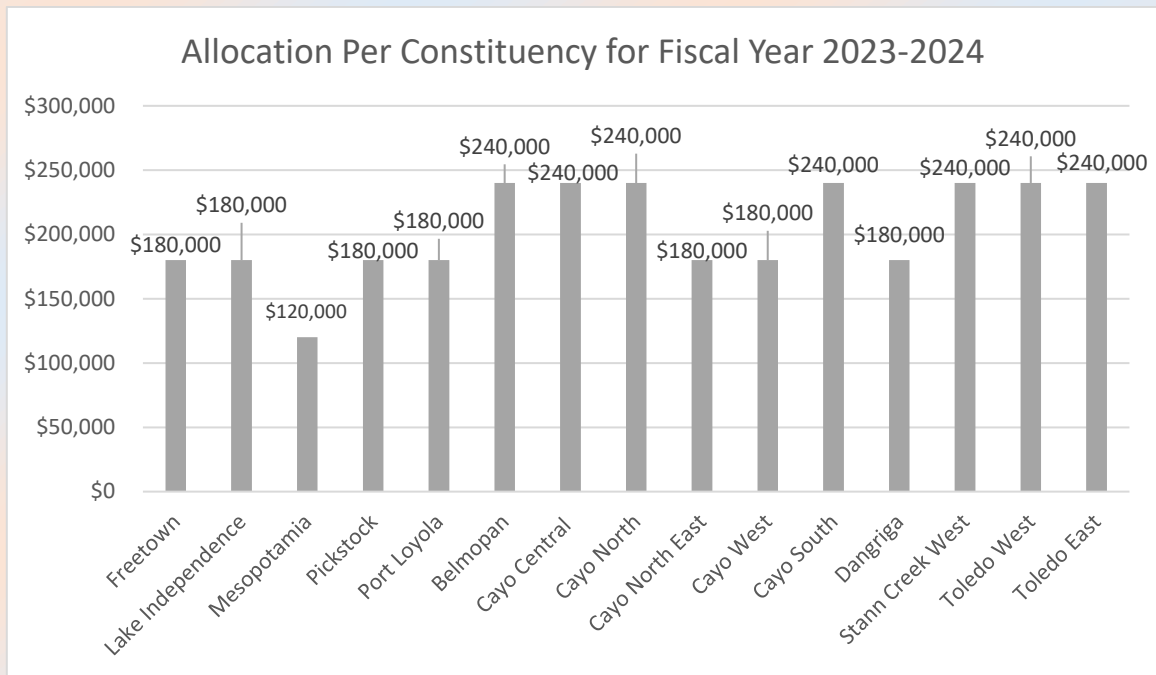
Total Expenditure by Participating Constituency

Throughout the fiscal year 2023-2024, each constituency was given their respective total fund corresponding to their electoral numbers (\$10,000, \$15,000, and \$20,000 per month). Over the fiscal year, (when requested and disbursed) this translates to a total allocation of \$120,000 for those in the \$10,000 series, \$180,000 for the \$15,000 series, and \$240,000 for the \$20,000 series. Over the fiscal year, the disbursements vary with room for flexibility and adjustment depending on the request periods and balances.

With a grand total of \$6,061,402.41 the accompanying bar charts illustrate the expenditure trends among participating constituencies relative to each other.



A. Bar Chart Showing Total Allocated Funds by Constituency for Fiscal Year 2023-2024 (Part 1)

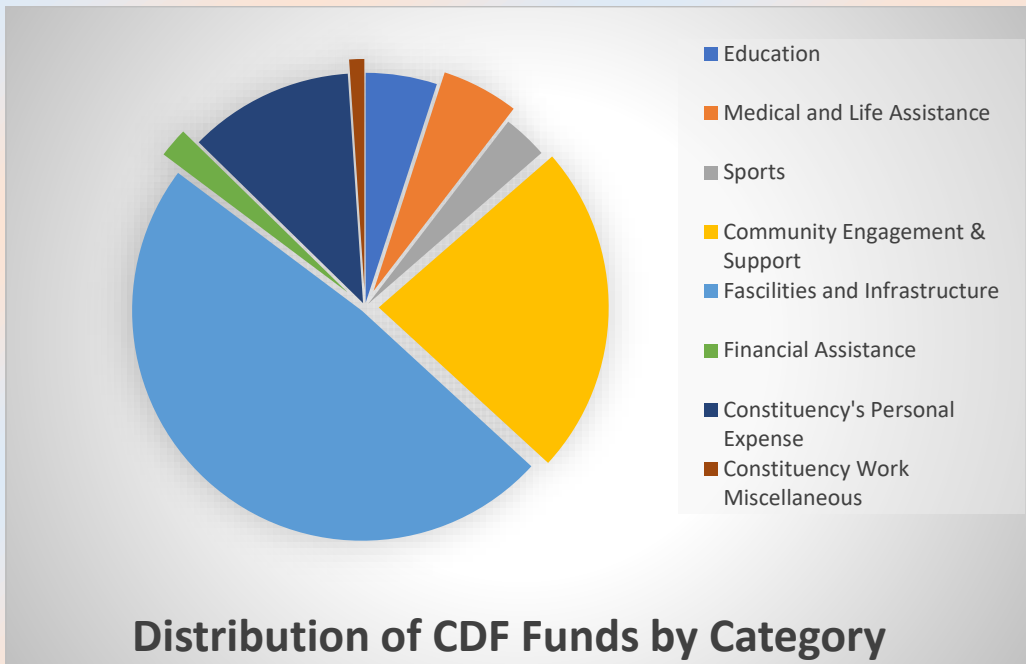


A. Bar Chart Showing Total Allocated Funds by Constituency for Fiscal Year 2023-2024 (Part 2)

With the aim of fostering community development, these constituencies allocated their development funds based on their identified needs. Expenditures were categorized into eight distinct areas: Education, Medical and Life Assistance, Sports, Community Engagement & Support, Facilities & Infrastructure, Employment, and Constituency Work Miscellaneous.

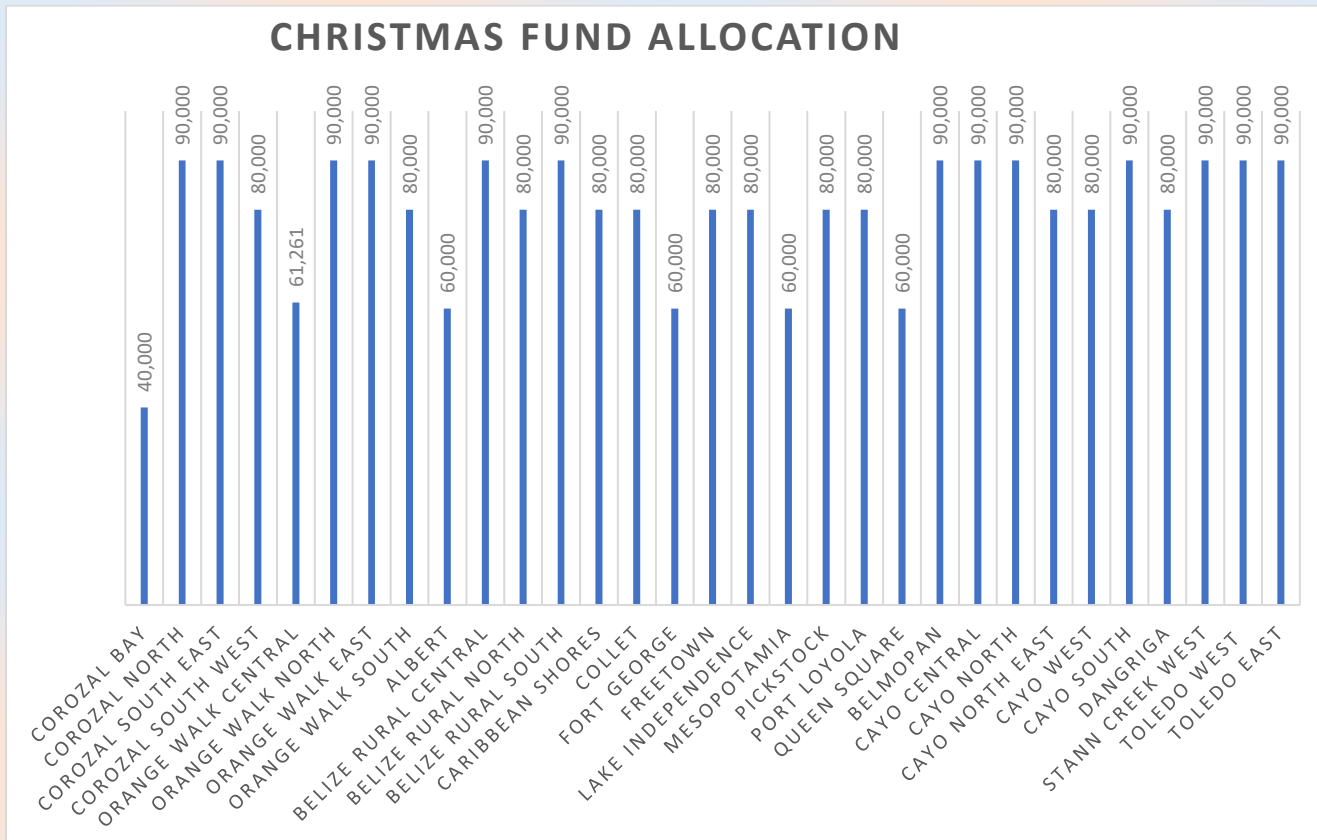
Each constituency allocates funds based on its own specific and identified needs. For example, constituencies such as Toledo West and Cayo South allocate their entire fund to Facilities and Infrastructure, whereas others distribute their funds across multiple categories. Others such as Fort George and Stann Creek West focus their funds on Community Engagement and Support. It is important to mention that a large part of the total CDF is allocated to community projects, infrastructure, and road works.

The accompanying pie chart illustrates the distribution of funds across these categories.



Christmas Fund Allocation

In addition to the funds received for the fiscal year, constituencies also received an additional fund that is geared toward the Christmas spirit at the end of the year - a total of \$2,471,261. The chart below shows how much each constituency received with relation to each other for the fiscal year 2023-2024.



iii. LESSONS LEARNT

The achievements so far have been in line with the approved uses of the [Constituency Development Fund](#), as set out by Cabinet, with well-defined guidelines and established procedures for financial reporting. Eligible uses of the funds include the following types of community inputs:

1. Small scale infrastructure projects (i.e., fences for schools, community areas, etc.)
2. Maintenance / General Clean Up of Community Areas
3. Community Projects (i.e., Parks, internet free libraries etc.)
4. Sporting programs, facilities, and equipment
5. Cleaning equipment (tractors, weed eaters, lawnmowers etc.)
6. Educational programs
7. Village Council assistance (Water Board equipment i.e., pumps etc.)
8. Health Care Centres, medicine, assistance to healthcare community personnel
9. Agricultural assistance to rural communities
10. Youth assistance programs

Each constituency's expenditures are supported by receipts and documentation. For instance, Corozal North, Orange Walk North, Albert, Belize Rural North, Cayo Central, Toledo East, and Toledo West, provided detailed summary sheets along with supporting documentation for reconciliation purposes. Cayo South provided a detailed booklet with regards to materials, and labour for its community projects. Conversely, others such as Belize Rural Central, Cayo Northeast and Stann Creek West provided summary pages for their fiscal year documentation. Others, such as the Freetown and Cayo West constituencies provided receipts.

Operational Guidelines of the Program are:

1. Proposed Projects and Activities along with detailed cost estimates must be submitted to the Office of the Prime Minister for prior written approval and subsequent release of funds.
2. Funds are to be released to area representatives every month in the amounts established in the allocation schedule and will be conditional on providing a full accounting for the previous month's expenditure to obtain the release of the subsequent month's allocation.
3. Accounting should include a report on the expenditure including the purchase of goods and services and any payments made for labour. Receipts must be provided as evidence to support the expenditure.
4. In executing any project, expenditure must comply with all applicable Finance and Stores Orders. (Particularly in obtaining quotations for goods and services) to ensure that the program is receiving the highest value for money. Detailed records should be maintained as the Program may be subject to auditing.

iv. FUTURE PLANS AND PRIORITY AREAS

The program was initially approved for the period between September 2021 and March 2022, for the seven-month duration from the start of the new administration to the end of the fiscal year. The constituencies have been successfully implementing community development projects since then.

These are the program outcomes for the year 2023 – 2024; it continues to be included in the budgetary allocation of the Office of the Prime Minister. Through the program, numerous projects and community assistance initiatives have been successfully completed, benefitting hundreds of Belizeans.

CHAPTER 3 – Bringing it all together for the Future!

The work of the respective diverse units covered in this Report demonstrates just some of the innovative approaches that have been applied within this reporting period by the Government of Belize to find solutions to the challenges and disruptions we face, with a view to improving the lives of all persons living in Belize through economic development programs, without losing sight and focus on enhancing social support mechanisms. Each of the units' reports share their highlight achievements, and more importantly, the pipeline projects and future priorities.

It is important to note that the partnerships forged to help us find and provide solutions, have included valuable assistance from both international institutions and national collaborative agencies. The Office of the Prime Minister extends appreciation for the continued and expanded support of the international community for sharing expertise, resources and collaboration on many of its programmes of work.

CONCLUSION

This Summary Report from the Office of the Prime Minister on its special programmes and Ministry of Investment portfolios for the period 2023 - 2024, is a synopsis of the work that has been carried out. The report has covered the legislative, strategic, policy, reform and project activities that have taken place and the respective results. This work contributes to the delivery of #Plan Belize priorities and commitments and provides rich research materials on various new areas of innovation.

Of major importance is the way forward. The Belize Investment and Business Climate Action Plan (BIBCAP), the National Digital Agenda and other strategic plans are critically important tools which together lay out the blueprint for upcoming fiscal periods, all with a focus on growing Belize's economy. Improvement of the "ease of doing business" and other interventions to accelerate investment, international trade and partnerships are also specific thrusts that will continue to be expedited by the Office of the Prime Minister and the Ministry of Investment.

ANNEXES

- I. [Restore Belize](#)
- II. [National AIDS Commission](#)
- III. [Social Investment Fund](#), Belize
- IV. [Economic Development Council](#)
- V. [Investment Policy and Compliance Unit](#)
- VI. [BELTRAIDE](#)
- VII. [Blue Bond and Finance Permanence Unit](#)
- VIII. Public Private Partnership Unit
- IX. [Belize Broadcasting Authority](#)
- X. Community Development Fund
- XI. [Government of Belize](#)

