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#OPEN GOV
BELIZE
2020



"PROMOTING
AN OPEN GOVERNMENT
ECOSYSTEM
IN BELIZE"





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Nestor Mendez

ASSISTANT SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE OAS



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“The work of the OAS, along with the Trust of the Americas, contributes towards Belize’s advancement in open government practices in benefit of all Belizeans and the region at large. It is important for the citizenry to be duly informed and keenly aware of the benefits of open government to engender accountability and efficacy in public management.”

The importance of open government in the exercise of good governance and accountability is undeniable. This can only be achieved through a collaborative approach in public management and oversight between government and civil society working in consonance to design and deliver improved services to citizens. Open government and open data are an invaluable resource that can assist countries like Belize in fostering public innovation, social entrepreneurship, and evidence-based public policy.”

Nestor Mendez

Assistant Secretary General of the OAS.

Government administrations worldwide are changing their business models. The leading governments shaping these changes for the last decade are effectively making the citizen the center of the equation. It is no secret that participation in public affairs is a way to contribute directly in transforming your communities or your country. Whether you are concerned about improving public service delivery, health or education issues, or you would like to find or connect business opportunities within the digital economy, Open Government is the platform that offers citizens the means to engage in decision-making. In this regard, e-Government and Open Government utilize Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to bring the government closer to its people through major improvements in the delivery of Government services.

Public participation and citizen engagement are key to having a strong, effective, and efficient government. Nowadays, Open Government capitalizes on government, private, and civil society resources and networks to collectively work together to improve, expand, or complement government service delivery (particularly to vulnerable populations); and working on advocacy for improved government transparency. Open government embraces collaboration and adopts technology to strengthen democracy. In this way, it builds pro-transparency coalitions among civil society and local governments while fighting corruption and marginalization. In 2017, the U.S. Embassy in Belmopan, Belize, decided to fund the project entitled "Promoting an Open Government Ecosystem in Belize," which would lay the foundational work to the development of open government, access to information through open data, transparency, and citizen participation in the country.

During 2018 and 2019, The Trust for the Americas and the Organization of American States (OAS) through its Department for Effective Public Management (DEPM) and the Government of Belize worked together to put into action mechanisms and activities in support of the government and civil society. Moreover, the project ensured a collaborative approach to unlocking the economic potential of open data in the country, most notably within Belize's tourism sector.

The objectives and respective results of the project were to:

- 1) Reinforce existing e-government initiatives to guarantee public access to information and effective service delivery.**
- 2) Strengthen the capacities of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) to participate in coalitions and advocate for the improvement of government services.**
- 3) Promote effective collaboration between government and civil society through coalition-building processes and social innovation mini-grants.**

Jamaica hackathon, and a high-level political forum on Open Government and Open Data.

The last component of the project included the promotion of effective collaboration between government and civil society through coalition-building processes and social innovation mini-grants. This groundbreaking initiative in the form of mini-grants served as motivation to create high impact solutions to improve public services. As a result, the projects financed were comprised of Belizean social organizations in partnership with a government counterpart.

The winning projects focused on the following main areas:

- a) Access to public information**
- b) Fight against corruption**
- c) E-government**
- d) Citizen participation**
- e) Digital-online requests**
- f) Open data**
- g) Education**

The eight pioneering projects received a sub-grant of **US\$5,000.00** each.

Scan the following QR and read more about these innovative projects.



Today, Belize has ongoing open government's initiatives well underway, while the project was also able to accomplish the insertion of the country at the regional level by joining 6 other countries in the pursue of Open Government through the Developing the Caribbean (DevCa) initiative; coordinated by the Caribbean Open Institute (COI) in Jamaica. While it is an important milestone, these are the very first steps towards an effective Open Government in the country.

The Government of Belize needs to consolidate the open government efforts, providing new opportunities and spaces for collaboration, and setting the ground to finally take it to the next level. This will also activate international platforms and mechanisms that will support with technical and financial resources, enabling the country to join the Open Government global movement through international organizations such as the Open Government Partnership (OGP).

In advancing open government through a multi-stakeholder co-creation approach, the Trust for the Americas and the Organization of the American States (OAS), are supporting during 2020 the development of Belize's first open government action plan. The Action Plan is intended to serve as the instrument to orient the actions of all actors in Belize to accomplish certain open government commitments in different topics and sectors.

To know more about this project follow our Facebook Page facebook.com/OpenGovBelize

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SNAPSHOT OF PHASE 1

21 training seminars, workshops and events were conducted during 2018-2019.

114 total local government, international organizations and/or civil society organizations engaged:

a) 30 government departments and ministries joined in various capacity building workshops, training events and roundtable discussions, including international agencies in Belize.

b) 30 local NGO and Civil Society Organizations involved.

c) 45 private sector agencies and businesses participated in training workshops, roundtable discussions and project events.

d) 9 local academic institutions participated.

200+ civil society stakeholders and public officials received training, attended workshops and engaged in the Open Government project. (**63** were young people under **30** and **109** were female participants).

23 international experts provided trainings and conducted workshops.

8 Open Government innovative projects awarded with seed funding.



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