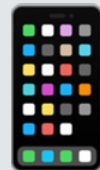
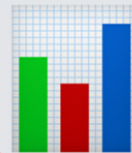


# TRANSFORMATION TO AN *OPEN PUBLIC* @ADMINISTRATION IN #BELIZE

2019 - 2021



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**First edition 2021.**

Contents and editing: **Rodrigo Iriani, Audrey Robin,  
Andrea López & Angélica Aranz**

Creativity and Design: **Marco Ortega Vega**

Special thanks to: **Carlos Escalante**

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# SITUATIONAL ***AWARENESS***





Since 2018, The Trust for the Americas and the Organization of American States (OAS), have implemented two projects in partnership with government entities and civil society organizations in Belize. These projects aimed at strengthening the creation of networks and fostering multi-stakeholder collaboration, supporting a long-term process to spur innovation, improving local government services, and activating international support mechanisms for enabling the country to join the **Open Government** global movement.

Building pro-transparency coalitions among civil society and local governments, including active participation from vulnerable groups, is key to increasing the effectiveness and resilience of public institutions. **Open Government and Open Data** have shown practical gains to advance and achieve transparency and fighting corruption, but also economic and social development outcomes.

A transformative process needs reformers in civil society and in government to work together under **Open Government principles**:

**Transparency:** providing citizens with meaningful information.

**Participation:** empowering citizen voice in policymaking.

**Collaboration:** solving problems with citizens and respond to their needs, including marginalized communities. Collaboration is key for incorporating different end-user views in the policy-making processes.

When citizens have transparency and wider participation, confidence and trust in government is increased. Greater public participation would translate to increased government accountability and client-focused public service delivery. Ultimately, these practices achieve lower crime rates and more stable support for democracy.

# PROJECT *SUMMARY*





Project participants and stakeholder representatives

**The Trust for the Americas** and the Department for Effective Public Management of the Organization of American States (OAS) have been working in **Belize in 2018 and 2019**, supporting the first steps towards Open Government in the country. The **“Promoting an Open Government Ecosystem”** project (phase one) enabled government institutions and various civil society organizations to deliberate and discuss the co-creation of policies and learn about modern participatory tools in public administration. An active civil society coalition is key to increase government transparency and accountability.

While phase one has been an important milestone, the “[Transformation to an Open Public Administration in Belize](#)” project, consolidated the open government efforts initiated in the country by providing new opportunities and spaces for collaboration, co-creation, and setting the ground for Belize to finally take Open Government initiatives to the next level. Capacity building training was carried out for [Belizeans](#) from various sectors through seminars, workshops, and roundtable activities, enabling the creation of small coalitions of government and civil society, the development of seven hackathon solutions, and the incubation of eight innovative projects through mini-grants. This led to the development of different open government initiatives in Belize. At the same time, the project also achieved the insertion of the country to the regional open government ecosystem, by joining efforts with seven other countries in the search for open government and open data through the [Development the Caribbean Initiative \(DevCa\)](#) with the coordination of the [Caribbean Open Institute \(COI\) in Jamaica](#), and with the Trust for the Americas [DIA Innovation Labs](#).

**Project objectives:**

**Objective 1:** Broaden knowledge and build capacities of government and non-government actors to co-create and initiate more transparent and efficient public service delivery.

**Objective 2:** Unleash critically needed collaboration between civil society and government to improve transparency and open government.

**Objective 3:** Empower communities through innovation to promote solutions that generate livelihood opportunities and good governance.

The expected results were the improvement of technical competencies both in national and subnational governments, the co-creation of a **Belizean Open Government Action Plan** mindful of improving transparency (through the Open Government Partnership methodology), increasing collaboration and public understanding of the government priorities (including civil society groups from across the country), and the establishment of a national **Open Government Coordination Mechanism** with government and non-government organizations. During the second phase of this project, and particularly during the Action Plan development process, we had active participation and collaboration of more than **170 government** entities and civil society organizations in the country and region.

### **Impact of the project:**

**1** Open Government Steering Committee created with **11** members from gov and non-gov actors.

**1** Open Government Action Plan: **11** suggested commitments and **7** final Open Government Commitments open to public consultation.

**+170** CSO and Gov entities engaged.

**+ 20** Gov entities and **50** CSO organizations trained.

**+ 100** people from civil society participated in at least one training session (representing over **30** CSOs, academic institutions and private sector entities).

**2** Hackathon events: **31** competitors presented **11** solutions with social and economic impact.



Get to know the results of the project: <https://youtu.be/prrg7oTvZKo>

See the data visualizations of the project: [access here](#)

## Adaptability to the Covid-19 context

The year 2020 exposed the world to an extraordinary situation: the Covid-19 pandemic. Across the globe, countries struggled to respond to unprecedented challenges, and the need for openness, transparency, inclusion and accountability has rarely been greater. Due to the Covid-19 outbreak, we decided to adjust the narrative of the project in order to connect the topic of Open Government to the situation and change its format from onsite to an online format. As the main activity of this phase was the development of the Belize Open Government Action Plan (BOGAP), with the holding of open tables and multi-stakeholder consultation meetings, this change of format had to be pivoted very carefully. This work resulted in large and greater participation of the traditional project stakeholders but also new actors throughout the country.

Moreover, the Open Government agenda and the design of an Action Plan during this particular context has represented an opportunity for the government, civil society, the private sector and citizens to work and seek solutions to the health and economic crisis together. This situation helped raising awareness of the project and channel the support on some specific areas that are relevant under these conditions (economic relief, health, education, fiscal transparency, among others). As stated by the Open Government Partnership (OGP): *“Open Government can build mutual trust: transparent and accurate disclosure and directives by government empower citizens to take responsible, mitigating action to curb contagion; citizens empower governments to unleash emergency powers, mobilize massive medical care and launch big stimulus packages, while governments act with integrity, open themselves to public scrutiny and roll back emergency powers after the pandemic.”*

Therefore, the exercise of developing Belize’s Open Government Action Plan contributed to defining priority areas in which Open Government could add more value or have a greater impact on Covid-19 related emergency response and/or recovery initiatives. In terms of timeline, the project was adjusted in order to achieve the intended outcomes and the National Action Plan development. A website and tailored information campaigns were also produced throughout the year to share communication and useful resources relative to these topics.

# PROJECT *IMPLEMENTATION*





## Belize Open Government Action Plan:



### Presentation of the Open Government Action Plan

Throughout phase two of the project “**Promoting an Open Government in Belize**”, The Trust for the Americas developed a series of actions and activities to facilitate the co-creation of a national Open Government Action Plan for Belize, to increase collaboration and public understanding of the Government priorities, and finally to establish a national **Open Government Coordination Mechanism** with government and non-government organizations.

This was done with the formation of a multi-stakeholder **Open Government Steering Committee (OGSC) (1)**, the facilitation of training webinars for the Steering Committee and members of the civil society **(2)**, and the preparation of a 12-months and 3-phases national Action Plan drafting process **(3)**. A series of hackathons targeting youth to promote social innovation and open data **(4)** and a closing event and ceremony with the key project’s actors were also organized **(5)**.



**Below is a preview of the key results of the Open Government Action Plan development:**

**1** Multi-Stakeholders Open Government Steering Committee formed

**5** Public multi-stakeholder co-creation sessions

**170** Participants

**11** Commitment proposals submitted

**25** Drafting meetings with proponents

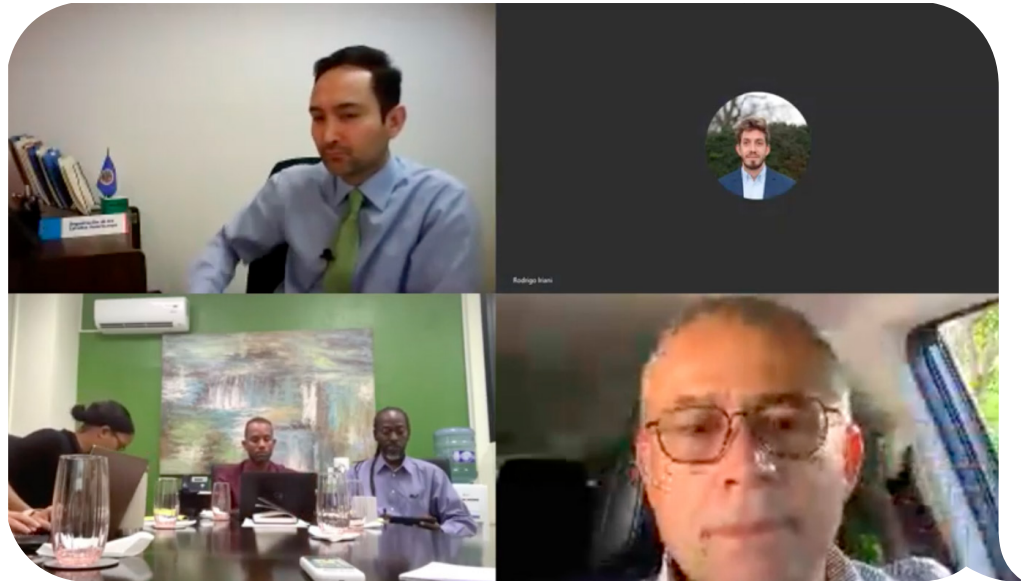
**40** Inputs received during the Public Consultation

**7** Drafted Commitments open to public consultation

**7** Agreed Final Commitments

1

## OPEN GOVERNMENT STEERING COMMITTEE (FEBRUARY 2020)



Open Government Steering Committee First Meeting

An **Open Government Steering Committee for Belize** was formed and launched in **January 2020** to participate and support the drafting and implementation of the Belize Open Government Action Plan. The role of the Steering Committee was to serve as the multi-stakeholder dialogue and decision-making ad-hoc mechanism to advance Open Government in the country. It was composed of **eleven (11) volunteer** members, **six (6) representatives** of government agencies and **five representatives (5)** from civil society organizations:

- ✓ **Ms. Deshawn Arzu Torres**  
*Chairperson, Integrity Commission* [through November 2020]
- ✓ **Mr. Imani Burges**  
*Crown Counsel, Attorney General's Ministry* [through November 2020]
- ✓ **Mr. Clifford King**  
*Director of Local Government, Ministry of Finance* [through November 2020]
- ✓ **Mr. Ishmael Quiroz**  
*Executive Director, Economic Development Council for the Office of the Prime Minister*
- ✓ **Mr. Michael Singh**  
*Office of the PM, Advisor on Digital Transformation* [through November 2020]
- ✓ **Mr. Ian Smith**  
*CIO, Central Information Technology Office (CITO)* [through November 2020]
- ✓ **Mr. Khalid Belisle**  
*President, Belize Mayor's Association* [through November 2020]
- ✓ **Mr. Dyon Elliot**  
*Representative of the Private Sector, Belize Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCCI)*
- ✓ **Mr. Marvin Mora**  
*Representative of the Unions, President of The National Trade Union Congress of Belize (NTUCB)*
- ✓ **Ms. Sharmayne Saunders Chairperson**  
*The Association of Tertiary Level Institutions of Belize (ATLIB)* [through November 2020]
- ✓ **Mr. Paco Smith**  
*Representative of CSOs, Belize PEACE Movement*

The roles of the members were defined as: 1) nourishing and share the principles of Open Government, including speaking on behalf of the OGSC in media outlets, interviews, and alike; 2) exerting active participation in periodic meetings of the Committee; 3) attending on Open Government activities set by the project such as workshops, pieces of training, forums, roundtable dialogues, and alike, and; 4) following-up, reviewing and validating the Open Government Action Plan.

See Open Government Steering Committee meetings:



First meeting: <https://youtu.be/Fv74Ud1BMWl>

Second meeting: <https://youtu.be/rtFbBfm8KBk>

Extraordinary meeting: <https://youtu.be/AmGGoJSSxWQ>

## 2

## TRAINING WEBINARS (FEBRUARY–MARCH 2020)

An important component of the project focused on building capacities and raise awareness about the rules and guidelines for participants of the multistakeholder **Open Government Belizean ecosystem** when engaging in formal Open Government cocreation processes such as the **National Open Government Action Plan**. Through a series of webinars organized by the Trust for the Americas in collaboration with the OAS and international and regional experts partners, participants were exposed to the latest trends in co-creation processes. Three webinars were tailored to the **Open Government Steering Committee**, and three to the extended civil society ecosystem.

Regarding the **Steering Committee** webinars, we focused our efforts to keep them engaged and updated. **Mayor Belisle**, during the second webinar, asked Mexico for examples of how they were able to successfully engage municipalities to participate in and lead Open Government / open data initiatives. **Ricardo Valencia**, Director of Transparency at the National Institute for Transparency, responded that the buy-in of the national process was the lead for bringing key stakeholders at the municipal level to the table, and an awareness of the local capacity, authority and context aided in garnering their support. Key take notes from this webinar were related directly to the development of commitments that are ambitious but realistic. Both Uruguay and Canada urged that stakeholders should not confuse ambition with quantity, but should focus on commitments that are outside the box but achievable. Another recommendation made by Uruguay was to link **Open Government commitments** to other social agreements or areas of focus that may be of priority to government and civil society actors such as **human rights, gender equality, and climate change**.

For those of the civil society ecosystem, efforts were stepped up to engage key organizations, particularly those with memberships to whom they could disseminate the information, as well as personalized invitations to **ITVET Corozal, Orange Walk, Stann Creek and Toledo**. The final webinar was held at the University of Belize Auditorium in Belmopan. On-site we had approximately **50** university students from one of the Management and Social Sciences classes, thanks to the cooperation of Lecturer **Audrey Pascacio**. Feedback from those who attended the webinars (OGSC and Ecosystem) was that the information was timely and relevant to the context of Belize. At all the webinars, questions and comments were made regarding the funding of the **OG Multi-Stakeholder** Forums and the implementation of the **National Action Plans**, international experts and project leaders provided succinct responses and ample reference sources to support how the process including funding works. One particular presenter reiterated the responsibility of the government to ensure access to resources that support accountability and transparency.

**1st training webinar for Belizean National Open Government Steering Committee Members:  
“Open Government: overview of the path to 2020”**

February 12, Belize Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCCI).

**1st training webinar for interested participants of the Open Government Belize ecosystem:  
“Open Government: overview of the path to 2020”**

February 13, Belize Training and Employment Centre (BTEC), Belize City.



Participants of the 1st training webinar

**2nd training webinar for Belizean National Open Government Steering Committee Members:**

“Development of National Open Government Action Plans; principles and world cases”  
February 19, Central Information Technology Office (CITO), Belmopan.

**2nd training webinar for interested participants of the Open Government Belize ecosystem:**

“Development of National Open Government Action Plans; principles and world cases”  
February 20, Belize Training and Employment Centre (BTEC), Belize City.

See webinar: <https://youtu.be/ItM50cvfUQQ>



Participants of the second training webinar

### **3rd training webinar for Belizean National Open Government Steering Committee Members:**

“More of co-creation and setting ambitious commitments”

February 26, Central Information Technology Office (CITO), Belmopan.

### **3rd training webinar for interested participants of the Open Government Belize ecosystem:**

“Development of National Open Government Action Plans; principles and world cases”,

February 27, University of Belmopan, Belmopan.

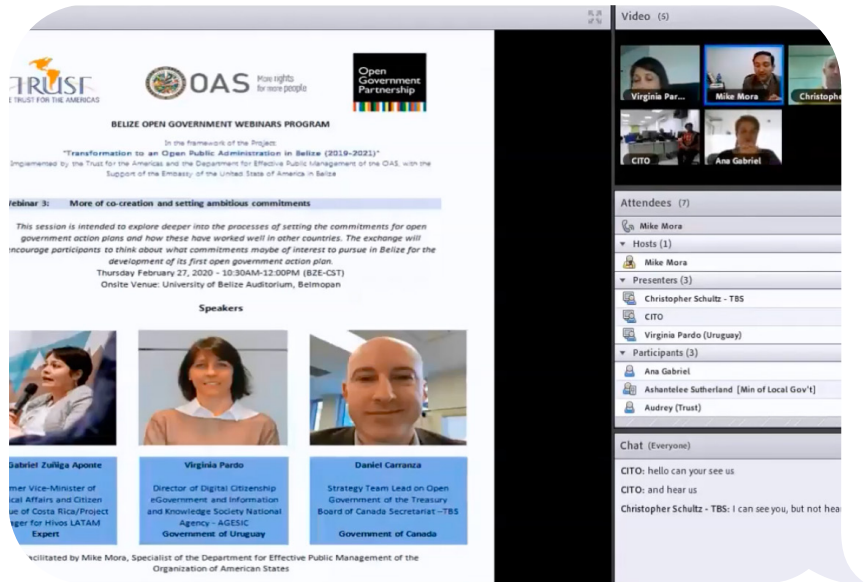
See webinar: <https://youtu.be/2yIX3lamcKM>



Participants of the third training webinar (Academia)



The material seen during the webinar was shared online with the Open Government Steering Committee.



Second training webinar



Second training webinar



See material: [here](#)

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## THE OPEN GOVERNMENT ACTION PLAN (MARCH 2020–JUNE 2021)

The Action Plan development process was divided into three phases:

1. Launching and Drafting
2. Public Consultation
3. Editing the final Plan

A dedicated interactive website for the co-creation process containing extensive information and resources was developed:



Belize Open Government Action Plan



See website: [Microsite BOGAP](#)

## Phase 1: Dialogue and drafting

The first phase of the project aimed at engaging members of the Belizean society to dialogue and draft commitments furthering open governance and open data in the country and contributing to the development of a National Action Plan. During this phase, the participants took an active and participatory role and went through a series of activities allowing to generate a cycle of thinking, proposing, reflecting, discussing, and materializing collective ideas in a written fashion, that would later be fulfilled with the successful production of Open Government commitments.

### Launch of the Belize Open Government Action Plan Development and public discussion



Launch of the Belize Open Government Action Plan Development and Public Discussion

In close collaboration with the Open Government Steering Committee, we launched the co-creation process for the Action Plan development. The Action Plan was intended to serve as the instrument to orient the actions of stakeholders in Belize to accomplish certain Open Government commitments that are identified and agreed by government and non-government in different topics and/or sectors. The co-creation of the Open Government Action Plan is a multi-stakeholder process of defining commitments/objectives for an executable plan. It entailed a sustained participatory approach, open to anyone wishing to participate, to identify areas of opportunity to utilize Open Government in pursuing among others, new policies, improved government services, innovative transparency efforts, or alike.

Due to the quarantine and social distancing measures adopted to address the Covid-19 pandemic, in this opportunity the development of the Action Plan was ought to switch from an in-person co-creation process accompanied by online resources, to a completely online one. Also, and given the diverse challenges posed by Covid-19 in Belize, the exercise of developing Belize's Open Government Action Plan sought to contribute to defining priority areas in which Open Government could add more value or have a greater impact on Covid-19 related emergency response and/or recovery. There was a great reception of the launch of the Open Government Action Plan with a participation of over 62 stakeholders for the initial consultation, and high engagement during the collective and break-out rooms consultative sessions. International experts from the region and representatives from the OGP facilitated the session.



Find the report of the launching session: [here](#)


See the launching session: [here](#)

## Drafting of commitments and follow-up meetings


Interested Belizean stakeholders were encouraged to submit their commitment proposal by uploading it to an online form using the project website. Drafted proposals could then be seen by any other interested party and were extensively shared and discussed during the different public sessions.


As a result, eleven (11) commitment proposals were originally submitted by proponents of different sectors. This was followed by merging some of the proposals that addressed similar issues in deliberations with the proponents. The number of commitments that were finally opened for public consultation was seven (7).


 1. Establishing Open Government education in Belize.

 2. Open data strategy for decision making in Belize.

 3. Open Government in health services.

 4. Improving transparency with open government: strengthening civil society participation in compliance with anti-corruption conventions.

 5. Digitalization of citizen procedures to prevent corruption and improve government's accountability.

 6. Ensuring the effectiveness and efficiency of the GOB in its climate action/Paris Climate Agreement obligations, with a view toward Increasing food security.

 7. Integrated forest management database development.

### Commitments opened for public consultation



## Second development session of the Belize Open Government Action Plan

### Action Plan Development sessions and co-creation sessions

During the co-creation phase, we conducted nine (9) private consultation meetings with stakeholders. The Action Plan is intended to serve as the instrument to orient the actions of stakeholders in Belize to accomplish certain Open Government commitments that are identified and agreed by government and non-government in different topics and/or sectors.



Action Plan Development session 1: [here](#)

Action Plan Development session 2: [here](#)

Action Plan Development session 3: [here](#)

We also organized over twenty (20) smaller consultation meetings facilitated by our local coordinator and international experts with around ninety (90) government entities and civil society organizations, to provide support and facilitate discussions with key actors on single commitments, strengthen their narrative, collect inputs from specialized actors, and obtain consent from potential stakeholders that are to play a role in the implementation.

**These actors were:**

- Office of the Prime Minister
- OAS Office in Belize
- Ministry of Education
- Ministry of Health
- Ministry of Human Development
- Ministry of Labour, Local Government, and Rural Development
- Integrity Commission
- Office of the Auditor General
- Central Information Technology Office
- Economic Development Council
- Ministry of Natural Resources
- Ministry of Agriculture
- Ministry of Sustainable Development & the Environment
- Central Bank of Belize
- National Trade Union Congress of Belize
- Channel 7
- KREM Television
- Belize Global Improved Government
- Humana People to People Belize
- Mayor's Association
- Belmopan City Council
- Belize City Council
- Belize PEACE Movement
- Ya'axché Conservation Trust



- Association of Tertiary Level Institutions
- University of West Indies
- University of Belize
- Galen University
- National Association of Village Councils
- Belize Youth Empowerment for Change
- The National Students' Union of Belize
- Belize Association of Planners
- Belize Coalition of Service Providers
- Belize Social Investment Fund
- Belize Trade and Investment Development Services
- Ministry of Investment Trade & Commerce
- Ministry of Tourism and Civil Aviation
- Office of the Auditor General
- Central Information Technology Office
- Economic Development Council
- Ministry of Natural Resources
- Ministry of Agriculture
- Ministry of Sustainable Development & the Environment
- Oceana
- Statistical Institute of Belize
- United Nations Development Programme
- Transparency International
- Social Security Board
- Belize Crime Observatory
- Public Service Union
- Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre
- Red Cross Belize
- Southern Emergency Services
- UN Refugee Agency
- International Organization for Migration



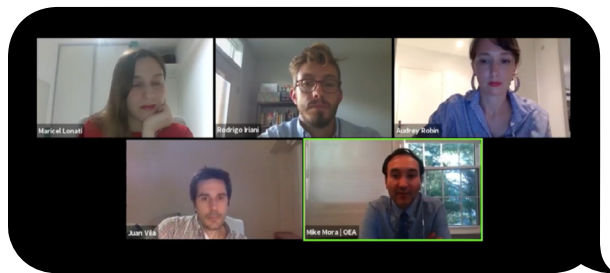
- National Garifuna Collective
- Belize Chamber of Commerce and Industry
- 4Realty Ltd.
- Breaking Belize News
- Belize Society of Composers Authors Publishers
- Clear Call Belize
- Corozal Junior College
- Belize National Association of Real Estate
- Integral Medical Clinic
- ARCH Consulting Group
- M&M Distributors
- Teach to Educate All Children
- United Network Solutions Ltd.
- Wildlife Conservation Society
- National Climate Change Office
- Young Women's Christian Association
- Youth Enhancement Services
- St. John's College Junior College
- Belmopan Comprehensive School
- Insight Data Systems
- Victoria House Resort & Spa
- Astute Consulting
- Avant Garde
- Science and Information Technology Organization of Belize
- Great Belize Productions
- Inter-American Development Bank
- Intranet Systems
- eData Ltd
- Total Business Solutions Ltd
- Caribbean Chicken
- Protel BPO Limited
- Moore Belize

- Gitz Tech
- Glow Pearl Consultants Inc.
- Naledo Belize Ltd
- Aligraphics Ltd
- Tina h Roberts law office
- Fountain of Youth Foundation
- Valor
- Hacienda Tropical Guest House
- Island Magic Beach Resort

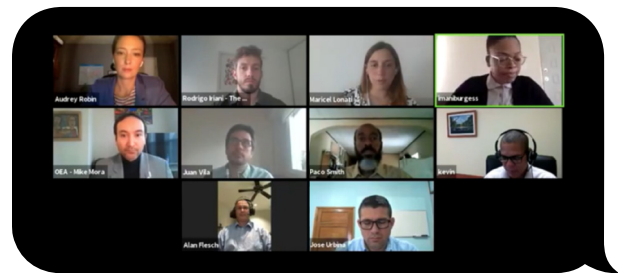
## Action Plan presentation

Three (3) final public sessions were organized to present the Belize Open Government Action Plan. They were organized online and streamed online on the Facebook page of the project.

**Session 1:** Presentation of Final Commitments (*30th of September*)



**Session 2:** Global Open Government cases with international experts (*3rd of November*)



**Session 3:** Presentation of Open Government Action Plan (*21st of December*)



See Live 1 Presentation of Final Commitments: [here](#)

See Live 2 Global Open Government cases with international experts: [here](#)

See Live 3 Presentation of Open Government Action Plan: [here](#)



Find all reports of the sessions and recordings: [here](#)

Also, the information is accessible through the [project Facebook page](#). All activities were streamed live.

## **Phase 2: Public consultation**

### **Public sessions**

Public Consultation was held, offering the opportunity to any Belizean to review all final drafted commitments and provide final inputs with the purpose of enhancing or validating the commitments. This participatory exercise was encouraged to be done by engaging an audience that extends beyond the stakeholders that participated in the drafting of the commitments. With the support of stakeholders, the consultation was intended to be exercised at all possible districts, organizations, and citizens, in order to strengthen the quality and legitimacy of commitments, which allow as well for a more robust and effective implementation of the Action Plan.

The public consultation phase of the seven drafted commitments was open with the last public session on **October 30, 2020** and extended to November **23, 2020**. For a month and a half, Belizeans were given the opportunity to contribute to this process by providing their own thoughts on the commitments. As a result, the process ended with over **40 inputs**.

This phase of the co-creation process was accompanied by a robust communication campaign in order to reach the largest number of participants and, thus, strengthen the process with the involvement of different actors in society.

### **The campaign included:**

- Sharing commitments by email to each Belizean individual or entity involved in the matter and/or industry listed in our Ecosystem Master List of over **740** stakeholders.
- Sharing posts on the Belize Open Government Action Plan and commitments, leading to the overall reach of **60,453 persons** and engagement of **5,561 persons**:

- Encouraging each author of commitments to share their proposal within their own professional network.
- Producing and communicating a one-minute animated video to present the Action Plan development process and the commitments, with a call to action to consult the proposals.
- Posting and boosting of the Action Plan video on social media, shared with GOB Press Office, key stakeholders and national media in Belize.
- Sharing the Action Plan and list of proposals with main media such as Channel 5, Channel 7, Love FM, and Krem News.
- Sharing the launch of the BOGAP with the GOB Press Office and the Belize Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCCI) that subsequently forwarded it to their emailing lists of over 1,000 individuals and organizations.
- Distributing BOGAP booklets digitally and paper.

Also, on November 3rd a special Public Session was held and broadcasted live which included the presentation of international good practices related to each of the seven Belizean drafted commitments.

Through the [Facebook page of the project](#), we shared posts on the Belize Open Government Action Plan and commitments.



See Metrics and Data Insights from social media: [here](#)

See Communication Metrics and Insights: [here](#)

See Live Video of Public Session November 3: [here](#)

See Call to Action Video to consult the proposals: [here](#)



Interview with representative of Humana People to People Belize

## Interviews with stakeholders

The authors of commitments were video-interviewed to present their commitment(s) and to encourage the Belizean public to participate in the public consultation:

- 1) [Project on digitalization of citizens procedures](#)
- 2) [Project on Forest Management Database](#)
- 3) [Project on open government education](#)

These video interviews were published, boosted, and tagged on the Facebook page of the project.

The proponents of the commitments were also programmed to present their commitment on national media. The author of the project Digitalization of citizen procedures was interviewed on the Love FM Morning Show TV in February. [See video](#)

The author of the projects on anti-corruption, on Open Government in education, and on climate change was also interviewed on Love FM Television in March. [See video](#)

### Phase 3: Editing and launching the final plan



Launch event of the Belize Open Government Action Plan

#### Launch event

Once the public consultation phase was over, the inputs resulted from the revision and comments were taken into consideration during the editing phase. The editing process also included the introduction and background information of Open Government in Belize as part of this document.

A draft of the final Action Plan was presented to the OGSC members in a session held on November 30th. The shared version of the plan included the narrative of the process for creating the Action Plan and the seven final commitments. This presentation to the OGSC was intended to obtain feedback and consent to the final version of the document.

A formal launching session of the plan for its public presentation was held on the 18th of December of 2020. As a follow-up, it is expected that the launch and adoption of the plan will trigger proponent and related actors in Belize to work together towards the implementation of each commitment. Adding the stakeholders' human and financial installed capacities strategically would benefit the chances of success for achieving the goals set forth by each of the commitments. It is worth mentioning that the change of government, following the national elections of November 2020, changed the political scenario in Belize. As for the project, the elections shuffled the cards and with a new administration in place, eager to engage with the project, meetings were held with the new ministries and CEOs to introduce the project and the open government action plan. They looked at how the national open government action plan commitments could be aligned with their agenda.



## Brief presentation of the 7 final commitments

### Establishing Open Government Education in Belize

The commitment goal is to establish an Open Government curriculum to be delivered at the tertiary level, as no formal educational Open Government programs exist in Belize, preventing the country from fully embracing open governance. The country is not producing experts who can work in this field, nor in open data. Formal college-level education could contribute to more robust human resources capacities in public institutions and citizens throughout the country. Having regular Open Government course offerings affords students in different areas of concentration, an opportunity to approach their respective fields, through the lenses of participatory, collaborative, and more democratic means. Therefore, having the country develop its experts by providing formal instruction in Open Government means that the country: ***1. Will have skilled people that can apply their knowledge towards a more transparent environment. 2. Will improve opportunities and capabilities for the public to: participate, inform and influence decisions.***

### Open Data Strategy for Decision Making in Belize

The commitment aims at an increased use of accurate and high-quality information for decision-making, particularly public sector decisions affecting policy development and resource allocation, with the development of:

1. an initial open data strategy aiming at identifying and assess the state of available datasets and data related sensitive regulation in Belize, promoting openness and data quality, improve open data knowledge sharing to build capacities, pursuing an open data fit for purpose principle, and promoting greater awareness about the use of open data.
2. an open data portal, making available data more accessible, open, and visible to users, and putting into practice existing guidelines and best practices pertaining to open data, while maintaining correspondent protections.

3. the capacity in data analysis for public servants and citizens interested in reusing them, also allowing the creation of an ecosystem that will be an intensive user of the data published on the portal and generated by the government.

4. establishing a public policy for data governance in public administration.

This commitment will establish a repository where all entities of the Government of Belize will be able to publish their data and information so that it is available for reuse by third parties, who will be able to develop innovative solutions for the provision of services and solutions for citizens.

### **Open Government in Health Services**

This commitment deals with the importance of data in the health system, not only to make better decisions and make diagnoses, but also to be accountable to citizens and optimize the service.

The main objective is to improve health care both at the secondary and tertiary levels of care and in rural communities. As a result, it is expected that the Ministry can establish an agenda for the publication of data around indicators co-designed with civil society, so that the ministerial management can be seen not only in the agenda against Covid-19, but also in the areas previously mentioned. Coordination between the Ministry of Health and civil society organizations to establish which indicators and data should be open in a reusable format will be a first step to set the priority of health management in these areas, allowing openness targeted work by the government and follow-up by civil society.

## **Improving Transparency with Open Government: Strengthening Civil Society Participation in Compliance with Anti-Corruption Conventions**

This commitment is to ensure the strengthening, execution and continuance of anti-corruption measures with greater participation of civil society, alongside the active promotion and use of Open Data. A combination of collaborative Anti-Corruption, E-Democracy and E-Governance efforts is envisioned to accomplish this goal. With the support of a multi-stakeholder mechanism (working group), the objective is to ensure the Government of Belize (GOB) complies with the various anti-corruption conventions to which it has committed, namely the United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC) and the Inter-American Convention Against Corruption (IACC). The expected results include: (1) the GOB's ongoing fulfillment of both its national and international obligations involving anti-corruption, (2) Belize shall be listed, annually on Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index (CPI), (3) elected officials are held accountable, in accordance with CAP 105 of the Laws of Belize (Prevention of Corruption Act) concerning acts of corruption and the accompanying betrayal of the public trust and (4) the ongoing strengthening of anti-corruption legislation.

### ***Digitalization of Citizen Procedures to Prevent Corruption and Improve Government's Accountability***

The overall objective of this commitment is to simplify and automate citizen procedures to increase government's transparency and public accountability, allowing digitalization of citizen services prioritized by citizens and the State so they can be complete in an online format.

It aims to identify some critical government services and citizen procedures that can be digitalized so people can apply and follow the procedure online. Some of the procedures that have been mentioned to be needed to prioritize are birth certificates; land status application; and migratory services.

## **Ensuring the Effectiveness and Efficiency of the GOB in its Climate Action/Paris Climate Agreement Obligations, with a View Toward Increasing Food Security**

This commitment is to ensure the Government of Belize (GOB) is effective, efficient and decisive in its Climate Action, regarding the terms and obligations under the Paris Climate Agreement and accompanying elements involving Institutional Arrangements and Greenhouse Gas Inventory Monitoring, Recording and Verification, with particular emphasis on the Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use (AFOLU) Sector and the respective Key Categories. This also includes a concerted emphasis on the active promotion, implementation and use of Open Data, thereby working in consort with both national and international partners toward improving the productivity of the Agriculture Sector, culminating in the development of a sound Food Security Policy, with a regional scope. Through ensuring Government's compliance with its reporting obligations such as: National Communications (NC), the Biennial Update Report (BUR) National Inventory Reports (NIR) and Greenhouse Gas Inventory Reporting it will enhance Climate Action governance and the government's overall ability to proactively create an environment that is conducive to improving the productivity of the Agriculture Sector, via integrating agriculture into the National Adaptation Plans (NAP-AG) Program, with a view toward developing synergies that address sustainable development and Food Security.

### ***Integrated Forest Management Database Development***

This commitment is to develop an integrated forest management database for Ya'axché to manage data collected under the following programs: (i) Community Outreach and Livelihoods, (ii) Protected Areas Management; and (iii) Science (biodiversity research and monitoring). The main goal is to monitor the annual productivity of the farm-scape to contribute to the national food security initiatives, such as climate-smart agricultural practices. This also contributes to the Sustainable Development Goals: 2. Zero Hunger; 13. Climate Action; and 15. Life on Land. Maintaining and managing an agricultural inventory of the Maya Golden Landscape can also pave the road for future collaborations such as supporting school feeding program in southern Belize, but this can only be attainable if data is well collected by Ya'axché's extension

officers providing the guidance to farmers to supply with crop yield data on a regular basis. The Community Outreach and Livelihoods program has a grassroots approach to working with our buffering communities that depend on fertile lands. Forest governance is at the center of the initiative, empowering communities to sustainably use lands, having minimal or no effect on their surrounding environment in the Maya Golden Landscape (MGL), a mosaic landscape comprising of globally important protected areas, private, state and community lands. It is a key biodiversity area, supporting over 3,000 plant species, 110 mammals, 400 birds, 92 reptiles and amphibians, including 18 endemics and 37 globally threatened species.

### **International experts collaborators**

Throughout the project, an international community of experts contributed to provide information, good practices, and engage with the stakeholders of the project:

- **Gustavo Perez Ara** – Senior Research Officer for America of OGP’s Independent Reporting Mechanism (IRM) – OGP
- **Daniel Barragán** – Professor, Los Hemisferios University (Ecuador)
- **Carolina Cornejo** – Open Government Director, Argentinean Government
- **Hernán Charosky** – Dialogando BA Coordinator, Buenos Aires City
- **Daniel Carranza** – Co-founder, DataUy (Uruguay)
- **Pepe García** – Senior Program Officer, Open Government Partnership
- **Celia Urbietta Peña** – Open Government Director, Paraguayan Government
- **Xiomara Natalí Domínguez** – Public Policy Coordinator, Reforestamos México
- **José Antonio García** – Senior Program Officer, Open Government Partnership
- **Carolina Matamoros** – Lead Data Analyst for the National Open Data Initiative Digital Government Division MinTIC – Government of Colombia
- **Maurice McNaughton** – Director, Caribbean Open Institute / UWI
- **Alari Rammo** – Head of Policy of the Network of Estonian Non-Profit Organizations & Civil Society – Point of Contact of Estonia to the OGP
- **Sarah Bérubé** – Open Government Analyst, Government of Canada

- **Benoit Frenette** – Open Government Lead, Government of Canada
- **Ott Karulin** – Point of contact to the OGP, Government of Estonia
- **Gustavo Perez Ara** – IRM Senior researcher Officer, Open Government Partnership
- **Ricardo Valencia Lara** – Director of Transparency, INAI (Mexico)
- **Ana Zuñiga Aponte** – Project Manager, Hivos
- **Virginia Pardo** – Director of Digital Citizenship, Government of Uruguay (AGESIC)
- **Christopher Schultz** – Lead on TBS, Government of Canada
- **Hugo Tarabini** – General Director of Infrastructure and Connectivity, Ministry of Information and Communication Technologies of Paraguay

## Open Government Action Plan facilitators:

- Maricel Lonati – Specialist
- Juan Martin Vila – Specialist

## HACKATHONS FOR SOCIAL INNOVATION

Two hackathons were organized, seeking to highlight Open Government fundamental values, such as transparency, participation, inclusion, and accountability.

Presentation of the 2020 and 2021 hackathons (July 2020, August 2021)



2020 Hackathon visual identity



2020 Hackathon winners

## Open Data Hackathon - Enabling Belize Tourism Post Covid-19 (2020):

The Trust, OAS and DevCa-Developing the Caribbean worked with local partners in Belize including BELTRAIDE, the Statistical Institute of Belize, and the Belize Open Government Steering Committee to stage the Belize 2020 Open Data Hackathon which took place from Wednesday, July 8th to Friday, July 10th, 2020. DevCA-Belize2020 Hackathon was a fully virtual 48-hours event that encouraged innovators from the public sector, civil society, and civic tech to explore ideas staged under the theme “Open Data: Enabling Tourism Post Covid-19”. The DevCA-Belize2020 Hackathon focused on solutions for the utilization of Open Data in tourism to promote destinations, highlight value-added services and improve safety and security (including access to information about epidemiological statistics). Potential solution areas included: Tourist Travel & Stay, Health Security & The Visitor Experience and Domestic Tourism. We developed a collaboration with BTB, the Statistical Institute of Belize, and the Ministry of Health – for data collection, as well as Beltraide, the Small Business Development Center (SBDC), and the Economic Development Centre (EDC) – as judges for the competition and advisors.

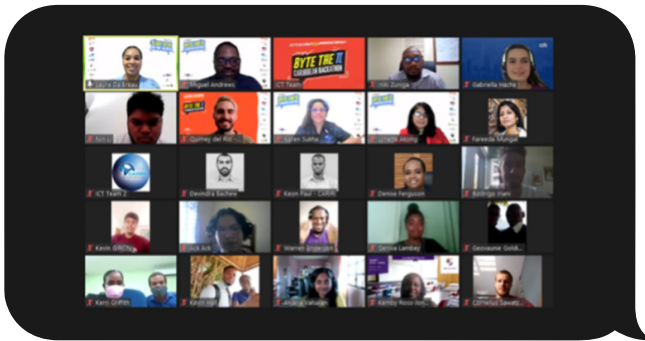


See Hackathon's event: [here](#)

See the Hackathon's event report: [here](#)

See the Hackathon's awards event: [here](#)





Virtual Byte the π: Caribbean Hackathon



Byte the π: Caribbean Hackathon winning teams in Belize

### Hackathon 2021:

**Byte the π:** Caribbean Hackathon, a regional hackathon produced by The Trust for The Americas through its DIA program, took place from Thursday, July 22nd to Saturday, July 24th. The hackathon focused on the “Open Response + Open Recovery for Covid-19” campaign between Belize, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago, and sought to serve as a hub for fresh ideas, focused on: Economic Recovery through Tourism; and Access to Health Care: Vaccination and Testing. 60 youth participated in the competition regionally, 21 in Belize (7 teams), 21 in Jamaica (5 teams), and 15 in Trinidad and Tobago (4 teams). The regional Hackathon aimed at achieving its goal of empowering, connecting and inspiring youth, academia, multi-sector innovators and entrepreneurs to help generate livelihood opportunities, promote good governance, and strengthen democracy by nourishing innovation across the region. This event was organized in collaboration with DevCa Initiative (Developing the Caribbean), the Caribbean Industrial Research Institute (CARIRI), Institute of Law and Economics (ILE), the Statistical Institute of Belize (SIB), the Ministry of Youth, Sports & E-Governance of Belize, Belize Trade and Investment Development Service (BELTRAIDE), The Ministry of Health and Wellness of Belize, Belize Tourism Board (BTB), and the OAS National Office in Belize.



See the Byte the π Caribbean Hackathon recorded sessions: [here](#)

# PRESENTATION OF ***WINNING PROJECTS***



See the awards for the 2021 hackathon winners: [here](#)

## Wining projects Hackathon 2020:



### BELIZE TOURISM MARKET INTELLIGENCE DASHBOARD *(1ST PLACE)*

**Project Description:** An interactive web app that delivers fast and intelligent data insights about Belize's Tourism Industry. The Belize Tourism Market Intelligence Dashboard was created using the open data provided including the accommodations list, tourist attractions and sites among others to create an analysis and insight of the data that makes it easy to view trends in the tourism industry. The data will be readily available and accessible to tourism board officials, government officials, non-profit organizations, universities, private companies, local operators, entrepreneurs, media, and citizens. This will allow the stakeholders to better interact, understand and further analyze the data. The dashboard solution provides a means to empower the end-user and gain insight on tourism information for planning, tracking, modeling, and even forecasting trends in the industry.



### JACOB, YOUR VIRTUAL GUIDE *(2ND PLACE, TIE)*

**Project Description:** The virtual tour guide, a mobile application designed to help local tour guides and small business tour operators. The application was created to assist in establishing the new norm for tourists when traveling within the country by being able to scroll through a list of gold standard hotels, restaurants and attractions that are available to them and are safe to visit. Through the app, tourists are also able to book local tours from a list of available tour guides and tour companies.

Website: <http://virtualguide.intranetsys.net/>



## TRAVEL BELIZE (2ND PLACE, TIE)

**Project Description:** Team501 pitched Travel Belize, a web application that allows personalized planning for tourists by providing access to information about available accommodations/services and up-to-date information on health regulations and access to health services before and during their visit.



## TRAVEL GUIDE (3RD PLACE)

**Project Description:** Team Racoon developed Racoon Travel Guide (RTG) a Belizean mobile app with user-generated content to access different services for local and foreign visitors. The app also promotes responsible tourism by additionally allowing access to important travel information such as emergency service contacts, weather forecasts, and recommendations/guidelines for safe traveling.

## Winning projects Hackathon 2021:



### CARIBTRAVELS (1ST PLACE)

**Project Description:** Aesthetics Marketing Solutions pitched CaribTravels, a web page and app that alerts tourists interested in visiting Caribbean countries on changes regarding the country's travel policy during the pandemic and regulated events.

The winners presented their project [in the wrap-up video of the project](#)



### VAXX (2ND PLACE)

**Project Description:** Team Hackmyearth developed a web app designed to help people locate testing/vaccination facilities near their area and easily sign them up to get vaccinated/tested at a facility, on a particular date.



### HACKBELIZE APP (3RD PLACE)

**Project Description:** Team Hackbelize presented a web app designed to provide convenience and accessibility to both local and foreign users when making their travel plans. This all-in-one solution allows travelers to book hotels/lodging, make reservations at restaurants, find transportation and learn about local events all through one app.

# ***CLOSING EVENT***



See the closing event agenda: [here](#)

A summary video of the closing event and project was produced, including interviews of key stakeholders: [See video](#)



A closing event of the project was organized in July 2021. During this ceremony, opening remarks were given by the OAS Representative in Belize and The Trust for the Americas. It was followed by a presentation of the Belize Open Government Action Plan co-creation process by the international expert and facilitator of the Action Plan for the country, as well as two authors of commitments from the civil society. Also, the regional Program Officer for the Americas at the Open Government Partnership talked about the possible addition of Belize in the OGP alliance, and the remarks of the CEO of Economic Development and the CEO of Youth, Sports and E-Governance in Belize. The hackathon award ceremony followed, with award distribution and pictures taken of the three national winning teams. The closing words were given by the Trust for the Americas who presented the next steps and work done in the region by the organization.

Among other guests, the event was attended by Hon. Kevin Bernard, Minister of Youth, Sports, and E-Governance; Mr. Jose Urbina, CEO of the Ministry of Youth, Sports, and E-Governance; Mr. Osmond Martinez, CEO of the Ministry of Economic Development; Mr. Luiz Coimbra, Representative of the OAS Belize Office; Mr. Leroy Almendarez, Director of BELTRAIDE; Ms. Alexia Peralta, Incoming Director for the E-governance and Digitalization Unit in the Ministry of Youth, Sports and E-Governance; Mr. Paco Smith, Good Governance and Anti-Corruption External Relations Liaison of the Belize Peace Movement; Mr. Rodrigo Iriani, Senior Program Manager DIA of The Trust for the Americas; Ms. Audrey Robin, Coordinator DIA Belize; and Ms. Christine Valerio, from the US Embassy in Belmopan. Mr. Jose Antonio García, Senior Regional Coordinator for the Americas at the Open Government Partnership (OGP), Ms. Maricel Lonati, international expert and facilitator of the Belizean Open Government Action Plan, and Ms. Lara Bersano, Director of Communications and Digital Transformation of The Trust for the Americas joined virtually.



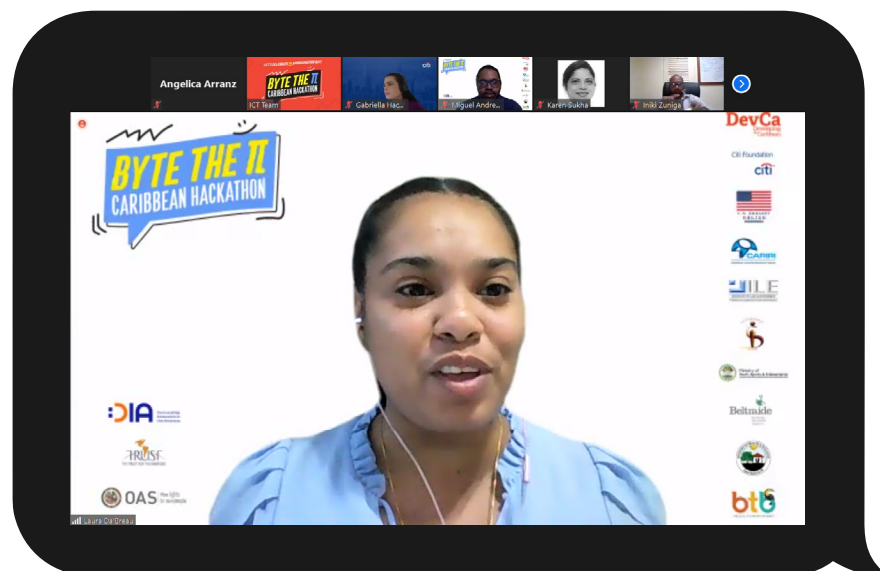


**Mr. Osmond Martínez at the closing event**

During the event, **Luiz Coimbra, OAS Representative in Belize**, declared: “Open Government is the materialization of the right to access public information. It fosters citizen participation, a key element to consolidate democracy. Democracy by the citizens and for the citizens, where they not only want to receive information but also comment and participate in decision-making”. Mr. Jose Urbina, CEO of the Ministry of Youth, Sports, and E-Governance, mentioned that “the pillars of Open Government and the use of emerging technologies to enhance public services are key. The use of data is imperative. Through this year’s regional Hackathon, Belizeans were engaged and challenged to solve community problems. We would like to champion this initiative moving forward,” while Mr. Osmond Martinez, CEO of the Ministry of Economic Development and Investment added that “Data has significant potential to provide innovative benefits for individuals, organizations and governments. We need to embrace these principles to solve the challenges we are facing in Belize. We are ready for Open Government and the Action Plan can successfully deliver that.”

**BEST PRACTICES,  
LESSONS LEARNED &  
*RECOMMENDATIONS***





2021 Virtual Hackathon

## Challenges

Having developed a working relationship with many of the local stakeholders (government and civil society) in the months previous to the Grant, allowed us to start implementation right away, obtain local buy-in and good reception of phase two during the first mission to the country. Based on the experience of phase one, we were also able to propose a multi-stakeholder committee (Open Government Steering Committee) in charge of moving the process forward into the next level and based on positive feedback from the actors involved. ***(September 2019 – January 2020).***

The Covid-19 outbreak forced us to adapt all of the activities and calendar of the project. The basic rhythms of our work during the first semester of 2020 were interrupted and then delivered services in a new way –100% digitally–, which required more time for adapting contents and methodologies. ***(March 2020 – December 2020).***

The main challenge for the overall implementation during 2020 was the national electoral process held in November. Many efforts and internal procedures happened throughout the year, and steps and mapping of the main events or milestones were considered when planning project activities. It was a good opportunity to give relevance to the topic in the political scenario. Also, this benefited the goal of reaching organizations from different regions or districts of the country. ***(October 2020 – December 2020).***

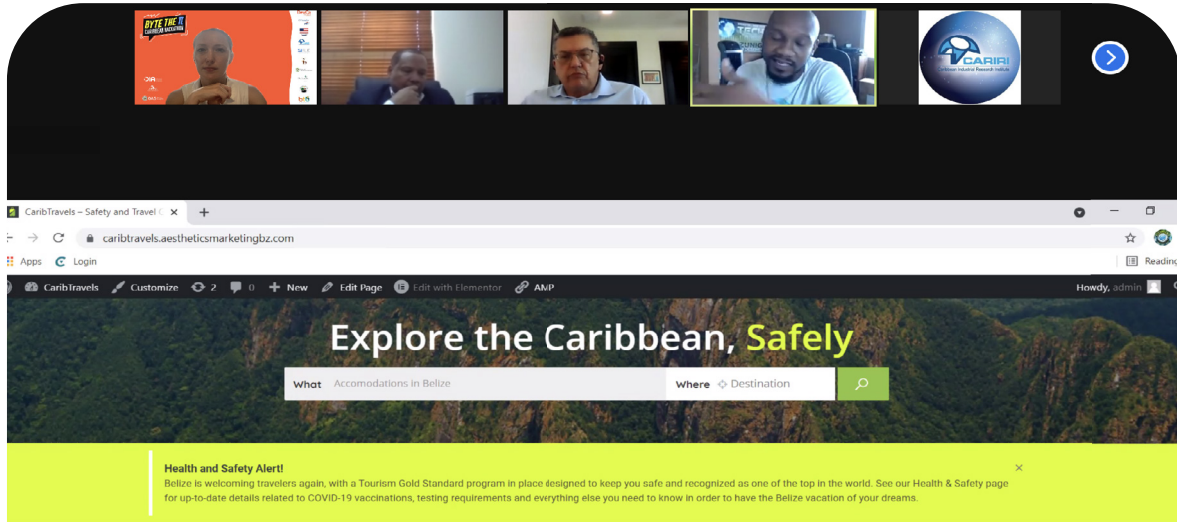


**Minister of Youth, Sports, and E-Governance, Kevin Bernard; CEO of Youth, Sports and E-Governance, Jose Urbina; Director of the E-Governance and Digitalization Unit, Alexia Peralta at the project closing event**

## **Successes and best practices**

- A great reception of the launch of the Open Government Action Plan with a participation of over 62 stakeholders for the initial consultation, and high engagement during the collective and break-out rooms consultative sessions. Comments from two stakeholders in the chat during the breakout sessions and the plenary session of the Open Government Action Plan launch: "I like this part of the meeting and should encourage having another session of this with longer time available to share more ideas!"; "This was an interesting conversation (economics and trade) and I am suggesting that we have another session with this type of conversation to give folks longer time to air their thoughts and suggestions."





## **GETTING BACK ON THE ROAD**

### *Covid-19 and travel*

In the past decades, tourism has experienced continued growth and became one of the fastest growing economic sectors globally. The sector witnessed a 59% growth over the decade in international tourists' arrivals from 1.5 billion 2019 compared to 830 million in 2009. Tourism is also a key driver for socio-economic progress, with tourism specific developments in an increasing number of national and international destinations.



### **The team “CaribTravels” presenting its project proposal at the 2021 Byte the ® Hackathon**

- A well-attended closing event, with various high-level government officials such as the Minister and the CEO of Youth, Sports, and E-Governance, and with good feedback from the government, the CSOs, and from the OAS representative of Belize. **(July 2021)**
- The Government of Belize and other key stakeholders shared widely the communication items we communicated to them: It was observed that ready-to-use communication materials (such as press releases, pictures, etc.) are largely used by our stakeholders. **(June to September 2021)**
- A great participation and demonstrated success of the two hackathons organized by The Trust: we had returning participants to the second edition from the first edition, and the registration of a total of 24 competitors for Belize, making it the highest initial participation of the region. **(July 2021)**

- The regional hackathon event brought a lot of interest in Belize, especially from media: the participation of other Caribbean countries and the competition element, additionally to the focus on youth, seemed to have been a major contributing factor to this success. Two national media shared the announcement of the event before the event, one reached out to the local coordinator for an interview streamed on prime time on television, and three media shared the results of the hackathon. ***(July 2021)***

- We observed a lack of skills in coding and data manipulation during the hackathon events. Furthermore, some competitors expressed their high interest in data and coding training. Also, there is a need to be addressed in this area for the youth. ***(July 2020–2021)***

- A need for digital training for governmental officials was also communicated by the Government of Belize, especially on digital transformation, cybersecurity, and for public workers on data collection and analysis. ***(July–August 2021)***



**Meeting with the CEO of the Ministry of Youth, Sports, and E-Governance, and the OAS Office Representative in Belize at the office of the CEO, Belmopan, April 2021**

### **Lessons learned and/or recommendations**

- To face the change of administration and liaising with the new government, we had to reopen the discussions, especially in the needs assessments on Open Government and open data. Reopening the dialogue instead of strictly implementing the plan developed under the previous administration brought positive outcomes as we were able to regain the interest of the Government of Belize in the project. **(January-June 2021).**

- Various actors of the Government of Belize have shown interest in having Belize joining in the Open Government Partnership (OGP), including the previous CEO for the Ministry of Public Service, Constitutional & Political Reform and the CEO for the Ministry of Youth, Sports & E-Governance. We finally facilitated a meeting with the Senior Program Officer for the Americas and the Deputy Director, Country Support, at OGP, to discuss Belize joining the OGP in the near future. We presented resources, eligibility criteria and a path for Belize to finally join this international platform with nine government representatives. **(May 2021):**

- **Jose Urbina**, CEO of Youth, Sport, and E-Governance
- **Kevin Bernard**, Minister of Youth, Sport, and E-Governance
- **Osmond Martinez**, CEO of Ministry of Economic Development and former CEO of Public Service, Constitutional & Political Reform
- **Luiz Octavio Coimbra**, Representative of OAS Belize Office
- **Rolando Zetina**, CEO of Ministry of Public Service, Constitutional and Political Reform
- **Duane Belisle**, Director of Policy and Planning Unit at Ministry of Finance, Economic Development & Investment
- **Diana Castillo-Trejo**, Director of the Statistical Institute of Belize (SIB)
- **Alexia Peralta**, incoming Director for the E-Governance and Digitalization Unit, Ministry of Youth, Sport, and E-Governance
- **Francisco Gonzalez**, Senior ICT for the Central Information Technology Office (CITO)

- We identified the new administration's stakeholders as much more responsive to the project. Since February 2021, the local coordinator with the assistance and participation of the OAS office representative in Belize, has had an ongoing relationship with the CEO and Minister of Public Service, Constitutional & Political Reform, as well as with the CEO and Minister of Youth, Sports & E-Governance, CEO of Finance, Economic Development and Investment and other GOB officials. They have been active participants and are willing to take the experience of the project as a baseline moving forward. **(February–July 2021).**



- The Ministry of Youth, Sport, and E-Governance is implementing various projects on digitalization within the government but also for the youth and young professionals. Also, for any work related to this area, it is advised to reach out to the CEO of the Ministry, the Director of the E-Governance Unit of the Ministry, and the Deputy Director of Youth Services to ensure a proper alignment between projects and national plan.

- There is a real lack of open data in Belize: except for economic data found on the Statistical Institute of Belize, data on Tourism and Health had to be requested and/or gathered by the local coordinator for the hackathon. For the first hackathon in 2020, data was not easy to access (it took over a month to get the data needed and after constant follow-up) and was not of the greatest quality (raw data not available, elements missing, data not always up-to-date, etc.). In 2021, we saw real progress on the data shared on Tourism by the Belize Tourism Board (BTB) in terms of quality and richness of content, but also presentation; nevertheless, this data is not open to the general public and has to be requested through email ([datarequests@belizetourismboard.org](mailto:datarequests@belizetourismboard.org)). However, we saw a regress in the health data situation during the same year: while we could get access to data upon request in 2020, it was impossible to get the same in 2021. As the sharing of health data had to be approved either by the CEO and Minister of Health, the local coordinator reached out directly to their office via their secretary; the request was registered but not fulfilled nor replied to. This confirms the timely execution of Open Government and Open Data projects in the country.

- Based on a conversation between the data technician manager at the Statistical Institute of Belize and as it was reported by the local coordinator for the preparation of the hackathon, the lack of data and information sharing on health, especially regarding information such as vaccination rate, vaccination and testing facilities, was of major concern. This shows the value of activities such as a hackathon, that manifest concepts (such as the importance of data sharing) in a concrete manner (the need to access specific data by specific stakeholders and the challenges) and potentially turn them into points of action (working on making data available).

# ***COMMUNICATIONS***



The communication strategy focused on raising awareness of how multi-stakeholder collaboration and Open Government can improve public services and strengthen governmental institutions, and how its principles (Participation, Access, and Collaboration) can aid in the alleviation of the COVID-19 crisis presenting solutions for local governments, educational institutions, businesses, civil society, general public and media.

When it came time to choose the most suitable communications platforms to share the efforts, the nature of the project's subject and the profile of local partners (public officials, government agencies, NGOs) were decisive factors. Therefore, the information was mostly diffused by the following Trust's official communications platforms:



**trustfortheamericas.org**



**Press Room**



**@Trust4Americas**



**TRUST Newsletter**

Nevertheless, Facebook is the most used social media in Belize, and this was a fact that could not be ignored. So, a Facebook page for the project was created.



**@Trust4Americas**



Followers: **1,512**

Posts: **119**

Total reach: **341,302**

Total engagement: **10,198**

The page gained **600** new followers and **562** more likes since the beginning of the project.

For more details, see [Metrics and Data Insights](#)

During almost two years of project implementation, most of the activities were conducted online due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Virtuality represented challenges in event planning and in gathering communication materials such as photos, videos, testimonials, etc. However, it also provided the opportunity to reinforce the use of digital communication channels.

Also, local partners represented a key role in connecting with audiences and spreading the word about the project's goals and activities.

For these activities, a comprehensive communication strategy was designed including:

- ➔ **Analysis of the target audience.**
- ➔ **Graphic proposal.**
- ➔ **Set of key messages for dissemination on social media.**
- ➔ **Press release.**

These actions allowed each initiative to have a unique visual identity to facilitate new marketing products during the execution period. This strategy was fundamental to achieve visual uniformity and promote brand recognition of the events.

After the project's adaptation to continuing its implementation during the pandemic, the communications team developed a [microsite](#) to record all the steps of the development of the Open Government National Action Plan and it was constantly updated.

This site has received **1000** visits since its launch in the second quarter of **2020**.

**BELIZE OPEN GOVERNMENT ACTION PLAN DEVELOPMENT IN TIMES OF COVID-19**

**Description**

USAID and OAS support the Belize Open Government Action Plan development process. The Trust for the Americas and the Department for Effective Public Management (DEPM) of the Organization of the American States (OAS), during 2018 and 2019, have supported and will continue to support the process for developing Belize's first open government action plan. The action plan is an instrument to ensure the actions of stakeholders in Belize to accomplish certain open government commitments that are certified and agreed to government and non-governmental partners and/or sectors. Since the onset of the pandemic posed by COVID-19 in Belize, the priority of developing Belize's open government action plan shifts to contribute to long-term goals and to address open government goals and to provide a fast government response to COVID-19 related emergency incidents and recovery.

The co-creation process of an action plan entails a sustained participatory approach. Users explore and engage in public spaces to identify areas of opportunity to foster open government in existing settings such as, for instance, municipal government, schools, business transparency of banks, markets, etc. Instead of the usual government-led process and public consultations, agreed areas of opportunity to address COVID-19 response and recovery through open government become what are known as open government commitments under action plans.

The action plan development process is divided into phases: 1. Learning and Drafting 2. Public Consultation and 3. Editing the final plan.

**Read Belize Open Government Action Plan here**

**Final Set of Commitments**

1. Establishing Open Government Education in Belize.
2. Open Data Strategy for Decision-Making in Belize.
3. Open Government in Health Services.
4. Improving Transparency with Open Government to Encourage Civil Society Participation in Compliance with Anti-Corruption Conventions.
5. Digitalization of Citizen Procedures to Prevent Corruption and Improve Government's Accountability.
6. Ensuring the Effectiveness and Efficiency of the OGB in its Climate Action/Plan Climate Agreement Obligations, with a View Toward Increasing Forest Resilience.
7. Integrated Forest Management Database Development.

**LAUNCHING AND DRAFTING**  
This first phase is intended to initiate a public discussion for priority areas to which the plan of action could focus on.

**PUBLIC CONSULTATION**  
This phase is aimed at having the general public to review and comment directly the drafted commitments.


**EDITING FINAL PLAN**  
Once the public consultation phase is over, the inputs received from the reviews and comments will be taken into consideration during an editing phase.

During the implementation of the project, we achieved coverage in important local media such as **Belize Breaking News, Channel 5, Channel 7**, among others. This was achieved thanks to the local coordinator, but also the collaborators who served as speakers.

Officials from The Ministry of Youth, Sports, and E-Governance meet with OAS

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Tags Categories



Views: 258  
 Posted: Monday, April 26, 2021, 4:07 pm CST.

*By BBN Staff:* Today, officials from the Ministry of Youth, Sports, and E-Governance met with representatives from the Organization of American States (OAS) to discuss collaborations and alignments of Good Governance within the Ministry.

**Audrey Robin**, Local Project Coordinator, reunited with Jose Urbina, CEO – Ministry of Youth, Sports and E-Governance, and Luiz Coimbra, OAS in Belize Representative.

**Belize Breaking News. April 2021**

Read the story [here](#)



**Paco Smith**, proponent of the commitments on Transparency and Climate Change.

**Belize Peace Movement** (Local partner and Member of the Project’s Open Government Steering Committee)

TV Interview on **Channel 5** Television in Belize City. March 2020

Watch interview [here](#)



**Andrea Perez**, proponent of the commitment on digitalization of citizen procedures.

**Humana People to People Belize.**

TV Interview on the Morning Show **Love FM** in Belize City. February 2020

Watch interview [here \(min 27\)](#)

Finally, all original content, including this report, is available on our platforms:



**trustfortheamericas.org**



**The Trust for the Americas**



**@Trust4Americas**



**The Trust for the Americas**



**@Trust4Americas**



**TRUST Newsletter**



**@Trust4Americas**



**TRUST Blog**



# 2020

## Training webinars

During the first quarter of 2020, we focused on promoting the Open Government cycle of webinars through our communication channels ([press release](#) and social media) and actively reaching out to local media.



## TV Interview on The Morning Show – Love FM in Belize City. February 2020

Watch the interview [here](#)

For the launch of the first series of webinars, we received over 58 participants online and onsite at BTEC (Belize Training and Employment Centre), which generously provided access to their training room facilities.

After its completion, we made all the content available for people to consult.

To access to the resources, click [here](#)




## Launch of the Open Gov Steering Committee

As The Trust for the Americas has designed and implemented **Open Government Projects** in the past four years, we have collected a database of people in the Americas interested in Open Government and Open Data topics.

Our newsletters reach an audience of **2,500** with direct mailing, including our board members, government officials, academia, students, and officials from other organizations in the field.

This information was shared on our May 2020 Newsletter issue. It also included a link to the [press release](#) for more information.



**PROMOTING AN OPEN GOVERNMENT ECOSYSTEM IN BELIZE**

**OPEN GOV STEERING COMMITTEE  
LAUNCH 2020  
#OPENGOVBELIZE**

*Starting the second phase of the open government project. "Transformation to an open public administration in Belize"*

**The Trust for the Americas launches the Open Government Steering Committee in Belize**

At the outset of the second phase of the Open Government project: "Transformation to an open public administration in Belize", The Trust for the Americas in coordination with the Organization of American States and with the support of the United States Embassy in Belmopan announced the official launch of the Open Government Steering Committee in Belize.

The objective is to serve as a dialogue and decision-making mechanism to advance the project's open government processes and, consistent with this, open government in Belize. The committee has multiple representatives from government agencies and civil society organizations with a total of 11 representative members.

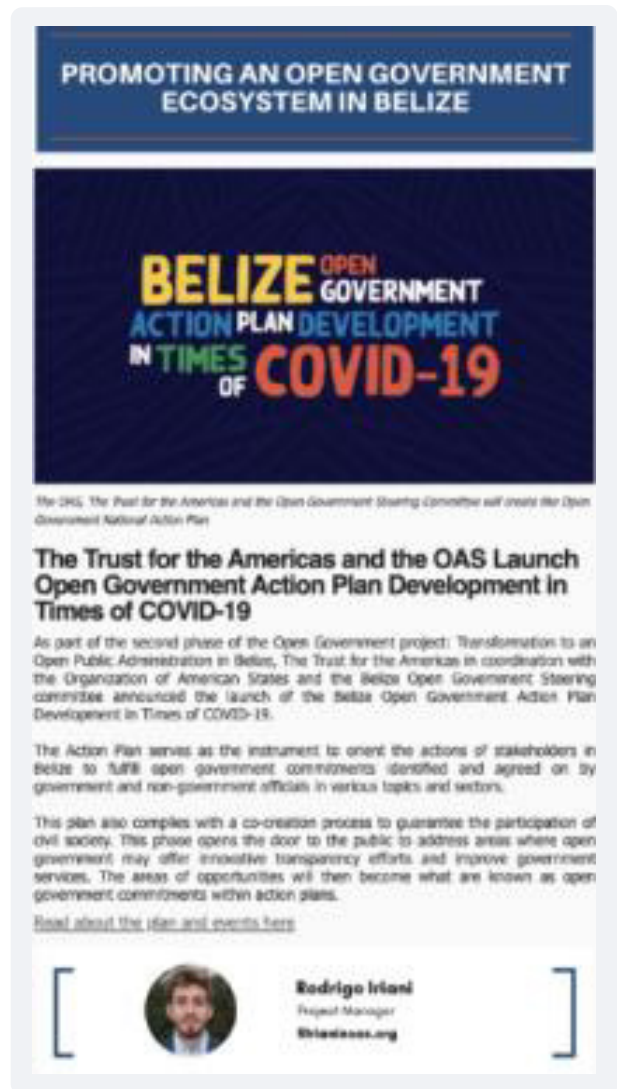
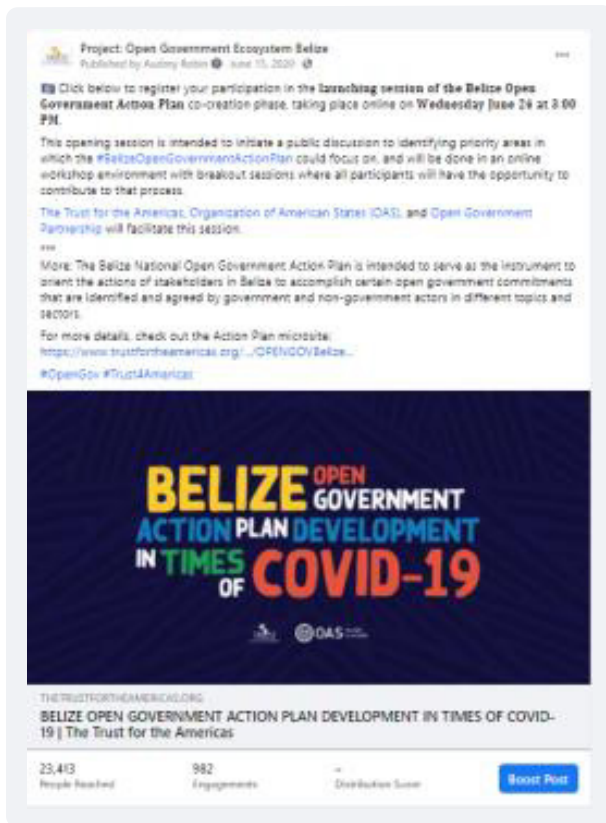
[Read the article here](#)

# Belize Open Government National Action Plan Development in times of COVID-19

With the microsite up and running, we focused on inviting people to register to the opening session of the co-creation phase of the Action Plan.

Through social media we organically reached over 25,000 people.

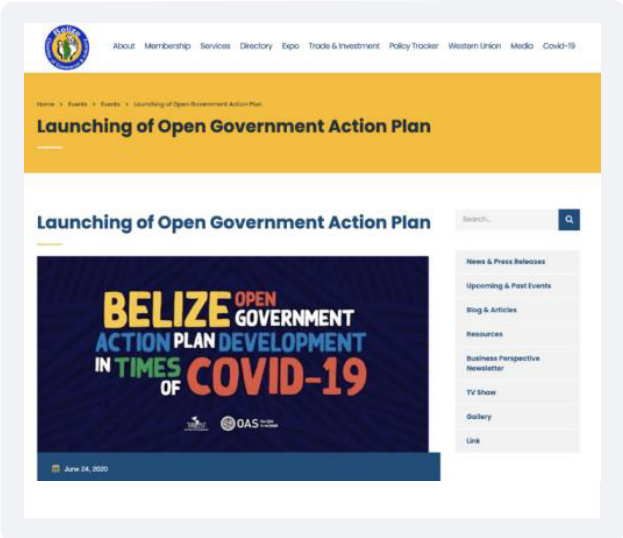
The development of the plan was also communicated on a [press release](#) and on our June 2020 Newsletter.



You can watch the launch of the Action Plan development process on our [Youtube Channel](#)

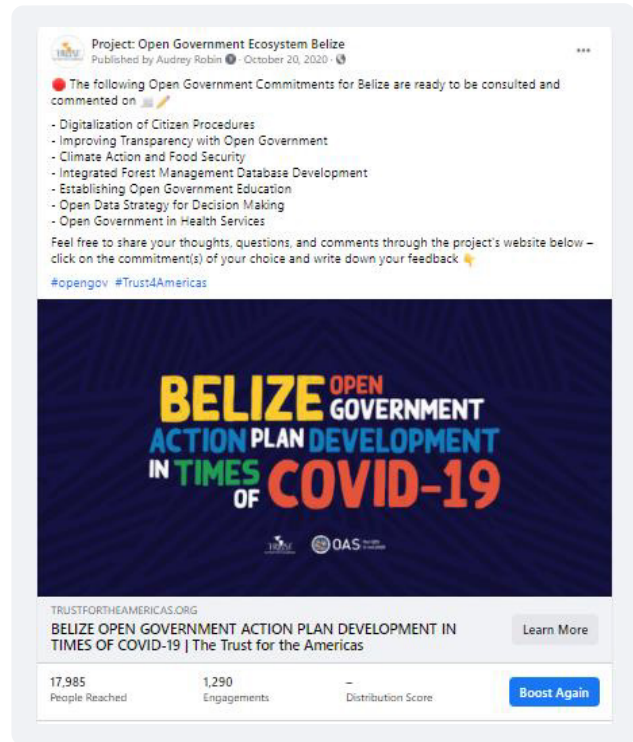
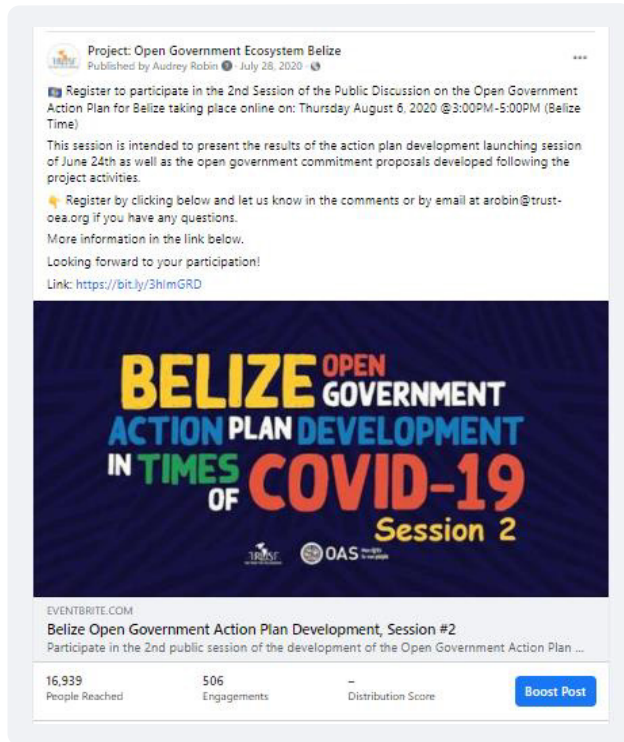


The development phase of the Plan was also announced by [Belize Breaking News](#) and the [Belize Chamber of Commerce](#)





For some of the actions in the development of the Action Plan, such as public sessions, interviews, consultation of the commitments, we ran **Facebook Ads** to boost reach, which resulted in an average of **16,500** and **20,500** people with each post.



Finally, at the end of 2020, and thanks to everyone's hard work, the Open Government Action Plan was launched. We uploaded the recorded session on **Facebook**



## Technical note Promoting an Open Government Ecosystem in Belize

To provide a brief summary of the work done until mid 2020, we released a technical note that included a brief statement by Nestor Mendez, Assistant Secretary General of the OAS, addressing the importance of exercising Open Government principles in Belize and the rest of the region.

You can watch the full document [here](#)



# Hackathon: Open Data enabling Tourism in Belize Post. COVID-19

With our local coordinators recruiting young people to register for the hackathon, the communications department helped to spread the word before, during and after event, through our platforms.

The image shows a Facebook post on the left and a website screenshot on the right, both promoting a virtual hackathon.

**Facebook Post:**

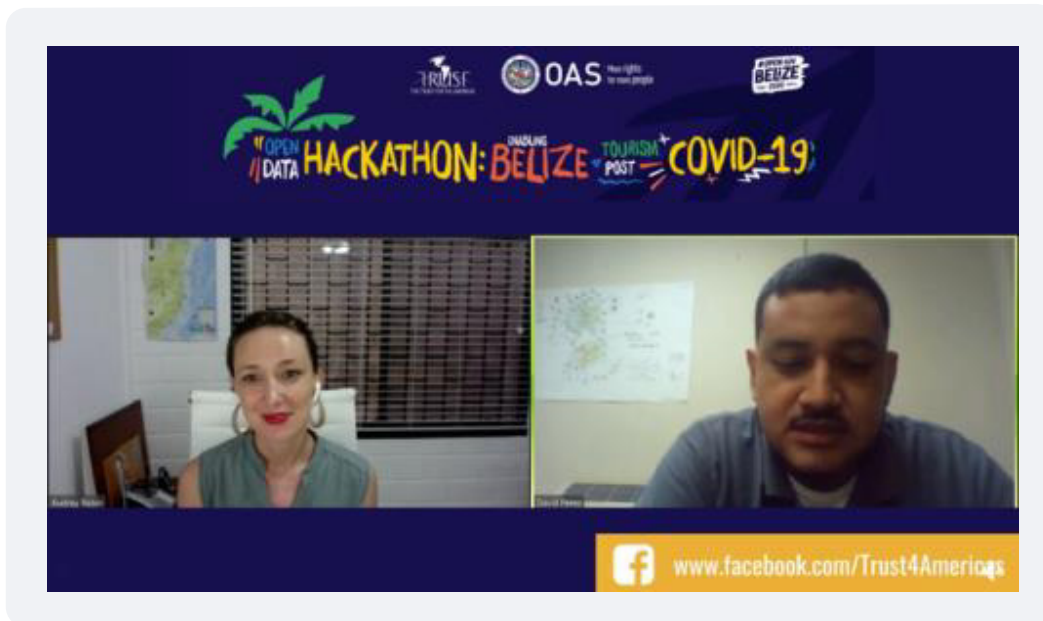
- Project:** Open Government Ecosystem Belize
- Date:** June 30 at 9:43 AM
- Text:** Register and participate in a fully Virtual 48hr Hackathon Competition on "Open Data: Enabling Belize Tourism Post COVID-19", on July 8th - July 10th. An awards ceremony will be organized and prizes distributed to the winners. More information by clicking on the registration link <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/110059334432>
- Organizers:** U.S. Embassy Belize, Organization of American States (OAS), The Trust for the Americas, Statistical Institute of Belize, BELTRAIDE, Belize Tourism Board, UWI Open Campus, Belize BTEC, Digi Belize, SBDC Belize, The Belize Chamber of Commerce & Industry, Belize PEACE Movement, Association of Tertiary Level Institutions in Belize, Belize Coalition of Service Providers, Belize13thsenator, Ministry of Health Belize, Ministry of Education, Youth, Sports and Culture, CITO, Min. Labour, Local Government & Rural Development, National Association of Village Councils, Belize City Council, Belmopan City Council, Ministry of Tourism and Civil Aviation, University of Belize, Galen University, Belize.
- Hashtags:** #opengov, #BelizeOpenGovernmentActionPlan, #Trust4Americas

**Website Screenshot:**

- Navigation:** About, Membership, Services, Directory, Expo, Trade & Investment, Policy Tracker, Western Union, Media, Covid-19
- Breadcrumbs:** Home > Events > Events > Virtual 48hr Hackathon Competition on "Open Data: Enabling Belize Tourism Post COVID-19"
- Header:** Virtual 48hr Hackathon Competition on "Open Data: Enabling Belize Tourism Post COVID-19"
- Content:** Virtual 48hr Hackathon Competition on "Open Data: Enabling Belize Tourism Post COVID-19"
- Search:** Search...
- Menu:** News & Press Releases, Upcoming & Past Events, Blog & Articles, Resources, Business Perspective

This event took place during 3 days. We broadcasted the [opening](#) and [closing ceremony](#) on the project's Facebook page, accumulating a total of **600 views**.

A few days later, Rodrigo Iriani, Program Manager, and Audrey Robin, Local Coordinator, chatted with the winners about their experience, their projects, and how they decided that they could build the next best tourism app using open data. You can watch it on [Facebook](#)

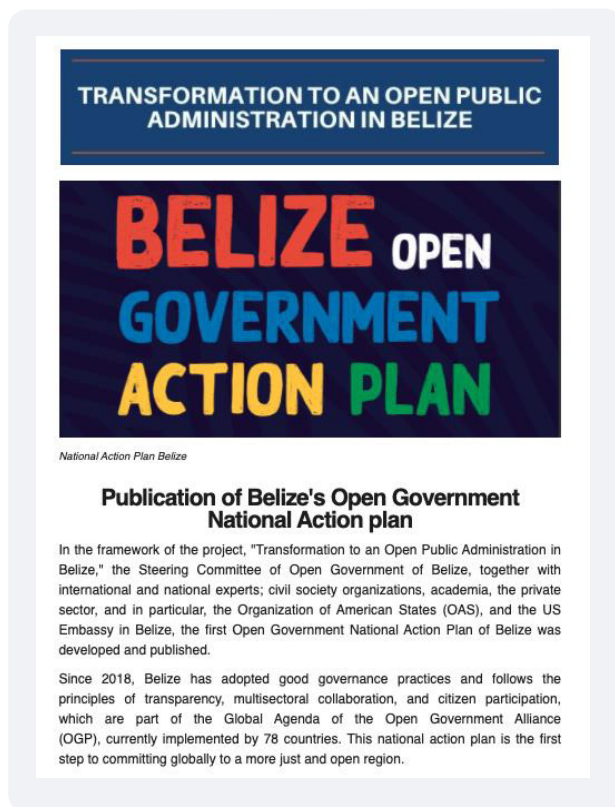




## 2021

### Belize Open Government National Action Plan

We began 2021 with the Belize Action Plan already published. The organizations involved in the creation of the plan were the main advocates of the commitments. During the first quarter of the year, we continued to reach out to local media, promoting live streaming of our events, and seizing online media opportunities to showcase the progress of the Belizean institutions involved in the Open Government agenda.



To promote this document, containing Open Government commitments focused on education, transparency, health, environment, and open data, we continued to optimized the project’s Facebook page by running an Ad. In this opportunity, over 24,000 Belizeans were reached.

**Project: Open Government Ecosystem Belize**  
 Published by Audrey Robin · January 29 ·

**The Belize Open Government Action Plan is published!**

Learn about the open government projects developed in education, transparency, health, environment, and open data!

Any questions and feedback can be sent to [arobin@trust-oea.org](mailto:arobin@trust-oea.org)

Many thanks to all who contributed to this important work 🙌

Humana People to People Belize - HPPBZ Ya'axché Conservation Trust Belize Forest Department Marigold Women's Cooperative Belize Department of the Environment - DOE CITO National AIDS Commission LXJ CODE Belize Min. Rural Transformation, Community Dev, Labour and Local Gov Ministry of Education, Culture, Science & Technology The Belize Chamber of Commerce & Industry Belize PEACE Movement University of Belize Environmental Research Institute (University of Belize) NTUCB Belize National Climate Change Office Ministry of Natural Resources Statistical Institute of Belize National Meteorological Service of Belize Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre Greenhouse Gas Management Institute Galen University, Belize Ministry of Health and Wellness Belize Belize Red Cross Southern Emergency Services Belize Ministry of Investment, Trade & Commerce - Belize Ministry of Tourism and Diaspora Relations Belize Tourism Board UNDP Belize Donovan Leiva

#Trust4Americas #OAS #belizeopengovernmentactionplan #opengov

[www.thetrustfortheamericas.org](http://www.thetrustfortheamericas.org) [www.thetrustfortheamericas.org](http://www.thetrustfortheamericas.org)

24,576 People Reached      664 Engagements      - Distribution Score      [Boost Again](#)

As we said before, local partners and organizations involved in the project were crucial in spreading the word. For Paco Smith and Andrea Perez's television appearance, we decided to boost the number of viewers with social media ads.

The image displays two Facebook advertisements for the 'Project: Open Government Ecosystem Belize'.

**Left Ad (Video):**  
- Title: Project: Open Government Ecosystem Belize  
- Published by: Audrey Robin, February 19  
- Text: This morning, Humana People to People Belize - HPPBZ presented their project on Digitalization of Citizen Procedures in the Morning Show of Love FM Belize - News and Music Power. This is one of the seven projects on #opendata and #opengov that were drafted as part of the Belize Open Government Action Plan, with the collaboration of the Organization of American States (OAS) and the support of the U.S. Embassy Belize. Great job Humana and looking forward to seeing this project implemented! #Trust4Americas  
- Video thumbnail: Shows a woman speaking on a stage with a 'Morning Show' logo and a 'Learn More trustfortheamericas.org' overlay.  
- Metrics: 24,609 People Reached, 2,305 Engagements  
- Action: Boost Again

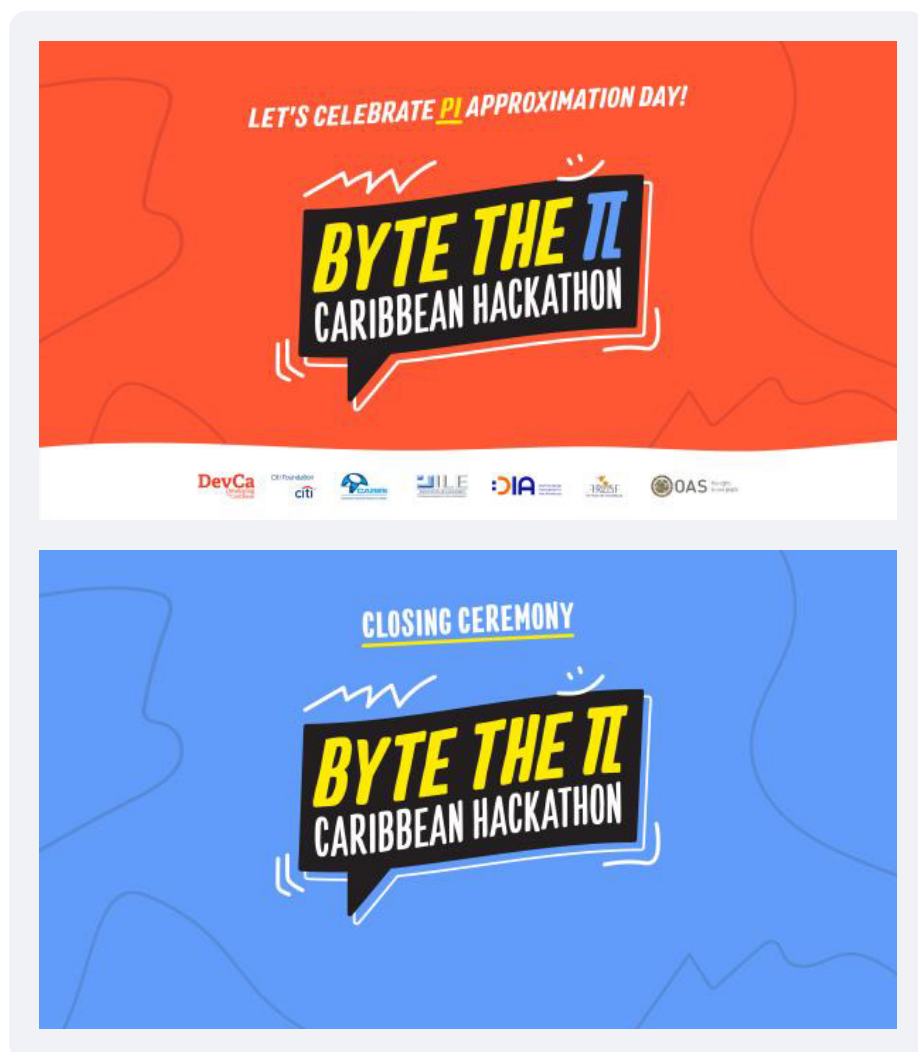
**Right Ad (Photo):**  
- Title: Project: Open Government Ecosystem Belize  
- Published by: Audrey Robin, March 12  
- Text: Author and contributor of three open government commitments, Paco Smith sat down this morning with Channel 5 Television to give insight on his contribution in the Belize Open Government Action Plan and how open governance and open data can greatly benefit Belize. Look out for the live broadcast in this evening's news at 06:00 PM. #opengov #trust4americas #Belize  
- Photo thumbnail: Shows Paco Smith and Andrea Perez on a television set.  
- Metrics: 12,081 People Reached, 189 Engagements, Distribution Score  
- Action: Boost Again

## Caribbean Hackathon

The second annual hackathon not only included participants from Belize but also beneficiaries from the Trust DIA Labs in Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago. Therefore, the communications efforts were bigger this time around and the campaign lasted for about a month.

The date of the event was set based on “**Pi Approximation Day**” on July 22nd. This inspired the name for the competition: **Byte the  $\pi$ : Caribbean Hackathon**.

The visual identity had to be unique, but functional in a variety of colors for a more dynamic communication, and also to differentiate the Opening Ceremony to the **Closing Ceremony**, to which we invited general public.



After the visual identity was created, recruiting participants was the next key step. We ran 3 different Facebook ads (one for each country) but with a special focus on Belize to acquire a more solid database of young people interested in tech and computer science, as the ones we have developed in the other two countries thanks to the DIA Innovation Labs and the local partners. **We were able to reach more than 50,000 people in Belize and enroll, as mentioned before, 21 participants to represent the country.**

The screenshot shows a Facebook post from 'The Trust for the Americas' published on July 15. The post includes a call to action for a virtual hackathon, a link to sign up, and a list of sponsors. The main graphic features the text 'LET'S CELEBRATE PI APPROXIMATION DAY!' and 'BYTE THE PI CARIBBEAN HACKATHON' in a stylized font. Below the graphic are logos for DevCa, Ministry of Digital Technology & Innovation, BelizeInfo, bt6, DIA, TRINT, and OAS.

**The Trust for the Americas**  
Published by Instagram · July 15 · Instagram · [location icon]

#DIA| Are you a tech wizard living in #Belize?

If you and your friends have amazing computer skills compete in the regional virtual hackathon to win up to BZD 1600.

We're looking for innovators who can develop disruptive solutions to promote post COVID-19 recovery efforts.

👉 Do you think you have what it takes to win? Sign up link in our BIO

For any additional information on how to enroll in the competition, please contact [arobin@trust-oea.org](mailto:arobin@trust-oea.org)

Project: Open Government Ecosystem Belize

**LET'S CELEBRATE  $\pi$  APPROXIMATION DAY!**

**BYTE THE  $\pi$  CARIBBEAN HACKATHON**

DevCa | Ministry of Digital Technology & Innovation | BelizeInfo | bt6 | DIA | TRINT | OAS

THE TRUST FOR THE AMERICAS.ORG  
PARTICIPATE IN THE VIRTUAL HACKATHON COMPETITION AND WIN UP TO USD 800 | The Trust for the Americas

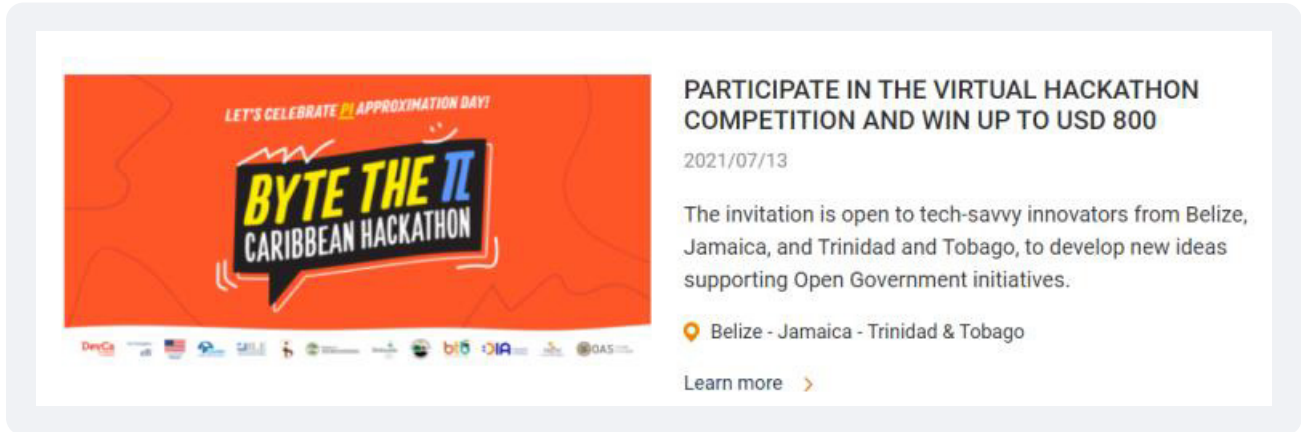
Sign Up

51,488 People Reached | 1,643 Engagements | - Distribution Score

Boost Again



We also developed a [press release](#) inviting people to participate. Here potential participants could find more information with specific details related to prizes and local contacts to register. This content became the call to action in the social media posts.



LET'S CELEBRATE  $\pi$  APPROXIMATION DAY!

**BYTE THE  $\pi$**   
CARIBBEAN HACKATHON

Participate in the virtual hackathon competition and win up to USD 800

2021/07/13

The invitation is open to tech-savvy innovators from Belize, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago, to develop new ideas supporting Open Government initiatives.

Belize - Jamaica - Trinidad & Tobago

Learn more >



The Trust for the Americas  
July 16 · 🌐

#DIA | Are you a tech wizard living in #Trinidad&Tobago?

If you and your friends have amazing computer skills, you can win up to USD 800 competing in regional virtual #hackathon.

We're looking for innovators who can develop disruptive solutions to promote post COVID-19 recovery efforts.... See More

LET'S CELEBRATE  $\pi$  APPROXIMATION DAY!

**BYTE THE  $\pi$**   
CARIBBEAN HACKATHON

DevCa | Citi Foundation | cfi | JILE | DIA | TRUST | OAS

THE TRUST FOR THE AMERICAS.ORG

PARTICIPATE IN THE VIRTUAL HACKATHON COMPETITION AND WIN UP TO USD 800 | The Trust for the Americas

Sign Up

Furthermore, Audrey Robin was interviewed by **7 News Belize**, where she commented on the hackathon and invited young people to participate and advance COVID-19 post recovery efforts.

This evening, the local coordinator for the Trust for the Americas granted us an interview via zoom to discuss why they are hoping that Belizeans will want to sign up to participate. Here's what she had to say:

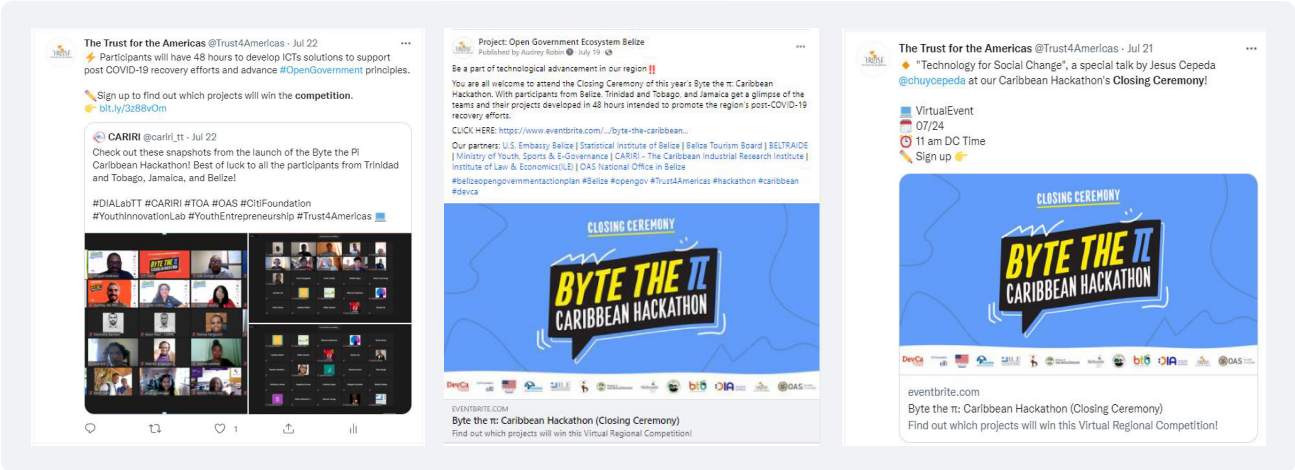


**Audrey Robin - Local Coordinator, Trust of Americas**

*"The reason why we developed this Hackathon with the Trust for Americas was that this Hackathon is part of a larger project that is on promoting open governance and open data in Belize. A Hackathon, in order to be successful, you need to have access to data. It's a way to show to countries, to representatives of the country what the population, stakeholders, people, citizens, youth can do when they have access to data. And that is the whole purpose of this type of activity. Give the possibility to participants, people in the country, to have access to data that sometimes they don't have access to for various reasons."*

Read the full story [here](#)

During the 3 days of the event, we shared some moments of the experience and invited the public to join us on the last day to watch the pitches, enjoy the conference “Technology for Social Change” by Chuy Cepeda (from the GovTech Startup OsCity), and, of course, witness the announcement of the winners.



The image shows three social media posts from The Trust for the Americas (@Trust4Americas). The first post (dated Jul 22) is a tweet with a video thumbnail showing a Zoom meeting grid. The second post (dated Jul 21) is a tweet with a graphic for the "Byte the IT Caribbean Hackathon Closing Ceremony". The third post (dated Jul 21) is a tweet with a graphic for the "Byte the IT Caribbean Hackathon Closing Ceremony" and a link to the event page.

We also live tweeted during the Closing Ceremony. See full thread [here](#)





A few days later, we shared the recorded and edited transmission of the Closing Ceremony on [Facebook](#), thanks to CARIRI – the Caribbean Industrial Research Institute, the local partner in Trinidad and Tobago. This video has accumulated 313 views.



To keep raising awareness about this international competition, a second **press release** with results was developed and shared with media. We achieved media exposure in the 3 countries with mentions in websites, social media and even a digital magazine.



Business Caribbean News  
See the full spread [here](#)



Belize Breaking News  
Read full story [here](#)

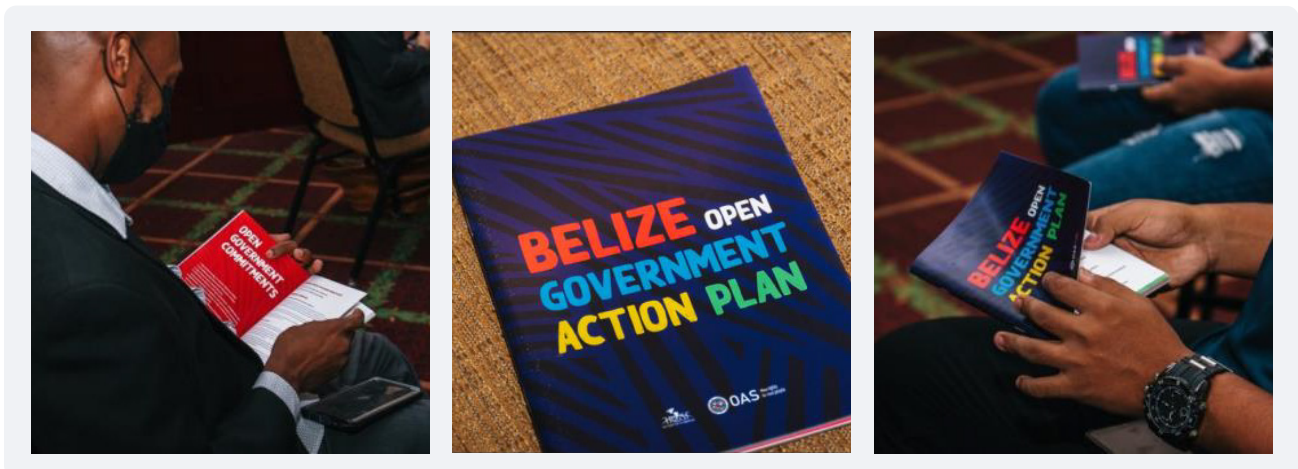
Technews Trinidad and Tobago  
See the full spread [here](#)

## Project's Closing Event

As mentioned, to close this phase of the project an on-site (with virtual presentations) event was held in Belize City, with the participation of government officials, civil society, academia, and innovative youth.

This gave us a new opportunity to showcase the Belize Open Government Action Plan, therefore 60 copies of the booklet were printed and distributed to the Government of Belize and the main project's stakeholders before and during the closing event. A digital version was also shared online and via email to all partners and stakeholders involved.

See [BOGAP digital booklet](#)



The remarks given by the invited speakers provided us with great content to develop a [press release](#) and social media posts.



**BELIZE ADVANCES TO AN OPEN ADMINISTRATION WITH MULTISECTOR COLLABORATION**

2021/08/13

The Trust for the Americas aims to strengthen public institutions through multi-sectoral co-creation processes through the "Transformation to an Open Public Administration in Belize" project. The Belize Open Government Action Plan defines areas where Open Government initiatives can help COVID-19 post-recovery efforts.

 Belize

The Trust for the Americas @Trust4Americas · 5 ago. ...

"Open Government is the materialization of the right to access public information"

Mr. Luiz Coimbra @lcoimbra01 - Representative @OASinBelize



0:25 59 reproducciones

The Trust for the Americas @Trust4Americas · 5 ago. ...

"#OpenGovernment is a governance model that allows us to use society strength and #innovation to solve government problems"

@pepe\_garcia from the @opengovpart



39 reproducciones 0:00 / 0:39

See full thread [here](#)



The Belizean winners of the Caribbean hackathon were presented during the event and awarded with personalized certificates and big checks. The photographs captured this day really helped the hackathon’s communications campaign come together, given that the whole event was done virtually.



Since Twitter is great for telling stories with the thread feature, we shared a summary of the project highlighting its most important actions and achievements, crediting stakeholders and collaborators involved, who showed support by sharing the post with their followers.

**The Trust for the Americas @Trust4Americas · Aug 13**

Implemented with the support of the @USMissionBelize, the project "Transformation to an Open Public Administration in Belize" aims to forward multisector collaboration and facilitate co-creation processes through social innovation.

Read more [bit.ly/37CecIV](https://bit.ly/37CecIV)



ARCH Consulting Group and 3 others

1 4 8

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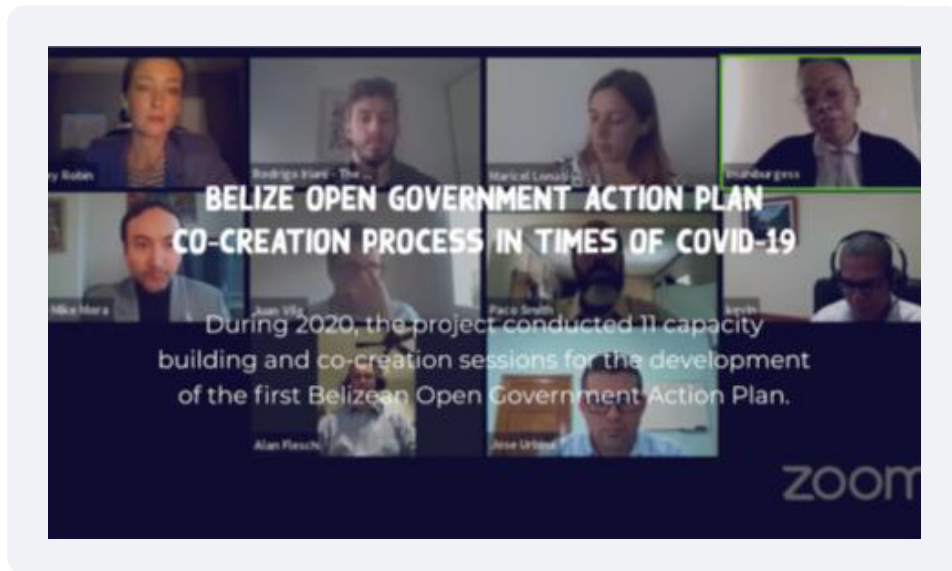
**The Trust for the Americas @Trust4Americas · Aug 13**

Launched in 2019, the project executed a series of webinars to promote an #OpenGov ecosystem in #Belize to strengthen its capacity towards transparency, participation, inclusion, and accountability.



See full thread [here](#)

For the event, we also coordinated the attendance of an AV production team to take photographs and video interviews for communications purposes. Later, the seven-minute recap video, that resulted from this and previous footage, was one of the last marketing pieces used to promote the work in Belize. You can watch the video [here](#)



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GOVERNMENT OF BELIZE  
MANY AGENCIES . ONE GOVERNMENT



ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT  
COUNCIL



OAS | More rights  
for more people







**OAS** | More rights  
for more people

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