



Ministry of Rural Transformation

Community Development, Labour and Local Government

ANNUAL TECHNICAL REPORT

2024 - 2025

**MINISTRY OF RURAL TRANSFORMATION,
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, LABOUR, AND
LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER.....</u>	<u>3</u>
<u>ABBREVIATIONS.....</u>	<u>5</u>
<u>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</u>	<u>6</u>
<u>1 INTRODUCTION.....</u>	<u>7</u>
<u>2 MISSION STATEMENT AND PRIORITIES OF THE MINISTRY.....</u>	<u>7</u>
<u>3 MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS.....</u>	<u>8</u>
<u>4 LESSONS LEARNT</u>	<u>36</u>
<u>5 FUTURE PRIORITIES AND PLAN</u>	<u>38</u>
<u>6 STAFFING AND FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR 2024-25.....</u>	<u>40</u>
<u>CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....</u>	<u>41</u>
<u>7 ANNEXES.....</u>	<u>42</u>

Annex 1. Organizational structure of the Ministry

Annex 2. List of professional and technical staff of the Ministry

Annex 3. List of projects - Climate Resiliency Projects for the Urban Sector

MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER



Hon. Florencio Marin

The year 2024 was one of steady progress and strategic implementation for the Ministry of Rural Transformation, Community Development, Labour, and Local Government. As we present the 2024 Annual Technical Report, I take this opportunity to commend the unwavering dedication of our Ministry's team and our valued partners for the strides we have made together this past year. This year marked another chapter of meaningful progress as we continued to fulfill our Ministry's strategic mandate across our three core departments. From municipal governance and labour reforms to rural development and service delivery our work continues to transform the lives of Belizeans.

The Department of Local Government led the charge with a strong emphasis on regulatory compliance and financial sustainability. This year, we took a major step forward in local governance reform with the passage of the Trade License Act, 2024, a long-anticipated milestone that reflects our commitment to fairness, transparency, and municipal empowerment. With national outreach campaigns and targeted training sessions, we've laid the groundwork for effective implementation. These efforts are part of a broader strategy to make our Local Governments more accountable, financially sustainable, and responsive to the communities they serve.

In the Labour sector, we've continued to raise the standard, and our efforts remain grounded in the principle of decent work for all. Labour inspections have increased, workplace violations are being addressed swiftly, and public engagement is growing. The Ministry has kept its promise to move forward on critical policy matters such as the Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Bill which is once again before the National Assembly and the Labour Act that is under review. Our collaboration with the International Labour Organization (ILO) to combat Child Labour demonstrates our Ministry's continued commitment to protecting vulnerable populations while enhancing legal compliance and workplace standards.

In the rural sector, rural communities remain a central focus of our work. The Department of Rural Transformation continues to be a beacon for development. We've improved rural water systems, expanded access through infrastructure projects, and introduced smart systems like the Community Profile Management Information System to better plan for the needs of our villages. Most importantly, we have supported economic empowerment especially for rural women and youth which reflect our inclusive approach to rural transformation.

As we look ahead to 2025, our Ministry is well-positioned to deepen its impact by accelerating digital transformation, finalizing policy reforms, and advancing inclusive governance across both rural and urban spaces. We are building stronger communities by making targeted, coordinated investments that reflect both national priorities and local realities. This is how we bring the vision of #planBelize to life by ensuring that transformation is not just a slogan, but a lived experience in every household, every village, every workplace.

I extend my sincere thank you to all staff, partners, municipalities, civil society groups, and community leaders who have played a role in advancing our goals. Your contributions are the cornerstone of our achievements. Let us continue this journey together building a Belize that is inclusive, empowered, and prosperous for all.

ABBREVIATIONS

ATIPS	Anti-Trafficking in Persons
CBA	Collective Bargaining Agreement
CWU	Christian Worker's Union
DAVCO	District Association of Village Councils
DWCP	Decent Work Country Program
GCF	Green Climate Fund
ILO	International Labour Organization
IDB	Inter-American Development Bank
IOM	International Office for Migration
KRA	Key Result Areas
LCMS	Labour Complaints Management System
LGO	Local Government Officer
MTDS	Medium-Term Development Strategy
MRTCDLLG	Ministry of Rural Transformation, Community Development, Labour and Local Government
NAVCO	National Association of Village Councils
NCLC	National Child Labour Committee
OSH	Occupational Safety and Health
PES	Public Employment Service Unit
RWSSU	Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Unit
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
TEP	Temporary Employment Permit
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Ministry of Rural Transformation, Community Development, Labour, and Local Government (MRTCDLLG) successfully concluded a year marked by decisive legislative reforms, strategic investments in service delivery, and enhanced institutional performance across its three core departments: the Rural Transformation Department, the Labour Department and the Local Government Department. Guided by the Ministry’s Strategic Plan and aligned with Belize’s Medium-Term Development Strategy (MTDS), efforts remained focused on modernizing systems, strengthening governance frameworks, and advancing inclusive development at both urban and rural levels.

The Department of Rural Transformation advanced its agenda through investments in rural water infrastructure, digital inclusion, and governance strengthening. Notable achievements included the installation of water meters, rehabilitation of water systems, and solar-powered upgrades, ensuring sustainable access to safe water. The development of a Community Profile Management Information System platform signalled a move toward data-driven rural planning and improved access to digital public services.

The Labour Department sustained momentum on key reforms aimed at fostering a fair, productive, and safe labour environment. With the formal launch of the Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP) 2024–2029, progress on the Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Bill, and the continued review of the Labour Act, the Department reaffirmed its commitment to International Labour Standards. Employment support services were expanded through mobile outreach and apprenticeships, while regional cooperation efforts bolstered initiatives to eliminate Child Labour and improve protections for vulnerable workers.

The Department of Local Government led critical governance reforms including the enactment of the Trade License Act, 2024 setting the foundation for a modern licensing regime and improved revenue performance. The completion of the Municipal Boundaries Re-Delineation exercise for seven municipalities marked a major milestone in promoting equitable representation. Capacity-building remained central with targeted training for elected officials and municipal finance staff. This was complemented by strengthened oversight through the annual municipal performance review.

Collectively, these initiatives reflect the Ministry’s commitment to transformational change, inclusive governance, and improved quality of life for all Belizeans. As the Ministry looks ahead key lessons such as the importance of responsive legislation, local leadership, and cross-sector digital integration will continue to shape its development agenda.

1 INTRODUCTION

The MRTCDLLG functions as a key executive agency within the Government of Belize. It is headed by the Minister and supported by the Chief Executive Officer who is responsible for the overall coordination, management, execution and evaluation of the policies and programs across the Ministry's Departments.

The Ministry's work is guided by its Strategic Plan which is closely aligned with national development objectives outlined in the MTDS and rooted in the Government's #planBelize Manifesto. Its mandate encompasses the delivery of essential services in both rural and urban settings, the promotion of decent work through improved labour standards and protections, and the empowerment of communities to drive sustainable development at the local level.

While significant progress has been achieved, persistent socio-economic challenges particularly in rural areas and in some urban communities continue to require targeted intervention. Addressing poverty, improving access to basic infrastructure, and strengthening institutional capacity remain key areas of focus. The Ministry continues to collaborate actively with development partners, donors, and other government entities to advance integrated solutions that respond to the evolving needs of Belizeans.

This technical report provides an overview of major initiatives undertaken during the year 2024, documents achievements across program areas, and evaluates performance outcomes. It also highlights key insights and operational learnings that will support the ongoing improvement of policies and guides future resource planning and allocation. Finally, the report outlines strategic priorities for the upcoming fiscal year aimed at strengthening governance, service delivery, and the quality of life for all Belizeans.

2 MISSION STATEMENT AND PRIORITIES OF THE MINISTRY

The Mission of the Ministry is as follows:

The Ministry of Rural Transformation, Community Development, Labour, and Local Government is committed to building sustainable and resilient communities in Belize through improved local governance, labour administration, and community development.

The Key Priorities of the Ministry include the following:

1. **Policy and Legislative Reform** – The Ministry is working to address major aspects in local governance, labour, and rural development both in policy and legislation. In all three departments, the Ministry is working to amend, revise, and update legislation to provide clearer provisions and requirements, empower citizens, strengthen sanctions, and strengthen oversight capacity.

2. **Digitization Program** – The Ministry has a strong program to digitize processes and procedures to improve the efficiency and quality of services provided to the public at all levels in the labour, rural and municipal governance sectors.
3. **Financial Sustainability** – The Ministry deems the financial sustainability of water boards village councils, towns, and city councils to be critical. There are several interventions underway to address this issue directly.
4. **Strategic Rural Development** – The Ministry will begin work on developing a roadmap that clearly articulates the development needs of rural areas based on sound research, from which specific and pragmatic interventions will be carried out under a clear collaborative mechanism to ensure maximum impact, resulting in sustainable growth and poverty reduction.
5. **Reorganization and Strengthening of Technical Capacity** – The structures in place at all departments within the Ministry have not kept up with the demands placed on the Ministry, but also due to a lack of strategic planning by previous administrations to improve the services provided by the Ministry. There is a need to realign administrative structures, recruit new staff, and improve the overall organizational structure.

3 MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS

In 2024, the MRTCDLLG, through its respective departments, collaborated with international organizations, local civil society partners, and other Government Ministries to achieve the following outcomes.

3.1 Rural Transformation

The Rural Transformation Department’s portfolio encompasses the Rural Development Department and the Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Unit (RWSSU). While these are the primary areas of focus, the Department also works in close collaboration with the Local Government Department, particularly in matters related to local governance at the village level. The Department engages with village councils, water boards, and the Alcalde system in the Toledo District, supporting governance and service delivery across 194 villages and communities nationwide. Of these, 190 villages hold official village council elections administered by the Elections and Boundaries Department. Village councils serve as elected local government bodies tasked with ensuring good governance and advancing community development at the village level. There are currently 108 water boards serving 126 villages, which collectively represent approximately 32,780 households. These boards are responsible for managing and operating village water systems, ensuring the continuous supply of potable water. Their duties include collecting user fees, managing service connections and disconnections, maintaining accurate records, undertaking system expansions, and overseeing all other water supply operations.

The following Key Result Areas form the Department’s work over the next three years:

- a) Village Governance and Reform
- b) Promoting economic development in the rural sector
- c) Rural water supply services and management
- d) Technology adaption and capacity building

A.) Village Governance and Reform

District Association of Village Councils (DAVCO) - The Department facilitated the Annual General Meetings (AGMs) for DAVCOs and NAVCO, guiding the election of new members. Immediately following the elections, orientation and training sessions were conducted for both organizations in the Northern and Southern Zones. These sessions focused on regulations, record keeping, minute taking, and financial reporting to strengthen their governance capacity. Recognizing the importance of keeping officers well-informed and equipped, efforts were made to ensure that they have the necessary tools and knowledge to perform their roles effectively. Officers maintain close collaboration with DAVCO representatives, providing ongoing guidance on matters related to Rural Transformation. The below images highlight activities undertaken by DAVCO Corozal in support of various communities within the district.

Liquor License Fees Disbursement – In 2024 the department disbursed a total of \$634,818.35 to village councils and in 2023 it disbursed a total of \$615,000.00, a difference of \$19,818.35 as shown in the below graph.

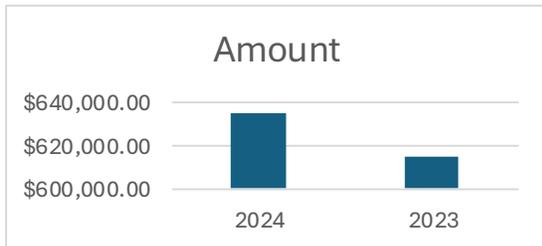


Fig. 1. Disbursement difference for year 2023 and 2024

Table 1. Revenue table for liquor license for 2024

District	2024 Liquor license Revenues
Corozal	\$32,450.00
Orange Walk	\$115,474.50
Belize	\$63,000.00
Cayo	\$37,150.00
Stann Creek	\$307,950.00
Toledo	\$62,375.00
Totals	\$634,818.35

In 2024, the Stann Creek and Orange Walk Districts collected the most revenue from liquor license fees. These two districts received 48% and 18% respectively, for a combined total of 66%. As shown in the table above, the Corozal and Cayo Districts are the districts with the lowest collection of liquor license revenue for this year.

Trade License Regime - The Trade Licensing Bill for rural areas was enacted in 2024 and is to take effect in October 2025. The first roll out of this regime is for a period of 3 years. This new and revised Trade License Act, 2024 provides a modern and standardized system for the administration of Trade License in Belize. The new regime aims at improving the ease of doing business through the incorporation of the following principles in the legal and regulatory framework.

- Predictability

- Accountability
- Transparency
- Revenue neutrality
- Ease of administration



Fig. 2. Sensitization sessions on the Trade License Bill for rural areas

B.) Promoting Economic Development in the Rural Sector

Improved community spaces – The Department supported a range of infrastructural improvements aimed at enhancing the functionality and appearance of community spaces. This included the upgrading of village roads to improve accessibility, especially during the rainy season, and to facilitate the movement of goods and people. These upgrades contribute to safer, more connected communities and support local economic activity. Some of the works also involved drainage enhancements and the rehabilitation of public areas commonly used for community gatherings and events.



Fig. 3. Upgrading of road in Toledo District

Digital Connect Centers – The Department partnered with the Ministry of Public Utilities and the United Nations Development Programme to support the establishment of Digital Connect Centers in rural communities. These centers aim to bridge the digital divide by providing residents with access to internet services, computers, and digital training. By improving digital

literacy and connectivity the centers empower individuals especially youth and women to access online education, job opportunities, and government services. They also create new avenues for entrepreneurship and small business development, ultimately contributing to local economic growth and community resilience in the digital era.



Fig. 4. Inauguration of Digital Connect Center

Women Empowerment Projects – The Ministry, through the Rural Development Department partnered with the Taiwan Technical Mission in Belize under the “Enhancing the Economic Empowerment of Women in Latin America and the Caribbean in the COVID-19 Post-pandemic Era: Technical Assistance for Women’s Employment, Entrepreneurship and Financial Inclusion” program, funded by the Taiwan International Cooperation Fund. Through this partnership, three women’s groups located in Independence (Stann Creek), Pueblo Viejo (Toledo), and San Pablo (Orange Walk) received support to implement economic empowerment projects. These initiatives provided women including single mothers, unemployed women, and adolescent girls with practical skills in sewing, business planning, and entrepreneurship. This collaboration has not only created opportunities for women to support themselves and their families but has also contributed to broader rural economic development. The Ministry remains committed to empowering women and continues to support initiatives that strengthen resilience and create sustainable economic pathways in rural communities.



Fig. 5. Women’s Empowerment Group in San Pablo, Orange Walk District

C.) Rural Water Supply Services and Management

Overseeing Operations of Water Boards - The Department continued to ensure that the villages have access to improved and consistent potable water by providing direct support and

oversight of rural water boards. The department was very active in 2024 completing several rehabilitation projects, upgrades to existing water infrastructure, donations of pumps, motors, pipes, and other materials for rural water systems throughout the country.

Procurement of a Well Rig Truck - In December 2024, the Government of Belize, with the assistance of the Republic of China (Taiwan) acquired a new well rig truck to strengthen rural water infrastructure. The primary objective of this initiative is to expand access to clean and safe drinking water in underserved and remote communities. The well rig truck will play a critical role in drilling new wells, thereby supporting agricultural development and ensuring dependable water sources. This effort directly supports Sustainable Development Goal 6, which promotes access to clean water and sanitation for all.

Capacity Building training for Water Boards - Out of a total of 763 village board members across 109 boards, 86 newly appointed members have successfully undergone training. These sessions focused on equipping them with an in-depth understanding of their roles and responsibilities, as well as their financial obligations under the regulations governing village councils and water boards. 684 long-serving members remain in the office, all of whom received comprehensive training in these areas upon assuming their roles. This ongoing commitment to training ensures that all members are well prepared to fulfill their duties effectively and in compliance with financial regulations.

Donation of pipes, meters, and other materials – The department facilitated the donation of pipes and other essential materials to several water boards in both the northern and southern regions of the country. This support aimed to strengthen the capacity of water boards to maintain and expand their water systems, ensuring a more reliable and efficient supply of potable water to rural communities. The donated materials have enabled timely repairs, improved water access, and supported ongoing efforts to connect additional households. These contributions not only enhance the quality of life for residents but also promote better health outcomes and support community development. A major focus was the metering of most water systems that had the capacity to fully migrate to metered water. The department invested in 1,299 meters amounting to over \$350,000 that were distributed to several water boards throughout the country.



Fig. 6. Donation of meters



Fig. 7. Donation of pipes and other materials to water boards in the Northern and Southern Regions

Rehabilitation of Water Systems – Throughout 2024, the Department remained actively engaged in the rehabilitation of several rural water systems to enhance rural water access. Ongoing monitoring efforts by the Department include the systems in Tower Hill, Carmelita, and San Estevan Villages in the Corozal District. Additionally, the San Roman Rio Hondo water system transitioned from a generator-powered setup to an electrical system, improving service for over 85 households. In partnership with UNICEF, major rehabilitation works were undertaken in the villages of Otoxha, San Vicente, and Midway in the Toledo District. These upgrades included the installation of new chlorinators, procurement of expansion materials, and the addition of backup pumps to improve system resilience and water quality.

A major investment of BZ\$1.3 million was made to rehabilitate the Guinea Grass Rudimentary Water System in Orange Walk District. This comprehensive project involved the installation of new distribution pipes to boost water pressure, a new generator, 700 water meters, and a fully operational chlorination system. These initiatives, supported by partners such as the Republic of China Taiwan, the Social Investment Fund (SIF) reflect a strong and ongoing commitment to improving water accessibility in rural communities. The Department's efforts have contributed meaningfully towards ensuring availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.

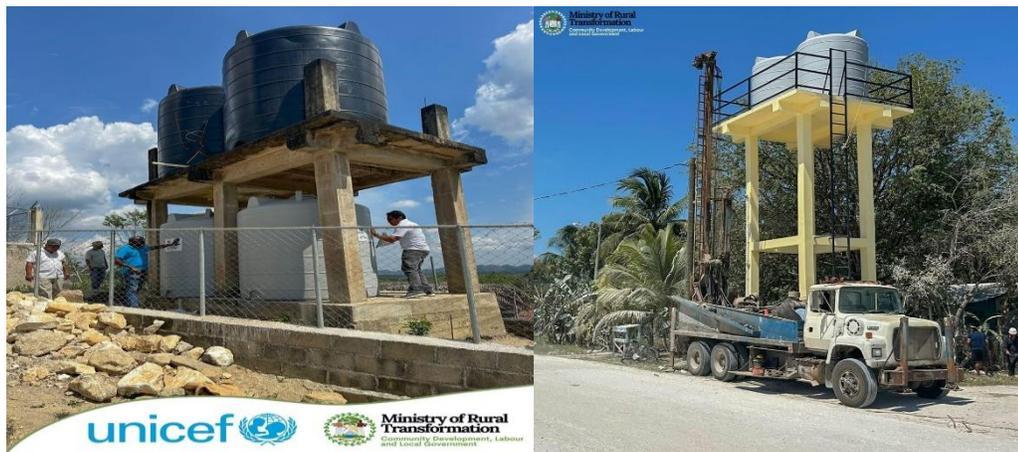


Fig. 8. Rehabilitated water systems

Rural Water Systems Financial Performance – In 2024 the water boards collected \$6,110,862.49. In comparing the income of 2023 and 2024, the boards recorded an increase of \$640,800.86 in collection within a year. The water boards incurred \$5,815,063.78 in expenses to operate their water systems.

Table 2. Rural Water Boards' Annual Income and Expenses

Annual Income and Expenses		
District	Income	Expense
Corozal	\$424,202.61	\$416,227.16
Orange Walk	\$826,711.40	\$816,369.88
Belize	\$222,122.41	\$203,421.81
Cayo	\$1,334,965.77	\$1,289,810.28
Stann Creek	\$2,181,153.57	\$1,986,995.55
Toledo	\$1,121,706.73	\$1,102,239.10
Total	\$6,110,862.49	\$5,815,063.78

Solar Electrification of Water Systems - The Department completed solar system connections for two water systems in the Toledo District and two in the Cayo District marking a significant step towards integrating renewable energy into essential infrastructure. These installations were made possible through international funding initiatives focused on sustainable development, emphasizing the global commitment to environmentally friendly and energy-efficient solutions. By harnessing solar energy, these systems not only reduce dependency on conventional energy sources but also provide a more reliable and cost-effective power supply for water systems. This advancement represents a sustainable approach to meeting community needs while contributing to broader environmental conservation goals.

D.) Technology Adoption and Capacity Building -

Community Profile Management Information System - In partnership with the IOM, the Ministry secured funding to develop a Community Profile Management Information System which will aid in the overall formulation of Village Profiles. This entails the use of a user-



Fig. 9. Snapshot of Community Profile Management Information System

friendly software to gather data using the kobo toolbox application which eases the amount of work to a very smooth process of data gathering and storage. The Ministry expects to officially launch this system in the upcoming months in 2025.

Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Unit (RWSSU) – The RWSSU is primarily responsible for drilling production wells and installing hand pumps for water systems. It also has responsibility for the repair and maintenance of wells, hand pumps, and rudimentary water systems. As a secondary function, the unit provides support to private farmers, related enterprises, and schools where water is needed to boost production. Throughout the year, the RWSSU remained highly active, consistently carrying out preventative maintenance on wells. The unit promptly addressed disruptions in water systems that led to water shortages. In instances where the root cause was a poor water source, the unit undertook groundwater exploration. The RWSSU continues to prioritize the operation and sustainability of water systems, responding efficiently to minimize periods of water service interruption for consumers.

In 2024, the unit completed the following:

- Drilling of 45 farmer wells to assist in agriculture.
- Drilling of 4 wells for schools and educational institutions.
- Installation and repair of solar systems for RWS in 4 villages across Belize.
- Air lifted over 40 production wells for RWS across the country.
- Through the Ministry, the unit procured 7 new submersible pump & motors for emergency repairs to RWS across Belize varying in sizes.
- Procurement of over \$500,000.00 worth of various size of pipes for the repairs and expansion of RWS across Belize
- Procurement of 1,600 water meters
- Assisted with the installation of a new pump house, new reservoir, new well and electrical upgrade (new system) at Georgeville, Armenia (Cayo District), Mahogany Heights (Belize District), San Estevan (Orange Walk District) Chunox (Corozal District) and Machakilha (Toledo District)

3.2 Labour

The Labour Department's core mandate is to foster a labour market environment that ensures the safety, security, and productivity of both workers and employers, while upholding their rights. In this fiscal period, the Department focused on enforcing labour laws and regulations, promoting workplace safety and employee wellness, providing employment support services, and encouraging constructive engagement between employers and workers.

The following are the KRAs that will guide the work for the department for the next three years:

- Industrial and Employment Relations
- Promoting Safe and Healthy Workplaces
- Complying with International Labour Standards to Eradicate Child Labour
- Providing Employment Services
- Legal Reform and Policy Development

- Strategic Partnership and Institutional Development

A.) Industrial and Employment Relations – During this year, the Labour Department undertook a range of monitoring and enforcement activities. These included workplace inspections to ensure compliance with labour laws and regulations, resolving cases of wrongful termination reported through the Labour Complaints Management System (LCMS), and processing temporary employment permits. The department also carried out educational sessions to raise awareness of labour laws, and reinforced compliance by overseeing employment practices, reviewing collective agreements, and addressing grievances.

Labour Inspections – In 2024, the Labour Department continued to prioritize proactive service delivery to safeguard workers' rights and promote decent work across Belize. With 727 workplace inspections conducted, the department ensured compliance with Labour Laws and occupational safety standards in both the public and private sectors.

Labour Complaints – A total of 313 labour complaints was received, with 252 successfully resolved, demonstrating the Department's commitment to dispute resolution and industrial harmony. These interventions led to the recovery of \$192,300.00 in benefits for aggrieved workers.

Labour Complaints Tribunal (LCT) – The LCT office received a total of twenty-five (25) new cases for the period 1st January 2024 to 31st December 2024. These cases classified as three (3) wrongful terminations and twenty-two (22) unfair dismissals. The LCT presided over eighty-eight (88) hearings through 2024.

Labour Advisory Board (LAB) - The LAB was established under the Labour Act, Chapter 297 of the Substantive Laws of Belize and serves as a tripartite consultative body that advises the Minister responsible for Labour on matters related to Labour policies, employment standards, and industrial relations. Its primary purpose is to ensure that labour legislation and policies are fair, balanced, and reflective of the interests of government, employers, and workers. The below outlines the key achievements for the LAB in the 2024 calendar year:

- The LAB played a pivotal role in the launch of the Belize's DWCP.
- Some members of the LAB are part of the Labour Act Review Committee, which will oversee the consultation process of the Labour Act Review.
- The LAB continues engagement on the OSH Bill, currently under review by the Attorney General's Ministry.
- LAB assisted with ILO Article 22 Reports for conventions 138 and 88 reaffirming Belize's commitment to International Labour Standards.
- LAB members completed ILO-facilitated training on International Labour Standards, enhancing their policy and advisory capabilities.

Labour Advice – The Department continues to function as a critical support mechanism for the labour force, offering guidance on a broad spectrum of labour-related issues. This includes providing clarity on statutory rights and obligations within the workplace, facilitating interpretation of employment legislation, and ensuring that stakeholders are adequately informed and equipped to implement and maintain equitable and legally compliant labour practices. In 2024, over 5,900 instances of labour advice were provided to workers and employers.

B.) Promotion of Safe and Healthy Workplaces

Labour Education – In 2024, the Labour Department conducted 100 labour education sessions across the country, utilizing various outreach formats such as workshops, open days, and school-based engagements. These sessions focused on key thematic areas, including:

- Statutory workplace rights and responsibilities
- Child labour prevention and regulatory safeguards
- Procedures and requirements for Temporary Employment Permits

These educational interventions facilitated informed stakeholder engagement, enhanced awareness among workers and employers, and contributed to strengthened compliance with national labour legislation. Additionally, the Department actively participated in several national initiatives aimed at advancing business development and employment services, including:

- The BELTRAIDE-led MSME Roadshow
- The Belize Investment Summit



Fig. 10. Labour Education Session

Employment Policy - In the pursuit of fostering harmonious and fair workplaces, the Department engaged in reviewing employment policies to promote mutual benefit for all stakeholders.

➤ **Collective Bargaining Agreements** – The Department plays a critical role in the signing of Collective Bargaining Agreements ensuring adherence to the provisions of the Trade Unions and Employers’ Organizations (Registration, Recognition and Status) Act, Chapter 304, Revised Edition 2020. This function supports the promotion of industrial harmony and the maintenance of sound labour relations. In 2024, the Department oversaw the execution of the following CBA:

1. The Development Finance Corporation and the Christian Workers Union (CWU) - The agreement covers the period September 1st, 2024, to August 31st, 2028, and it exemplifies the power of dialogue in securing fair and respectful working conditions.



Fig. 11. CBA signing with Development Finance Cooperation and CWU

Temporary Employment Permit (TEP) – In 2024, the Department facilitated the processing of a total of 2,397 applications. Of these, 2,315 were approved, while 82 were denied. The below table provides a comprehensive summary of TEP processing data for the year 2024. It offers insight into the volume, demographics, and trends associated with TEP applications.

Table 3. Comprehensive summary of TEP processing data

Category	Total
Total Applications Processed	2,397
Total Applications Approved	2,315
Total Applications Denied	82
Highest Approval Month	July - 269 approvals
Lowest Approval Month	December - 109 approvals
Highest Nationality Approved	Guatemalan - 1,032 approvals
Most Common Job Type	Crop Farm labourer - 1,150 approvals
Renewals vs New Approvals	renewals – 1,114

Category	Total
Male vs Female Applicants	Male – 1,822, Female – 493
Top District for Approvals	Stann Creek – 803 approvals

The largest number of approvals was from the Stann Creek District with 803. Table 3 illustrates the total percentage of applications approved by District.

Table 4. Number and percentage of TEP Applications approved by district

District	# of Applications Approved	Percentage
Stann Creek	803	34.69
Belize	551	23.80
Cayo	432	18.66
Toledo	360	15.55
Orange Walk	92	3.97
Corozal	77	3.33
TOTAL	2,315	100.0

Among the total applications approved, the highest number 1032 (44.58%) were Guatemalan nationality and the lowest being Cuban nationality with only 19 (0.82%). Table 4 below shows the percentage of applications approved by nationality.

Table 5. Number and percentage of TEP Applications approved by district

Nationality	# of Applications Approved	Percentage
Guatemalan	1,032	44.58
Honduran	255	11.02
American	218	9.42
Mexican	142	6.17
Salvadoran	125	5.40
Nicaraguan	97	4.19
Indian	91	3.93
Chinese	72	3.11

Nationality	# of Applications Approved	Percentage
Canadian	40	1.73
Costa Rican	24	1.04
Cuban	19	0.82
Other	199	8.59
TOTAL	2,314	100.0

In direct response to the urgent labour shortages and rising costs affecting the agriculture (banana, citrus, sugar, etc), construction, and hospitality sectors, the Ministry of Rural Transformation Community Development and Local Government has developed a Seasonal Migrant Workers Programme (SMWP). The Programme is ready for deployment to provide timely access to foreign labour in these industries. Full implementation requires certain legislative amendments, particularly to the Immigration legislation, after which the Programme will be rolled out.

A key feature of the SMWP is the streamlining of the application, vetting, and approval process for temporary work permits. Employers will be able to submit applications through the Online TEP System before workers arrive in Belize, significantly reducing delays. Approval letters will be issued within seven working days of receiving complete documentation, and the Immigration Department, integrated into the online system, will issue TEPs at ports of entry within three to seven days.

These reforms will reduce the processing time from six to eight weeks to less than two, allowing employers quicker access to the workforce they need. Once fully operational, the SMWP will help ease labour shortages, contain rising costs, strengthen productivity, and safeguard the rights of both Belizean and migrant workers, thereby supporting rapid and sustainable economic growth.

Advancing Workplace Health and Inclusivity -

- ***HIV/AIDS Workplace Program*** - The Labour Department in collaboration with the National AIDS Commission and the CSO Hub, hosted a sensitization session on “Human Rights and HIV Policy in the Workplace” to highlight the vital role of the private sector in addressing HIV-related issues at work. The session showcased experiences from businesses that have successfully implemented inclusive workplace policies to support employees affected by HIV. By embracing these practices, employers not only support employee well-being but also foster greater equity and inclusivity across the workforce. This joint initiative reaffirms the Labour Department’s commitment to advancing human rights, social justice, and inclusive policy development in Belizean workplaces.

C.) Complying with International Labour Standards to eradicate Child Labour

On July 18th, 2022, the Ministry launched the Belize National Child Labour Policy and Strategy 2022-2025. This fiscal period, the Department carried out the following initiatives to support its effort in eradicating child labour:



Fig. 12. HIV Aids Workplace Session

- ***Strengthening Partnerships for a Child Labour-free future*** - In a major step toward fulfilling its national goal of eliminating child labour by 2025, the Labour Department of Belize welcomed a high-level delegation from Brazil’s Ministry of Labour and Employment, Ministry of Social Development, and the Brazilian Cooperation Agency. Held from June 24–28, 2024, in Belize City, this knowledge exchange mission was facilitated by the ILO-Brazil South-South Cooperation Programme. The collaboration centered on Brazil’s proven strategies to combat Child Labour, such as leveraging digital tools, conducting proactive labour inspections, and coordinating social protection services. The mission served as a valuable forum for dialogue and shared learning between Belizean stakeholders and the Brazilian counterparts. As a new member of the Regional Initiative Latin America and the Caribbean Free of Child Labour, Belize reaffirmed its commitment to regional cooperation and data-driven policy development. This engagement has enhanced institutional capacity and strengthened collective efforts to create safe, supportive environments for children and families, marking a pivotal moment in Belize’s journey toward a Child Labour-free future.
- ***Engagement with ILO to advance the National Child Labour Strategy*** - In May 2024, the National Child Labour Committee (NCLC) held a special virtual workshop with the ILO team. The session provided an overview of the ILO’s work and introduced the Regional Initiative Operational Plan. Discussions focused on adapting the framework to inform the development of a prioritized country acceleration plan complete with budget estimates to support and enhance the implementation of the existing national strategy.
- ***Belize recognized for progress in combating the worst forms of Child Labour*** - In 2024, Belize advanced its national efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labour. The U.S. Department of Labor recognized this progress by awarding the country a moderate advancement rating, highlighting notable improvements in legal frameworks,

enforcement practices, policy coordination, and social programs. This milestone reflects the dedicated work of the NCLC and its partners.



Fig. 13. Meeting with high-level delegation from Brazil

- ***NCLC and ILO strengthen Belize’s Child Labour elimination efforts*** - The NCLC partnered with the ILO to advance the development and implementation of the Country Acceleration Plan, strengthening Belize’s dedication to eradicating child labour by 2025. Key initiatives were led by the Child Labour Secretariat and Inspectorate Desk, including workplace inspections, education and awareness sessions, and high-level dialogues with the ILO Decent Work Team. A significant milestone was the knowledge exchange between Belize and Brazil, facilitated through the ILO-Brazil South-South Cooperation Program, which emphasized proactive labour inspections and comprehensive social protection approaches.
- ***Belize advanced regional action against Child Labour-*** Belize was represented at the 10th Annual Meeting of the Regional Initiative Latin America and the Caribbean Free of Child Labour, held in Brasilia, Brazil. The event brought together representatives from 31 countries to assess collective progress toward eliminating Child Labour by 2025, in alignment with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal Target 8.7. Supported by key international partners, including the ILO, the meeting served as a platform to strengthen regional cooperation, share best practices, and reaffirm the joint commitment to ending Child Labour and promoting decent work for all children across the region.

Several key national institutions have also played vital roles in supporting Belize’s efforts to eliminate Child Labour. Their collaborative actions from data collection and protection services to advocacy and coordinated inspections have significantly strengthened the implementation of the national strategy:

- The Statistical Institute of Belize and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) enhanced data on child welfare through the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey.

- The Child Development Foundation provided protection and reintegration support for at-risk children.
- The ATIPS Council strengthened inter-agency collaboration and awareness campaigns against child trafficking.
- The NCFC led children’s rights advocacy through events such as the National Children’s Parliament and Mother’s Day essay contest.
- The Child Labour Secretariat and Inspectorate Desk conducted 15 sector-wide child labour inspections, including joint operations with strategic partners in key agricultural areas.



Fig. 14. Regional Initiative Latin America and the Caribbean Free of Child Labour meeting

- ***Belize Engages in regional initiative to eliminate Child Labour*** - Delegates from the Belize Labour Department participated in the Brazil South-South Cooperation Programme under the project titled “Consolidating the Progress of the Regional Initiative Latin America and the Caribbean Free of Child Labour.” This initiative is a joint effort by the Government of Brazil through the Brazilian Cooperation Agency of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the ILO. The engagement facilitated knowledge exchange and reinforced regional collaboration aimed at strengthening efforts to eliminate child labour across Latin America and the Caribbean.



Fig. 15. Belize represented at the Brazil South-South Cooperation Programme Session

- **Signing of Memorandum of Understanding on Child Labour** - A key achievement in the year 2024 was the signing of a Memorandum of Association by the Northern Sugar Cane Growers Association marking a unified commitment to eliminate Child Labour in the sugar industry by 2025. This agreement monitored by the Child Labour Secretariat and Inspectorate Desk, includes practical steps such as field inspections, public sensitization, promotional events, and the resolution of labour-related issues significantly reinforcing national efforts in the agricultural sector.



Fig. 16. Signing of Memorandum of understanding with Northern Sugar Cane Growers Association

- **Child Labour Awareness Education and Sensitization** – In 2024, 22 child labour education and sensitization sessions were carried out countrywide, reaching a total of over 3,000 individuals. These sessions were conducted by the Labour Department, including Child Labour Secretariat staff, Labour Officers, and Employment Officers, with the support of the Ministry of Education and the National Committee for Families and Children. Activities targeted rural communities, engaging parents, farmers, teachers, principals, students, and village leaders to raise awareness on Child Labour to strengthen community involvement in its prevention.
- **Commemoration of World Day against Child Labour** - In observance of the 2024 World Day Against Child Labour under the theme “*Let’s Act on Our Commitments: End Child Labour!*”, the Labour Department led a series of awareness and education initiatives to reinforce national efforts. The department engaged in media outreach to discuss Belize’s multi-stakeholder approach and progress under the National Child Labour Policy and Strategy 2022–2025. Complementing the media outreach, the department conducted school-based sessions that engaged students and teachers on child rights, the dangers of Child Labour and reporting mechanisms. A national webinar further brought together experts from the Ministry of Education, ILO, and civil society to discuss inequality, education access, and prevention strategies. These efforts reaffirm Belize’s commitment to ending Child Labour and protecting every child’s right to a safe and nurturing environment.

D.) Providing Employment Services - Amidst the dynamic and continually evolving labour market, the Public Employment Services (PES) Unit continues to serve as a vital intermediary linking job seekers with prospective employers. The effectiveness of the unit's efforts is reflected in the following key achievements for the year as shown in the below table:

Table 6. PES Unit's Key Achievements for the year 2024

Key Achievements	Total
Employers Registered	568
Jobs Matched	200
Employers Contacted	3,900
Job Seekers Registered (Manual)	322
Job Seekers Contacted	1,476

To enhance accessibility and strengthen public engagement, the unit implemented mini employment booths in high-traffic community areas, including parks and markets. These booths provided walk-in support, employment-related information, and personalized consultations with Employment Officers, thereby increasing the visibility and approachability of services. This innovative outreach strategy effectively addressed information gaps and expanded the reach of employment services to underserved populations. Additionally, the PES also participated in the following initiatives:

- ***Expanding Opportunities through Apprenticeship*** – In collaboration with the Community Rehabilitation Department, the Labour Department successfully completed the third cycle of the *Apprenticeship Program: Positive Moves 3.0*, this initiative equipped 29 participants with practical training, real-world work experience, and essential employability skills to support their successful integration into the Labour Market. All 29 apprentices secured placements with reputable businesses throughout Belize representing a significant step toward sustainable employment and economic self-sufficiency. Their participation contributes directly to national efforts in workforce development and youth empowerment.
- ***Career Day Engagement – Hope Creek Methodist School*** - The Labour Department participated in the Career Day event at Hope Creek Methodist School. This platform allowed Employment Officers to engage directly with students, providing valuable information about the Labour Market and career pathways within the sector. Through interactive sessions, students gained a deeper understanding of the Labour Department's functions and the significance of early preparation for a smooth and successful transition into the world of work.

E.) Legal and Policy Reform

The Department remains dedicated to advancing the revision and development of policies and legislation aimed at fostering a more equitable and inclusive labour environment. It is actively working to modernize outdated laws and introduce new regulations that respond to emerging challenges and align with International Labour Standards. By engaging in collaborative partnerships and conducting comprehensive consultations with key stakeholders such as government entities, employers, and workers' organizations the Department is shaping a legislative framework that upholds fairness, promotes workplace safety, and encourages inclusivity. The following highlights key initiatives and developments in this effort:

- **OSH Bill** - In 2024, a major milestone was reached with Cabinet's approval of the proposed amendments to the OSH Bill. An important step toward enhancing Belize's legal framework for workplace safety and health. The OSH Bill aims to replace the outdated Factories Act, Chapter 296 by establishing a modern and comprehensive legislative structure that clearly outlines the responsibilities of both employers and workers. Key provisions of the Bill include the establishment of the National Advisory Occupational Safety and Health Committee and the OSH Inspectorate, two essential bodies for enforcing safety regulations and fostering a proactive safety culture. The Bill has followed a lengthy path, initially presented to Cabinet in 2011 and later reviewed by the Public Service, Labour, Industry, and Trade Committee in 2014.
- **Modernization of the Labour Act, Chapter 297** - The Labour Act, originally enacted in 1960, is currently undergoing a comprehensive review to modernize its provisions in light of evolving labour dynamics, including the impacts of COVID-19, labour migration, and technological change. The review aims to enhance clarity, improve compliance, and align with international labour standards. While progress has been made, the review remains ongoing, and a new consultancy firm will be contracted to complete the process.
- **Advancing the DWCP** - The DWCP serves as a strategic framework to promote decent and productive employment in conditions of freedom, equity, security, and dignity for all Belizeans. In May 2024, in partnership with the ILO, the Department hosted a national validation workshop to finalize Belize's DWCP 2024–2029. This collaborative event brought together representatives from government, employers' and workers' organizations, and civil society to review and refine the draft programme. The validation process reflected a strong commitment to inclusive dialogue and national ownership, ensuring the DWCP is aligned with Belize's development priorities and the evolving needs of the Labour Market. Guided by the ILO, stakeholders engaged in in-depth discussions that helped shape a shared vision for the future of work in Belize.

The DWCP 2024–2029 was formally launched on 11 July 2024. The launch event marked the beginning of the implementation phase and reaffirmed Belize's national commitment to the DWCP's three strategic priorities:

- Promoting Employment and Sustainable Enterprises
- Strengthening Labour Market Governance and Compliance
- Enhancing Social Dialogue and Inclusion

This milestone provided a platform to build momentum among tripartite partners and stakeholders, ensuring a unified approach to advancing decent work and improving labour conditions across the country.



Fig. 17. Signing of the DWCP

F.) Strategic partnership and institutional development

- ***Empowering Asylum Seekers and Migrants through Job Preparedness and Strategic Partnerships*** - On November 30, 2024, the Labour Department, in partnership with the Regional Protection and Solutions Framework and the Refugees Department, conducted a Job Preparedness Training aimed at supporting the socio-economic integration of asylum seekers and migrant persons in Belize. The training equipped participants with essential tools for workforce entry, covering key topics such as job market navigation, workplace expectations, and access to important services including those offered by the Social Security Board. This initiative underscores the Department's ongoing commitment to fostering inclusive labour markets by empowering vulnerable populations to achieve economic independence and actively contribute to national development. Through strategic partnerships and alignment with regional protection mechanisms, the Labour Department continues to promote decent work and sustainable livelihoods for all.
- ***Strengthening Partnerships to Advance Decent Work: ILO Official Visit to the Labour Department*** - The Labour Department was honoured to host Dr. Joni Musabayana, Director of the ILO Decent Work Team, and Office for the Caribbean, along with his delegation during their official visit. Meaningful discussions took place with Ministry representatives to reaffirming a shared commitment to promoting decent work across Belize. This visit underscores the ongoing collaboration aimed at strengthening labour systems, building resilient institutions, and fostering a more inclusive labour market for all Belizeans.
- ***Modernizing Public Employment Services through Strategic Partnership with Inter-American Development Bank (IDB)*** - The Labour Department reaffirmed its commitment to inclusive economic development by establishing a strategic partnership with the IDB. This collaboration is centered on the modernization of Belize's Public

Employment Services with a strong focus on enhancing digital job-matching systems and expanding support for women in the labour force. These efforts are designed to boost labour market participation, empower marginalized groups, and contribute to greater national productivity.

- ***Belize Participates in the XXII Inter-American Conference of Ministers of Labour in Bogotá, Colombia*** – The Minister of Labour led Belize’s delegation at the XXII Inter-American Conference of Ministers of Labour (IACML) which was held on October 23-24, 2024, in Bogotá, Colombia, under the chairmanship of the Colombian Ministry of Labour. The conference gathered Labour Ministers and representatives from workers’ and employers’ organizations across the Americas to discuss key challenges shaping the future of work. Centered on the theme “The Future of Work in the Americas: Laying the Foundations for Peace, Social Justice, and Climate Action,” the discussions addressed the impacts of technological change and the climate crisis on labour markets. Over the course of the two-day event participants adopted a Ministerial Declaration and Plan of Action that sets hemispheric priorities and cooperative strategies to guide efforts over the next three years. Belize’s active engagement underscores its ongoing commitment to regional cooperation and the promotion of decent work, equity, and sustainable development in the labour sector.



Fig. 18. Inter-American Conference of Ministers of Labour in Bogota, Colombia

- ***Bilateral Meeting with Guatemala*** - On August 27, 2024, the Minister of Labour accompanied the Prime Minister as a member of Belize’s official delegation during a state visit to Guatemala. As part of the high-level discussions, the Minister highlighted critical issues concerning Labour migration between the two countries. He reiterated Belize’s commitment to strengthening bilateral ties and advancing fair, safe, and effective labour practices for migrant workers in both Belize and Guatemala.
- ***Ministry of Labour Participates in Belize–Guatemala Joint Commission*** - On August 7, 2024, Chief Executive Officer in the Ministry of Labour and the Labour Commissioner represented Belize at the Belize–Guatemala Joint Commission meeting held in

Guatemala City. As part of the official delegation, they actively engaged in discussions on key bilateral matters with a particular focus on labour migration. During the meeting, they shared updates on Belize's ongoing efforts to manage labour migration and gained valuable insights into Guatemala's corresponding initiatives. While in Guatemala City, they also held a bilateral meeting with Guatemala's Vice Minister of Labour to further exchange views on enhancing cooperation and advancing the implementation of the Placencia Accord. These engagements reflect Belize's ongoing dedication to promoting collaborative approaches to labour mobility and ensuring decent work conditions across borders.



Fig. 19. Belize represented at the Belize-Guatemala Joint Commission

- ***Regional Workshop in Costa Rica hosted by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the Regional Conference on Migration*** - From July 30 to August 1, 2024, the Chief Executive Officer of the Ministry of Labour led Belize's delegation comprising representatives from the Labour Department, Immigration Department, and Ministry of Foreign Affairs to a regional workshop in Costa Rica organized by IOM and the Regional Conference on Migration. The workshop focused on reviewing a needs assessment for replicating labour traceability systems across Central America. As part of the engagement the Belize delegation participated in a technical meeting with Costa Rican authorities to gain insights into the implementation of the SITLAM system. In his capacity as representative of Belize's Pro Tempore Presidency of the RCM, the Chief Executive Officer delivered both the opening and closing remarks, reinforcing Belize's leadership and commitment to advancing regional cooperation on labour migration.
- ***Launch of the Participation, Ownership, and Sustainable Progress for Economic Resilience (PROSPER) Project to Strengthen Rural Livelihoods in Southern Belize*** - In 2024, the Labour Department reached a major milestone with the official launch of the PROSPER project, a four-year initiative aimed at fostering inclusive and sustainable local economic development in Belize's southern districts. The Chief Executive Officer represented the Ministry at the signing ceremony which marked the formalization of this

strategic partnership between the Government of Belize, the ILO, and the European Union. PROSPER is designed to build economic resilience by empowering women and youth, promoting entrepreneurship, and enhancing technical and vocational skills. The project embraces a participatory, community-driven approach to ensure local ownership and sustainable outcomes. The Ministry remains steadfast in its commitment to advancing policies and programs that support decent work, inclusive growth, and sustainable livelihoods, particularly for Belize’s most vulnerable populations.



Fig. 20. Signing of the PROSPER Project

3.3 Local Government

The Department of Local Government is responsible for overseeing the governance and administration of all town and city councils in Belize. Its mandate is to strengthen the institutional capacity of town and city councils across Belize by providing oversight, guidance, and support to improve compliance with legal and reporting requirements, enhance administrative performance, and promote effective service delivery and sustainable municipal development.

Within the past three fiscal periods, the Department has strengthened its internal capacity to support municipal governments in areas of sustainable municipal financing and climate resiliency for the urban sector. The seven town and two city councils are governed by respective municipal legislations that are supported by various pieces of regulations. These include the Belize City Council Act; the Belmopan City Council Act and for the seven towns, the Town Council Act; all Revised Edition of the Laws of Belize, 2020.

The following Key Result Areas (KRA) are the primary drivers of the Department’s work during this period:

- a) Climate Resiliency for the Urban Sector
- b) Sustainable Municipal Financing
- c) Capacity Building and Institutional Strengthening
- d) Legal and Policy Reform

A.) Climate Resiliency for the Urban Sector

Municipal Climate Resiliency Project – In collaboration with the Central Executing Unit in the Ministry of Finance several projects have been completed, some are in the pipeline and others are in the process for full implementation in the upcoming fiscal period. With the support of the Government of Belize, these projects are intending to directly facilitate climate resiliency for the urban sector including support for environment and waste-water management, local economic development, infrastructure improvement, gender-responsive and support to vulnerable groups and migrants. A list of these projects is provided in Annex 3.

B.) Sustainable Municipal Financing

Municipal Financial Management - The Department continues working closely with municipalities to tackle financial challenges by overseeing their operational surplus/deficit and overall financial performance. For the year 2024, the highest revenue councils were the San Pedro Town Council and the Orange Walk Town Council. Meanwhile the councils with the lowest revenue were the Belmopan City Council and Punta Gorda Town Council.

According to the performance indicators, shown in Table 7, the San Pedro Town Council outperforms all councils with an average rate of 131%. The Orange Walk Town Council continues holding its significant rate of 109%. For the licenses collection rate (budget vs. actual), once more, the San Pedro Town Council similarly outperforms all other councils, and the Corozal Town Council is the second best performing with an outstanding rate of 111%.

Table 7. Performance Indicators for Revenue Collection during 2019-20 and 2023-24 Period

Percent Performance Indicators - Averages for last 5 Fiscal Years (2019-20 to 2023-24)											
	Belize City	Belmopan	Corozal	Orange Walk	San Ignacio	Benque	Dangriga	Punta Gorda	San Pedro	Overall Average	
% Ratios on key areas of (Budgeted/Actual):											
Revenue											
1	Overall Revenue Collection Rate	88	71	103	109	88	104	91	76	131	91
2	Revenue Collection Rate - Property Tax	86	58	80	63	66	132	74	52	190	76
3	Revenue Collection - Traffic	92	103	103	124	102	107	120	95	136	106
4	Revenue Collection - Licenses	95	69	111	103	97	98	92	94	139	95
Expenditure											
5	Emoluments to Revenue	37	67	46	47	51	57	54	71	38	54
6	Maintenance Cost to Revenue	10	10	7	11	17	8	9	12	15	11
7	Operational Cost to Revenue	6	8	12	7	10	11	10	9	6	9
8	Administrative Cost to Revenue	7	5	4	5	4	5	3	5	4	5

C.) Capacity Building & Institutional Strengthening of Municipalities

Table 8. Capacity Building & Institutional Strengthening of Municipalities: Participants by District

District	Toledo	Stann Creek	Cayo			Belize			Orange Walk	Corozal	Total
Municipality	Punta Gorda	Dangriga	Belmopan	San Ignacio/S.E	Benque Viejo	Belize City	San Pedro	Caye Caulker			
Capacity Building and Institutional Strengthening for Municipal Leaders	14	10	9	13	13	15	10		12	11	107
Municipal Boundaries Expansion Sensitization	18	28		25	19		34		22	25	171
Trade Licenses Act Sensitization	86	120	130	91	59	161	135	89	74	65	1010
QuickBooks Financial Management Training	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	19
Trade & Liquor Licenses Training	15	15	16	12	12	16	12	12	14	13	137
Annual Board of Survey Refresher Training	8	8	8	8	8		8		8	8	64
Annual Review - Municipalities (Challenges/Best Practises)	2	3	3	3	4	1	4		2	3	25
QuickBooks Training - Corozal Town Council										5	5
			168	154	117	195	205	102			
	145	186	439			502			134	132	1538

Capacity Building and Institutional Strengthening for Municipal Leaders - As part of the Department’s efforts to enhance capacity and strengthen institutional frameworks, training sessions were conducted in March and April 2024 for newly elected officials of the town and city councils. These workshops sensitized and oriented elected leaders on their roles and responsibilities, the governance and administration of municipal councils, current challenges and opportunities within the local government sector, municipal finance, and other critical areas consistent with the existing legal and regulatory framework. More than sixty (60) elected representatives participated in these sessions, which were delivered in their respective municipalities.



Fig. 21. Sensitization and Capacity Building Sessions for Elected Officials

Sensitization on Municipal Boundary Re-delineation - Following Cabinet’s decision to finalize the municipal boundaries re-delineation exercise, a series of sensitization sessions were conducted with municipal authorities, selected village communities, and the public within each affected municipality. These sessions were held between May and July 2024 and focused on presenting the finalized boundary proposals that had been mutually agreed upon by municipal authorities and the respective village councils, endorsed by Cabinet, and scheduled for official declaration on April 1, 2025. Over three hundred (300) stakeholders engaged in these consultations, ensuring broad-based awareness, and understanding of the boundary changes.

Sensitization on the Trade License Act, No. 19 of 2024 - During the second and third quarters of the fiscal year, the Department undertook a nationwide sensitization campaign across selected rural communities, towns, and cities to raise awareness of the provisions under the newly enacted Trade License Act. These sessions targeted key stakeholders, including over five hundred (500) participants comprising village council leaders, municipal officials, members of the business community, and the public. Complementary outreach was conducted through presentations on various national and local radio and television platforms. The full implementation of the legislation was postponed to October 1, 2025, following a decision by Cabinet.



Fig. 22. Public Sensitization Sessions on the New Trade License Act

QuickBooks Financial Management Training for Municipal Officers - In October 2024, the Department facilitated targeted financial management training for municipal personnel, specifically town and city administrators, finance officers, and accounts clerks. Led by the Department’s focal point on municipal accounts and finances, the multi-day workshops focused on enhancing technical competencies in the use of QuickBooks software. Core training components included transaction posting, data entry protocols, financial report generation, budget analysis, and broader elements of accounts and financial management. The objective was

to improve operational efficiency and strengthen evidence-based financial reporting to support municipal decision-making. Additional in-depth sessions were conducted with the accounts staff of the Corozal Town Council to reinforce these capacities.

Training for Trade and Liquor Licensing Boards and Enforcement Agencies - Following the appointment of new Trade and Liquor Licensing Boards for the calendar year, the Department working in collaboration with the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Council (ATIPS) delivered a series of regional and joint training sessions. These sessions brought together board members and key enforcement agencies, including representatives from the police, fire service, public health, and environment departments, as well as the Magistracy. The training emphasized a comprehensive review of the applicable legal and regulatory frameworks, identified areas of non-compliance, and included practical field exercises and stakeholder presentations outlining institutional mandates. The overarching goal was to strengthen inter-agency coordination and improve compliance monitoring and enforcement thereby enhancing public safety and regulatory adherence among license holders.



Fig. 23. Training for Trade and Liquor Licensing Boards

Refresher Training for Annual Board of Survey Exercise - The Department, with technical support from the Asset and Utilities Unit and the Office of the Auditor General, facilitated a refresher training session for members appointed to conduct the annual Board of Survey. This included deputy mayors and other designated municipal officials. Held at Dream Valley Resort in Teakettle Village, the session engaged over seventy-five (75) participants. The training provided a structured review of the procedural requirements for executing the survey including documentation standards, report preparation, coordination with municipal councils, and practical exercises aligned with the prevailing regulatory framework. The session aimed to ensure procedural consistency, accountability, and accuracy in the management of government assets at the municipal level.

Capacity Building on Urban Climate Resilience and Sustainable Municipal Financing – The Department’s focal point for municipal and climate financing participated in two high-level international training programmes aimed at strengthening institutional capacity in sustainable urban finance. In April 2024, the officer attended a one-week technical course in Belem, Brazil,

hosted by the World Bank, which addressed the evolving dynamics of urbanization in Latin America and the Caribbean, with a focus on climate change impacts and associated financing mechanisms for mitigation and adaptation. Complementing this, in February 2025, the officer also participated in a specialized training session in Singapore on Sustainable Financing for Cities. These learning exchanges have significantly enhanced the Department's technical capabilities in supporting municipalities with project development, climate resilience planning, grant proposal preparation, and the implementation of sustainable financing models.

Annual Municipal Review - In preparation for the new fiscal year, the Department hosted a one-day annual review session in March 2025, bringing together thirty (30) municipal stakeholders, including mayors, deputy mayors, administrators, finance officers, and revenue managers. The session focused on evaluating the financial performance of municipal councils and their adherence to legal and regulatory obligations, while highlighting best practices, challenges, limitations, and key concerns. It also served as a platform to facilitate open dialogue between the Minister and municipal authorities. Key concerns raised during the session included sustainable municipal financing, solid waste management, axle fee regulations, and the effectiveness of current financial and accounting management tools used by the councils.



Fig. 24. Annual Municipal Review Session

D.) Legal and Policy Reform

The Department continues its endeavours to collaborate closely with town and city councils throughout all municipalities to promote substantial reforms in local governance. The primary initiatives pursued this fiscal year are the following:

Trade License Reform –The Trade License Act, 2024 was passed into law in November 2024 and is slated for full implementation on October 1, 2025. Simultaneously, the Department is currently working with the Office of the Solicitor General for the drafting of the Regulations to support the new Trade Licensing legislation. The Department working towards the development of a digital tool for the management and administration of trade licensing.

Municipal Boundaries Re-Delineation Exercise – In September of 2024 Cabinet approved the passage of an Order for the Minister of Local Government to declare new boundaries for seven of the municipalities in Belize. These include for Punta Gorda, Dangriga, Benque Viejo, Orange Walk, Corozal and San Pedro towns. The new boundaries shall be declared effective April 1, 2025.

Transport at Border Points Regulations (Axle Fees) - During the last quarter of the 2024 fiscal year, Cabinet approved the passage of the new revised regulations which was signed into law by then Minister of Transport. Due to unforeseen challenges and circumstances both councils on the border points were requested to halt the full roll-out and implementation of the Regulations.

Municipal Building Units – Under the guidance the Central Building Unit in the Ministry of Infrastructure Development and Housing, amendments to the Building Act of 2017 have been completed. In this regard, the Central Building Authority is now engaging more rigorously with town and city councils and their respective building units to enhance compliance with building regulations in cities and towns. A major effort under the new Act is for the establishment of building codes for Belize.

4 LESSONS LEARNT

4.1 Rural Transformation

- Community involvement is critical – involving local stakeholders in planning leads to more effective and sustainable rural infrastructure projects.
- Strengthening local leadership is essential – empowering village leaders through capacity building enhances community-driven development.
- Preventative maintenance improves reliability – regular upkeep of water systems reduces service disruptions and prolongs system functionality.
- Emergency response capacity builds resilience – the use of the water bowser enabled swift action during water shortages, ensuring continued access.
- Strong financial policies support sustainability – water boards with consistent collection and enforcement practices remained financially stable and better able to serve their communities.

4.2 Labour Department

Over the past year, the Labour Department worked hard to serve the people of Belize. In doing so, it faced both challenges and successes which taught important lessons. These lessons are shaping how the Department plans to improve its work going forward.

- Working together makes a difference - When employers, workers, unions, and government representatives are brought together, better decisions are made. It is not enough to engage stakeholders once; continuous dialogue and coordination are key to getting things done effectively and on time.

- Good data is essential - Having accurate, up-to-date information makes a huge difference in how the Department responds to labour complaints and Temporary Employment Permits. Investing in better technology and labour market information systems is a top priority.
- Capacity building is key to reform - As the Department prepares for major programmes in 2025, it learnt that building internal capacity is not a one-off activity. Ongoing training, knowledge sharing, and leadership development are vital to support expanding responsibilities, especially with the implementation of the DWCP and the roll-out of new services under PROSPER and digital platforms.
- Individuals need to know their rights - Awareness campaigns, especially those about child labour, and Labour Educations sessions, had a noticeable impact. When individuals understand their rights and responsibilities, they are more likely to speak up and follow the law.
- Technology aids in doing more with less – The experience using digital tools from Labour Complaints Management Systems and the Temporary Employment Permit System showed that technology can help work smarter and not harder. Digital solutions can expand outreach and make services more accessible.
- Legal reform is a long-term investment - Progress in labour law reform, including the Labour Act, Trade Unions Act, and Wages Councils Act has shown that legal changes take time but are critical to addressing modern labour challenges.

By incorporating these lessons, the Department remains committed to advancing labour rights, fostering economic empowerment, and building a more equitable and prosperous future for all.

4.3 Local Government

Through its efforts in the past year, the Department recognized that several of its planning and engagement initiatives have worked well. These include, but are not necessarily limited to the following:

- Application of a Monitoring and Assessment Report form
- Conducting quarterly monitoring visits to Town and City Councils
- Application of a Quarterly Action Plan Calendar
- Collaboration with Asset and Utilities Unit and the Audit Department
- Collaboration with key government partners to facilitate key actions in support of municipal development.
- Conducting webinar series on key municipal legislations to reach a broader audience.
- Having strong leadership at the municipal level is critical in driving a national development agenda at the local level.

- The hosting of an annual review session with mayors, administrators, finance managers, and revenue managers
- In-house training for key staff on the use of accounting tools, budgeting, and budget management

Despite these best practices, the Department notes that there is a need for stronger collaboration with the Office of the Auditor General. This is essential to ensure alignment of efforts and to improve municipal councils' compliance with legal and regulatory requirements, particularly in relation to asset management and reporting.

5 FUTURE PRIORITIES AND PLAN

5.1 Rural Transformation

The Rural Transformation Department will focus on the following:

- Identify and adopt a digital accounting system for village councils and water boards.
- Provide continuous capacity building for staff through trainings and provide the necessary tools to allow to serve all village councils and water boards efficiently.
- Development and implementation of a National Rural Development Strategy.
- Continue to improve the management and operations of Rural Water Systems for service and sustainability.
- Rollout of the Trade License Bill in rural areas

5.2 Labour

The Labour Department remains steadfast in its mission to strengthen the labour market, enhance worker safety, and ensure compliance with national laws and international standards. In 2025, the Department will continue advancing decent work and social justice through the following key initiatives:

- Implementation of the DWCP 2024–2029
- Labour Law Reform and amendment of the Wages Councils Act to introduce a minimum wage adjustment formula.
- Support the reintroduction of the OSH Bill in the National Assembly to enhance worker protection.
- Expand skills training and entrepreneurship support and modernize employment services and labour intermediation systems.

- Enhance key platforms and systems, including the Temporary Employment Permit System and Labour Complaints System
- Strengthening the Public Employment Services Unit
- Implement the PROSPER Project to promote local development, gender equality, and skills training in underserved areas.
- Design and implement a structured Seasonal Migrant Workers Programme to support, to facilitate and minimize time and cost of processing seasonal labour mobility.

5.3 Local Government

While the Department has made significant strides in supporting municipal growth and advancing the local government sector, certain limitations remain. Addressing these areas will enhance collaboration with the councils and strengthen alignment with Belize's national development agenda. Given the Department's critical role in facilitating municipal development and strengthening local governance, it will prioritize the following areas moving forward:

- Enhancement of human resource capacity of the Department i.e. Secretary, Chief Valuer, Planning & Development Officer
- Institution of an Information & Technology Officer and Systems Administrator for the Ministry to support the digital and electronic data management agenda of the Department and the Ministry
- Allocation of a portion of project funds to support the development and implementation of a modern, integrated financial management system encompassing revenue, expenditure, and accounting for the councils.

6 STAFFING AND FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR 2024-25

Department	Human Resources	Financial Resources	Other Considerations	2024-2025 Budget
Rural Development	Training continues to be provided to build staff capacity to engage with critical issues such as climate change and community development. With the employment of the Rural Water Services Manager, there have been improvements in dealing with water-related issues. Approval was granted for the creation of seven second-class clerks to assist with trade licensing in rural areas.	There is need to expand financial sustainability program for water boards. This includes purchasing and installing water meters and expansion of water systems.	Continue stronger oversight of water boards and village councils. The need to expand work on village streets and farmers' roads, infrastructure remains. MIDH struggles to respond due to sheer scale of need around the country. There is a need to restructure the department to effectively fulfil its mandate. Currently, staff face limited opportunities for upward mobility, and there is an increase of workload for rural development. To address these challenges, consideration will be given to restructuring the Department, to increase efficiency and effectiveness.	\$7,233,727.00
Labour	With the continuous training and employment of new personnel, the Labour Department has grown and is reflected in the results of its productivity. The LCT now has an assigned secretary. The employment of three (3) Employment Officers, four (4) Labour Officers and the promotion of other officers has increased staff motivation and reduced previous workload.	With the support of regional and international partners and internal resources, the Department has been able to meet its costs of programs and operations. However, there is a need to increase the budget to meet the Department's mandate.	There is still a need to revamp the employment services unit to make it more effective in addressing workforce preparedness. There is also a need to address the demand for specialization within the Department such as inspection, industrial relations, child labour, etc. Furthermore, the passing of the Occupational Safety and Health Bill will create the need for a unit which will need staffing such as a Chief OSH Inspector, OSH Inspectors and support staff.	\$3,407,582.00
Local Government	The Department continues to work with a strength of four. However, approval was granted for the creation of a secretarial post and the Ministry of the Public Service supports the creation of a planner post to assist with boundaries and council's development.	Adequate for level of service provided however any new programs will require new financial resources to cover operations and personnel. There is a need for five desktop computers for more efficient and effective production.	There is a need to compile the councils' acts into a single, comprehensive act that governs all councils. With the Trade License Bill coming into effect and the intention to revise the three existing acts into one, it is crucial to consider the inclusion of a deputy director to support the director. This addition would enhance the supervision of the Department's operations and staff. Additionally, the inclusion of a driver for the Department is essential, given its out-district operations	\$5,411,364.00

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In 2024, the Ministry continued to deliver on its strategic priorities through integrated and coordinated action across its three core departments. The Department of Local Government prioritized municipal modernization, regulatory compliance, and financial sustainability. Key developments included the enactment of the Trade License Act, 2024, national sensitization campaigns, and the preparation for its phased implementation. Additionally, technical training and annual review sessions bolstered accountability, while capacity-building efforts for municipal officials, licensing boards, and trade enforcement strengthened inter-agency coordination and operational readiness.

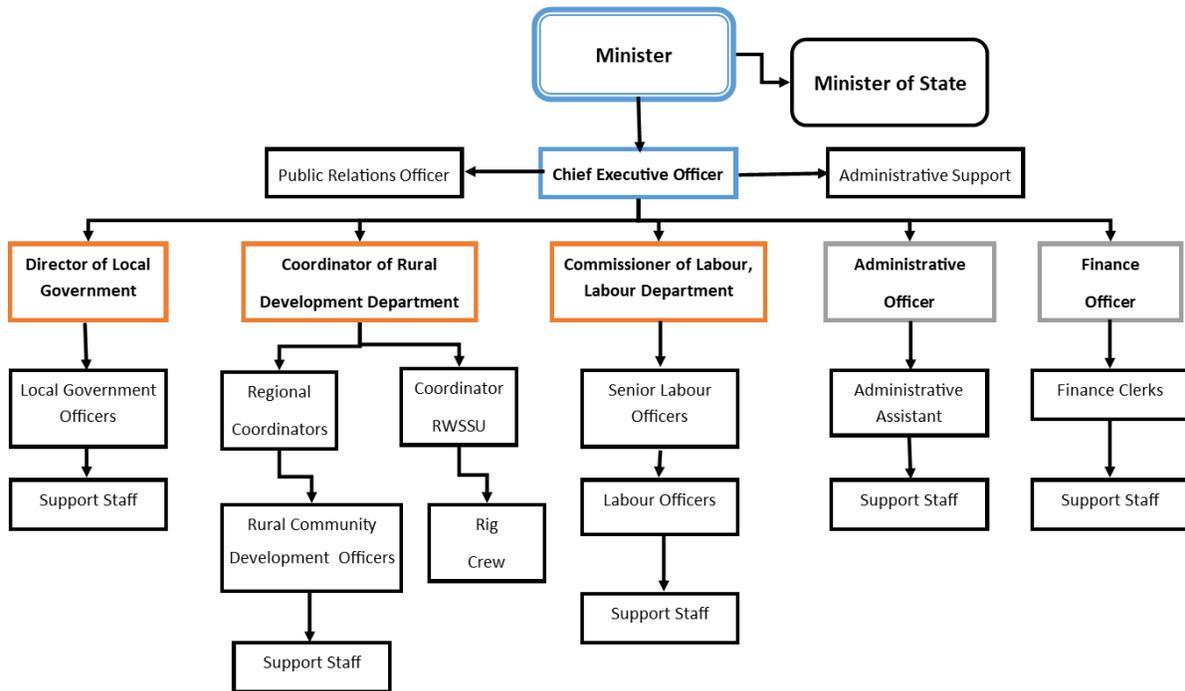
The Labour Department continued its multisectoral approach to improving workplace standards, legal compliance, and employment access. With several labour inspections conducted and various complaints resolved. Legal and policy frameworks advanced through the reintroduction of the OSH Bill, active review of the Labour Act, and the launch of the DWCP 2024–2029. Efforts to combat child labour were reinforced through international collaboration with Brazil and the ILO, while labour education sessions and advisory consultations ensured wide public engagement.

The Rural Transformation Department focused on expanding rural infrastructure, improving water system management, and building community resilience. The installation of meters improved water system accountability and rehabilitation projects enhanced access and water quality. Governance and accountability were strengthened through the training of over Water Board members. Economic empowerment projects, especially for women and youth in rural areas supported inclusive development while new systems like the Community Profile MIS enhanced data-driven decision-making.

Together these achievements reflect the Ministry’s ability to deliver coordinated, cross-sectoral development outcomes through strong institutional frameworks and sustained stakeholder engagement. With the foundation laid in 2024, the Ministry is well-positioned to deepen its impact in 2025 by accelerating digital transformation, finalizing key policy reforms, and advancing inclusive governance and service delivery across both rural and urban communities.

7 ANNEXES

Annex 1. Organizational structure of the Ministry



Annex 2. List of professional and technical staff of the Ministry

Management Team	
Staff Name	Position
Honourable Oscar Requena	Minister
Honourable Ramiro Ramirez	Minister of State
Mr. Valentino Shal	Chief Executive Officer

Rural Transformation Department	
Staff Name	Position
Mr. Isodoro Galvez	Ag. Coordinator, Rural Development
Mr. Ismer Ortega	Regional Rural Coordinator (Northern Region)
Mr. Leonardo Cal	Regional Rural Coordinator (Southern Region)
Mr. Neville Wade	Rural Community Development Officer
Mr. Kurt Gideon	Rural Community Development Officer
Mr. Nemencio Acosta	Rural Community Development Officer
Ms. Evelio Castaneda	Rural Community Development Officer
Mr. Herminio Sho	Rural Community Development Officer
Ms. Dominga Shack	Rural Community Development Officer
Mr. Adrian Cus	Rural Community Development Officer
Mr. Elmer Osorio	Rural Community Development Officer
Mr. Germin Avila	Rural Community Development Officer
Mr. Jaime Jimenez	Rural Community Development Officer
Mr. Pedro Choc	Rural Community Development Officer
Mr. Juan Marin Jr	Rural Water Services Manager

Rural Water and Sanitation Unit	
Staff Name	Position
Mr. Ernesto Rash	Master Driller
Mr. Ronaldo Coc	Well Rig Operator
Mr. Matthew Rash	Assistant Well Rig Operator
Mr. Norman Choco	Assistant Maintenance Foreman
Mr. Benito Coc	Third Hand Helper
Mr. Jaheed Sandoval	Third Hand Helper
Mr. Jamar Loague	Third Hand Helper
Mr. Gilberto Ucan	Third Hand Helper

Local Government Department	
Staff Name	Position
Mr. Clifford King	Director, Local Government
Ms. Ashantelee Sutherland	Local Government Officer
Ms. Lauren Cayetano	Local Government Officer
Ms. Aurelia Cal	Local Government Officer

Labour Department	
Staff Name	Position
Mrs. Rissela Dominguez Patt	Labour Commissioner
Ms. Claire Lamb	Deputy Labour Commissioner
Mrs. Aida Reyes	Senior Labour Officer
Mr. Jesus Yam	Senior Labour Officer
Ms. Gicely Cal	Labour Officer I
Mrs. Daria Bo-Mes	Labour Officer I
Mr. Franklin Martinez	Labour Officer I
Mr. Alfaro Muy	Labour Officer I
Mr. Aniki Palacio	Labour Officer I
Mr. Rudy Ake	Labour Officer I
Mrs. Sujelli Ku	Labour Officer II
Mr. Orvin Sanchez	Labour Officer II
Mr. Domingo Pau	Labour Officer II
Ms. Vernon Avila	Labour Officer II
Ms. Denise Spain	Employment Officer
Ms. Perla Coba	Employment Officer
Ms. Brenda Serrano	Employment Officer
Mr. Gabriel Ramos	Employment Officer
Ms. Tarina Moody	Employment Officer
Ms. Esperanza Mendez	Employment Officer
Ms. Christy Edwards	Employment Officer
Ms. Shemicha Cattouse	Employment Officer

Annex 3. List of projects

Climate Resiliency projects for the Urban Sector

Project Name	Funding Support	Beneficiary Municipalities	Project Description	Project Status
Sustainable & Inclusive Urban Development Project	IDB	San Pedro, Orange Walk & Corozal	To address institutional strengthening, infrastructure investments, local economic development, and other development challenges in the selected municipalities	Launched
Belize Blue Cities & Beyond	World Bank	Punta Gorda, Belize & San Pedro	To address institutional strengthening, infrastructure investments, local economic development, and other development challenges in the selected municipalities.	Final Preparatory Stages
Development of a Gender-Responsive Framework/Model for establishing Market Infrastructure and Agrifood Logistics and Distribution Systems	Caribbean Development Bank (CDB)	San Ignacio & Santa Elena (include market studies for Caye Caulker & San Pedro)	To support and enhance access to markets and to food logistics and distribution in selected municipalities with primary focus on the Cayo Farmers Market.	CDB signed Agreement with the FAO.
Integrated Flood Management in the Upper Regions of the Belize River Watershed	5Cs (GCF)	San Ignacio & Santa Elena	To improve flood risk management systems in the San Ignacio & Santa Elena areas include the control of drainage and water containment.	Final consultancies to inform the development & submission of the Project Preparation Facility (PPF) to the GCF
Belize Inclusive, Resilient, Safe & SMART Spaces	United Nations Development Program – Joint SDG Fund	Select Municipalities	To focus on increasing safety and resilience through reducing violence and harassment whilst ensuring access to public spaces.	Preparation to Launch
Resilient Infrastructure & Sustainable Development	Protected Areas Conservation Trust – Adaptation Fund	All Municipalities	To build capacity of urban stakeholders through training and the application of toolkits in enhancing urban infrastructure and sustainable development.	Launched
Strengthening Climate Readiness in Belize	IDB – Compete Caribbean	Selected Municipalities	To build capacity of municipal councils and key staff to address and manage development challenges that are exacerbated by climate change.	Project Proposal submitted to Compete Caribbean
Climate & Ocean Risk Vulnerability Index	Taiwan International Cooperation Development Fund	Belize City	To develop a database with indices relating to climate and ocean risk vulnerabilities for Belize City.	Completed