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► Situational analysis

Technical and Vocational Education and
Training (TVET) Systems in Southern Belize

Situational analysis

Technical and Vocational Education and
Training (TVET) Systems in Southern Belize

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► List of acronyms and abbreviations

ANRI	Agriculture and Natural Resource Institute
BAHA	Belize Agricultural Health Authority
BEL	Belize Electricity Limited
BTB	Belize Tourism Board
CANTA	Caribbean Association of National Training Authorities
CPBL	Citrus Products of Belize Limited
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CVQ	Caribbean Vocational Qualification
CXC	Caribbean Examinations Council
EUp	Education Upliftment Project
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
HACCP	Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points
HVAC	Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning
ILO	International Labour Organization
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
ITVET	Institute for Technical and Vocational Education and Training
MoECST	Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Technology
MOH	Ministry of Health
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NGC	National Garifuna Council
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
POWA	Productive Organization for Women in Action

PROSPER	Participation, Ownership and Sustainable Progress for Economic Resilience
PUC	Public Utilities Commission
PWD	Persons with Disabilities
TCGA	Toledo Cacao Growers Association
THS	Technical High School
TIDE	Toledo Institute for Development and Environment
TMWC	Toledo Maya Women's Council
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training

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► Executive summary

Purpose and scope of the assessment

This situational analysis examines the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) system in Southern Belize's Stann Creek and Toledo Districts, in support of the implementation of the International Labour Organization (ILO)/European Union-funded PROSPER Project (Participation, Ownership and Sustainable Progress for Economic Resilience). The assessment identifies institutional capacity, barriers to access for vulnerable groups and the alignment between skills supply and labour market demand in priority value chains.

Conducted between August and November 2025, this study engaged 9 TVET institutions and technical high schools, 12 community organizations and over 200 stakeholders from Maya and Garifuna communities. The analysis coordinates directly with the value chain study to ensure skills development interventions are linked to economic opportunities in the tourism and agroforestry sectors, including cacao, honey, cardamom and vanilla production.

The assessment addresses two core objectives:

1. evaluating institutional capacity to deliver market-relevant skills training;
2. identifying specific barriers affecting women, youth, persons with disabilities and indigenous communities in accessing training and transitioning to the labour market.

Methodology and stakeholder engagement

The methodology was guided by the ILO Skills System Assessment Tool¹ and the ILO's Guide on the inclusiveness of TVET and skills development systems,² employing a mixed-methods approach. Data collection combined interviews with institutional leadership, focus group discussions with teachers, students and community organizations, and structured questionnaires distributed to both TVET instructors and government officials and specialized agencies (including Ministry representatives, district education managers, University of Belize personnel, Belize Tourism Board and agriculture extension officers) across both districts.

All consultations followed established community engagement and cultural protocols³ to ensure respectful engagement with Maya and Garifuna governance systems. Data triangulation across interviews, focus groups, questionnaires and field observations ensured evidence-based findings. A regional validation session for stakeholders from the Stann Creek and Toledo Districts was held to review preliminary findings before finalization of the situational analysis.

Key findings

Opportunities and existing system strengths

The TVET landscape in Southern Belize demonstrates foundational capacities that provide entry points for strengthening skills training linked to economic opportunities in the tourism and

1 ILO, *ILO Skills System Assessment Tool*, 2021.

2 ILO, *Guide on Making TVET and Skills Development Inclusive for All*, 2020.

3 UN, *Free, Prior and Informed Consent: Report*, A/HRC/39/62 (2018).

agroforestry sectors. Nine institutions currently deliver training programmes in agriculture, tourism and business sectors, serving more than 4,400 students across both districts. Female students comprise 48 per cent of total enrolment at institutions reporting sex-disaggregated data. These institutions provide training in crop production, animal husbandry, hospitality and food preparation, establishing a platform on which to expand specialized training aligned with priority value chains.

Inclusive education infrastructure presents a particular opportunity for advancing equitable access. Julian Cho Technical High School and Toledo Community College operate inclusive classrooms for students with disabilities. Corazon Creek Technical High School has developed plans to establish similar facilities. These inclusive classrooms provide examples for expanding accessibility accommodations and developing training programmes tailored to diverse learning needs.

Access to digital devices represents a significant enabler for increasing inclusive participation in TVET. Many women in rural communities already possess cell phones, and some have access to computers, providing a foundation for digital learning once gaps in digital literacy are addressed. Younger women exhibit higher educational attainment, stronger literacy and numeracy skills and greater familiarity with technology, indicating that targeted interventions for this demographic could increase these women's participation in training for skills acquisition in tourism and agroforestry.

Institutions maintain informal networks with graduates through social media platforms and personal connections, providing a basis for systematic tracking of school-to-work transitions. Strengthening these existing contacts through structured data collection would generate labour market intelligence to inform curriculum revisions, contributing to better alignment of training programmes with labour market demands. Several institutions have established informal work-based learning arrangements with local enterprises, which can be formalized and expanded to enhance practical skills development.

Systemic constraints affecting training delivery

Existing training programmes do not adequately address the specialized skills identified in the value chain analyses for the tourism and agroforestry sectors. Specifically, curricula lack modules on priority agroforestry crops such as vanilla cultivation, cardamom processing and honey production, which are essential for advancing value chain development. While cacao processing is offered at one institution, the programme does not incorporate food safety certification, a critical requirement for producing value-added products. Existing training programmes in the tourism sector do not include digital marketing, online booking systems or customer service. In addition, instructional approaches remain predominantly theoretical, with limited emphasis on work-based learning.

Equipment, tools and infrastructure constraints limit practical skills development. Computer shortages require students to share devices, restricting individual time for the development of digital skills. Institutions lack specialized equipment and tools for food processing and value-added product training. Workshop facilities cannot accommodate concurrent instruction across multiple trades. Internet connectivity is limited across institutions, characterized by slow speeds, unreliable or intermittent connections, with access available only in certain areas, minimising the integration of online learning resources and digital literacy instruction.

Instructor capacity to deliver market-relevant training requires strengthening. Most technical instructors lack industry experience in the tourism and agroforestry sectors, and professional development opportunities occur only sporadically. These factors limit instructors' ability to integrate current practices in food safety standards, climate-smart agriculture, cooperative development and sustainable tourism management. Moreover, the absence of structured industry attachments prevents instructors from acquiring evolving techniques and workplace requirements, thereby reinforcing the disconnect between classroom instruction and value chain operations.

Work-based learning arrangements exist; however, they tend to be informal and depend on individual instructor initiative rather than institutional systems. Where partnerships with employers have been established for internships or apprenticeships, they remain brief in duration and lack defined

learning objectives and competency-based assessment criteria. Formalising these arrangements with structured supervision protocols and certification processes would enhance practical skills development and improve pathways from training to the labour market.

Access barriers for vulnerable groups

Women in rural Maya and Garifuna communities express a strong interest in skills development for tourism and agroforestry value chains; however, they face multiple barriers to accessing TVET opportunities. Distance to training locations presents the most significant challenge for women in remote villages. Training schedules frequently conflict with agricultural cycles when women's labour is essential for household livelihoods, and caregiving responsibilities further restrict mobility. Financial barriers include both direct costs, such as tuition fees and learning materials, and indirect opportunity costs associated with foregone income during training periods.

Educational attainment varies across age cohorts: younger women are more likely to have completed secondary education, whereas older women typically possess only primary-level education, impacting the ability of older women to effectively engage in training programmes. Many women have access to cell phones and some to computers, but digital literacy needs to be improved to enable women's effective participation in flexible and remote learning training opportunities.

Current training programmes are delivered exclusively in English, creating a significant language barrier for older Maya women who primarily speak Q'eqchi' or Mopan Maya. To address this constraint, institutions should incorporate multilingual strategies, including translation of instructional materials, recruitment of bilingual trainers and development of culturally responsive curricula. Additionally, integrating community-based language support and digital tools for translation can further enhance accessibility to ensure equitable participation in TVET.

Youth encounter persistent barriers to effective school-to-work transitions despite their significant enrolment in technical training programmes. Transportation costs and schedules constitute major obstacles for students from remote villages, limiting their ability to access training institutions or participate in work-based learning opportunities. Institutional support for school-to-work transitions is largely absent, with no systematic provision of career guidance services, job placement assistance, employer networking events or structured internship programmes. Anecdotal evidence suggests that a significant proportion of TVET graduates secure employment outside their field of training, frequently in security-related roles such as the Belize Defence Force, Coast Guard or police services.

Findings indicate that students with disabilities are currently enrolled in training programmes at two of the nine institutions studied; their enrolment is possible because of the existence of inclusive classrooms. Physical infrastructure remains a major barrier: facilities are characterized by stairs without ramps, narrow doorways and inaccessible sanitation amenities. Moreover, most institutions lack trained support personnel and adaptive learning materials necessary for inclusive instruction. Families report significant financial constraints in securing para-professional assistance and medical services for children with disabilities, further limiting these children's participation in skills training opportunities.

Conclusions

This situational analysis provides evidence-based information for planning targeted interventions to strengthen TVET institutional capacity in Southern Belize. The assessment identifies clear opportunities to build on existing institutional foundations, community expertise and informal industry relationships to create skills development pathways aligned with tourism and agroforestry value chains.

The analysis addresses both supply-side constraints affecting institutional capacity to deliver market-relevant training and demand-side barriers preventing vulnerable groups from accessing skills development and transitioning to the labour market. Access to quality skills training targeting the identified sectors in tourism and agroforestry can contribute to increasing the participation of Southern Belize's rural and indigenous communities in sustainable economic activities, enhancing their employability and strengthening their integration into competitive value chains.



► 1. Introduction

1.1 Background and context

The PROSPER Belize Project is a European Union-funded initiative implemented by the ILO from 2024 to 2028. The project focuses on Local Economic Development in Southern Belize, specifically targeting rural and indigenous communities in the Stann Creek and Toledo Districts with particular attention to women, youth and persons with disabilities.

PROSPER employs a participatory planning approach to identify market opportunities in high-potential value chains, ensuring technical assistance and capacity development are market-oriented and feasible. The project emphasizes sustainable use of natural resources, maintaining biodiversity and promoting local inclusive development. Component 3 of PROSPER aims to strengthen local Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions operating in the target areas through skills development, including work-based learning approaches connecting education with practical workplace experience.

Southern Belize, comprising Stann Creek and Toledo Districts, presents unique development challenges and opportunities. The region is home to significant Maya and Garifuna populations maintaining strong cultural traditions while seeking pathways to economic advancement. Geographic isolation, limited infrastructure and historical marginalization have contributed to higher poverty rates and lower educational attainment compared to national averages.⁴ Despite these challenges, the region holds comparative advantages in sustainable tourism and agroforestry products, particularly cacao, honey, cardamom and vanilla.

1.2 Purpose and objectives

This situational analysis serves as the foundation for strengthening TVET systems in Southern Belize. The primary objectives are to:

- conduct comprehensive analysis of TVET and sector-based training institutions in the project target area, including existing or potential work-based learning ecosystems;
- identify barriers and skills gaps faced by women and persons with disabilities in transitioning to the labour market;
- assess work-based learning ecosystems and their potential for enhancement.

The study applies the ILO Skills System Assessment Tool⁵ and ILO Guide on Making TVET Inclusive⁶ to examine three dimensions: (a) developing, recognizing and certifying skills; (b) improving access to skills development and the labour market; and (c) skills for employability, decent work and productivity in the workplace.

1.3 Geographic scope

Toledo District: The southernmost and least populated district in Belize, Toledo, is predominantly rural with the highest concentration of Maya communities in the country. Punta Gorda, a coastal town of

4 Belize, Statistical Institute of Belize (SIB), [Multidimensional Poverty Index: September 2024](#), 2024.

5 ILO, [ILO Skills System](#), 2021.

6 ILO, [Guide](#), 2020.

approximately 6,800 residents, serves as the main urban and administrative centre.⁷ The district is home to many Q'eqchi' and Mopan Maya villages, several Garifuna communities and populations of Creole, East Indian, Mestizo and Mennonite residents. Toledo is the only district in Belize where indigenous languages are spoken by a majority of the population, with Maya languages spoken by 68 per cent of residents.⁸ The economy is primarily agriculture-based, with cacao, rice, beans and corn as principal crops, alongside small-scale fishing.⁹ While the Thomas Vincent Ramos Highway (Southern Highway) connecting Punta Gorda to the rest of Belize is paved, many villages are accessible only by unpaved roads that become impassable during the rainy season. The population of Toledo District is approximately 41,500.¹⁰

Stann Creek District: Located on Belize's southeastern Caribbean coast, Stann Creek encompasses both coastal communities and inland agricultural areas. Dangriga, a town of approximately 10,900 people, is the largest settlement in southern Belize and serves as the district's administrative centre.¹¹ Stann Creek holds the largest Garifuna population in the country.¹² The district also includes the tourism centres of Placencia and Hopkins, Maya communities and the port of Big Creek serving the banana industry. The district is served by the Hummingbird Highway and Thomas Vincent Ramos Highway, providing better connectivity than Toledo, although rural areas still face infrastructure challenges. Economic activities include citrus and banana cultivation, tourism, fishing and small-scale manufacturing. The population of Stann Creek District is approximately 48,700.¹³

Both districts share common challenges like geographic isolation, limited public services, infrastructure deficits and economic dependence on primary sectors with limited value-addition. The concentration of indigenous populations, strong community governance structures and growing recognition of the region's agro-ecological and cultural assets provide foundations for inclusive skills development interventions.

1.4 Report structure

In addition to this introduction, this report is organized into the following other five main sections:

1. **Section 2: Methodology** details data collection approaches, stakeholder engagement and analytical frameworks.
2. **Section 3: Institutions providing TVET profiles** describes the institutions serving the region, their programmes and resource base.
3. **Section 4: Development, recognition and certification of skills** examines curriculum quality, assessment systems and instructor capacity.
4. **Section 5: Inclusiveness and access** analyses barriers faced by women, persons with disabilities and marginalized groups.
5. **Section 6: Work-based learning** assesses current arrangements and partnership potential.

7 SIB, [Abstract of Statistics 2022](#), 2022, table 1.4.

8 SIB, [Languages Spoken by District: Census 2010](#), 2010.

9 Belize, Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Enterprise, [National Agricultural and Food Policy of Belize 2015–2030](#), 2015, page 14.

10 SIB, [Abstract of Statistics 2022](#), table 1.4.

11 SIB, [Abstract of Statistics 2022](#), table 1.4.

12 SIB, [Belize Population and Housing Census 2010: Country Report](#), 2013, table 8.

13 SIB, [Abstract of Statistics 2022](#), table 1.4.

► 2. Methodology

The situational analysis employed a mixed-methods approach combining qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques. The methodology was designed to assess both institutional capacity and community-level barriers simultaneously, recognising that effective TVET strengthening requires understanding what institutions can deliver and what prevents marginalized populations from accessing training opportunities.

2.1 Conceptual frameworks

The study applied two complementary ILO frameworks to structure institutional analysis and inclusiveness assessment:

1. **ILO Skills System Assessment Tool**,¹⁴ a framework which guided institutional evaluation across three dimensions:

- i. developing, recognizing and certifying skills (curriculum quality, certification pathways, assessment systems and instructor qualifications);
- ii. improving access for all (enrolment patterns, completion rates, financial accessibility and transition support mechanisms); and
- iii. skills for employability and productivity (work-based learning arrangements, employer partnerships and graduate employment outcomes).

2. **ILO Guide on Making TVET Inclusive**,¹⁵ a framework that guided analysis of barriers facing women and persons with disabilities through:

- i. examination of physical, financial, technological, cultural and institutional accessibility;
- ii. identification of exclusion points across the training cycle from enrolment through transition to employment;
- iii. evaluation of support services and accommodations available for target populations; and
- iv. analysis of transition outcomes for marginalized groups.

These frameworks were tailored to the specific requirements of the Terms of Reference and adapted to the cultural and institutional context of Southern Belize, ensuring analysis addressed both system-level capacity and individual-level access barriers.

2.2 Data collection methods

Data collection occurred in two strategic phases from August through October 2025:

Phase 1 – Community consultations (August–September): During the period when TVET institutions were preparing for the new academic year, the research team conducted focus group discussions with women's organizations, indigenous community groups and disability support networks. This approach allowed early identification of access barriers while institutions prepared for the school year. Thirteen community organizations participated:

¹⁴ ILO, *ILO Skills System*, 2021.

¹⁵ ILO, *Guide*, 2020.

- **Stann Creek:** National Garifuna Council (NGC) Hopkins and Seine Bight chapters, Humana, Productive Organization for Women in Action (POWA) Dangriga;
- **Toledo:** Julian Cho Society, Home of Indigenous Arts, Toledo Maya Women's Council, Maya Bags, Toledo Institute for Development and Environment (TIDE), women's agricultural groups (Ligemeri Haruga, Indian Creek, Corazon Creek, San Lucas);
- Special Education Officers from both districts.

Phase 2 – Institutional assessments (September–October): Following school reopening and coordination with value chain consultants, comprehensive assessments were conducted at nine institutions:

- **Stann Creek:** Institute for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (ITVET) Stann Creek, Agriculture and Natural Resource Institute (ANRI), Ecumenical High School (limited TVET offerings), Independence High School (HS), Georgetown Technical High School (THS);
- **Toledo:** ITVET Toledo, Julian Cho Technical High School (THS), Corazon Creek Technical High School (THS), Tumul K'in Center of Learning.

A comprehensive record of all stakeholder consultations, with dates, locations and participant numbers disaggregated by sex, is provided in Appendix A.

Data collection instruments:

- **semi-structured interviews** with institutional leadership (principals, directors, department heads) covering institutional capacity, curriculum relevance, resource constraints, strategic priorities, work-based learning arrangements and graduate employment support;
- **focus group discussions** with instructional staff to examine training delivery, student needs, resource adequacy and relationships with local employers;
- **student focus groups** (with parental consent) exploring training relevance, accessibility, employment preparation and learning experience;
- **individual interviews** with student support personnel responsible for job placement, life skills and special education;
- **structured questionnaires** for Government officials, University of Belize, and specialized organizations and agencies, examining work-based learning policies, labor market information systems, regional education oversight and sector-specific capacity-building;
- **document review** of institutional records, curriculum materials, assessment procedures and student enrolment data;
- **field observations** of training facilities, equipment condition and accessibility features.

A full record of the data collection instruments used, including focus group discussion guides, interview protocols and questionnaires, is provided in Appendix B.

2.3 Stakeholder engagement and cultural protocols

Engagement with Maya and Garifuna communities followed culturally appropriate protocols. M.D.C.L. Limited leveraged established relationships with trusted intermediaries including the Julian Cho Society, National Garifuna Council and Toledo Maya Women's Council. Entry into communities followed traditional protocols, with introductions facilitated by respected community leaders.

Women's focus groups were facilitated by female team members to ensure culturally appropriate discussion of barriers and challenges. Sessions were scheduled to accommodate childcare responsibilities and household obligations. For persons with disabilities, consultations included appropriate accommodations for communication, mobility and participation based on individual needs identified during initial contact.

All student engagement required prior parental consent given that participants were minors under 18. Consent forms were distributed through school administration with clear explanations of research purpose and voluntary participation.

2.4 Data analysis and validation

Qualitative data from interviews and focus groups were transcribed and analysed thematically to identify patterns across institutional capacity, curriculum alignment, resource gaps, access barriers, barriers related to transitioning to employment and employment linkages. Quantitative data from questionnaires and institutional records were compiled to establish baseline statistics on enrolment, completion, programme offerings and demographics.

Triangulation occurred across multiple data sources: institutional leadership perspectives were validated against instructor narratives, student experiences and community organization observations. Value chain consultant findings regarding skills requirements were integrated into the analysis to assess curriculum-market alignment. Special Education Officers provided district-level perspectives on disability inclusion that complemented institutional assessments.

A validation workshop was conducted on 22 November 2025, at Hope Centre, Punta Gorda, Toledo bringing together 30 participants comprising institutional representatives, community organizations and government officials to review findings. Appendix C presents the validation session details. The workshop presented preliminary findings, stakeholder review and feedback. Participants provided input on the accuracy of findings to ensure they reflect on-the-ground realities and institutional priorities. Feedback from the validation session has been incorporated into this final report. Continuous coordination with the ILO PROSPER Project Team ensured alignment with project objectives throughout the analysis.

2.5 Limitations

The findings presented in this report reflect data collected within the project timeline and geographic scope. The following factors should be considered when interpreting the analysis:

- ▶ **Data availability:** Systematic data on graduate employment outcomes, completion rates by demographic group, and employer hiring patterns are not collected by most institutions. Tracer studies are not conducted. Analysis relied primarily on qualitative information from stakeholder consultations and institutional records where available.
- ▶ **Employer engagement:** The research team reviewed and provided input on an employer survey prepared by the value chain consultants. Direct consultations with private sector employers were not conducted within the project timeline. Assessment of work-based learning and labour market demand relied on institutional and community perspectives, supplemented by value chain analysis findings.
- ▶ **Geographic access:** Road conditions during the rainy season affected access to remote communities, particularly in Toledo District. Consultations in some villages required rescheduling or alternative arrangements.
- ▶ **Engagement of communities:** Some communities have participated in previous consultations conducted by other donors and development partners. The research team mitigated the demands of participation in multiple consultations by scheduling consultations at times convenient to participants and coordinating through established relationships with respected local organizations.

Mitigation strategies: These limitations were addressed through triangulation of findings across multiple stakeholder groups (teachers, students, principals, community organizations, Special Education Officers), integration with value chain analysis results and a validation workshop with institutional and community representatives. Where data gaps affect the reliability of findings, this fact is noted in the relevant sections.



► 3. Institutions providing TVET in the region

This situational analysis examined nine institutions across the Stann Creek and Toledo Districts. These institutions comprise two government-operated Industrial Training and Vocational Education Training centers (ITVETs) and seven technical high schools offering technical and vocational programmes alongside general secondary education.

3.1 Institutional profiles – Stann Creek District

3.1.1 ITVET Stann Creek (Dangriga)

- **Location and reach:** Located in Dangriga; serving Valley Community, Bella Vista, Orange Walk Town, Independence, Dangriga Town, Armenia, Gales Point, Seine Bight, San Roman, Hope Creek and Hopkins.
- **Student population:** 154 students (116 males and 38 females); 95 per cent completion rate; 15 students per practical class, 30 students per theory class.
- **Programmes offered:** Pre-trade programme lasting ten months: Mathematics, English, Life Skills, Wood Carving, Applied Research, Information Technology (IT). Trade programmes include Electrical, Tourism, Commercial Food Preparation, Housekeeping, Agro Food Processing (jam, pepper, pickles, oils from fruits and vegetables), Elder Care, Cake Baking, Massage Therapy, Cosmetology, Nail Technician, Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC), Carpentry, and Automotive. The most popular programmes are Tourism, Electrical and HVAC; least popular is Carpentry. The Applied Research Programme studies flora, fauna and waterways surrounding the campus to align with sustainable and eco-tourism development.
- **Facilities and equipment:** Kitchen with industrial equipment (fryer and dishwasher not functioning); computer lab with insufficient computers for class-size groups (some not functioning); projectors in each classroom (some require replacement); buildings under renovation. Welding programme suspended due to equipment unavailability. Limited internet connectivity.¹⁶
- **Work-based learning:** Six weeks industry attachment plus eight weeks on-the-job training with teacher supervision (three visits per placement). Employer partnerships with Marie Sharp's Fine Foods Ltd., Silk Grass Farms and resorts in Hopkins, Placencia and the Cayes. Employers are invited and recognized at graduations. It is reported that 85 per cent of trainees receive job offers during on-the-job training.
- **Key strengths:** 95 per cent completion rate; curriculum derived from regional occupational standards (Caribbean Association of National Training Authorities, CANTA); tourism instructor is a certified Belize Tourism Board (BTB) professional trainer; culinary instructor is a former Executive Chef from Naia Resort; accepts students with disabilities from Stella Maris School¹⁷ with unit certifications for appropriate employment; accepts older students including police and Belize Defence Force on Saturdays for Elder Care; teaches business plan development; Public Utilities Commission (PUC)

¹⁶ «Limited internet connectivity» refers to slow speeds, unreliable or intermittent connection, and/or access available only in certain areas. At all assessed institutions where «limited internet connectivity» is noted, the situation reflects a combination of these factors.

¹⁷ Stella Maris School, located in Belize City, is a government-funded school dedicated to students with disabilities, serving students aged 4-18 with learning disabilities, intellectual challenges, autism, cerebral palsy, visual impairment and deafness. See: «[Stella Maris Celebrate 60 Years of Service to Belize](#)», Breaking Belize News, 25 April 2018.

partnership to redesign electrical curriculum to Belize standards enabling students to pass licensing exams; strong donor partnerships supporting infrastructure development.¹⁸

- **Additional context:** Agro-processing and carpentry instructor positions are currently vacant. The school reported that salary levels create challenges in recruiting instructors with industry experience.

3.1.2 Agriculture and Natural Resource Institute (ANRI) (Hope Creek Village)

- **Location and reach:** Located in Hope Creek Village; serving primarily Dangriga Town and Gales Point Manatee Village.
- **Student population:** 56 students (50 males and 6 females); 60 per cent completion rate; 7:1 student-teacher ratio.
- **Programmes offered:** Agriculture (vegetable production and livestock), including Animal Science, Crop Science, greenhouse maintenance, and Agro-processing (jam, coconut milk, coconut oil, jalapeño products).
- **Facilities and equipment:** Greenhouses, livestock facilities, crop plots and demonstration areas for various crop systems. No science lab or soil/water testing equipment; no IT lab; limited internet connectivity. Teacher uses personal laptop and projector for instruction.
- **Work-based learning:** Work experience placements at Marie Sharp's Fine Foods Ltd., Citrus Products of Belize Ltd. (CPBL) and Silk Grass Farms.
- **Key strengths:** Part of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Technology (MoECST) Education Upliftment Project (EUp),¹⁹ providing students with meals, uniforms, school resources, transportation support and payment of school fees; close relationship with ITVET Stann Creek for joint training activities; strong practical training including planting, greenhouse maintenance, livestock care, castrating pigs and slaughtering chickens; female students report equal participation in all tasks.
- **Additional context:** School materials and other costs not covered by the EUp programme remain the responsibility of students and their families. School bus frequently unavailable due to mechanical issues, affecting student attendance and field activities.

3.1.3 Ecumenical High School (Dangriga)

- **Location and reach:** Located in Dangriga Town. Primarily an academic secondary school with limited technical offerings; serving the entire Stann Creek District.
- **Student population:** 1,002 students.
- **Programmes offered:** Tourism and Hospitality (food and beverage service, front office operations, assistant kitchen work), Business, Electrical and Electronics Technology, and Building Construction and Technical Drawing.
- **Facilities and equipment:** Electrical programme equipment (oscilloscopes, meters) insufficient for class-size groups; kitchen and office technology for practical training insufficient for class-size groups. Limited internet connectivity.

18 In July 2025, ITVET Stann Creek received 1.4 million Belize dollars for infrastructure renovations through a partnership between the Social Investment Fund and the Caribbean Development Bank. See: «[Much Needed Renovations In The Works For Hope Creek's ITVET](#)», 7 News Belize, 17 July 2025.

19 Belize, Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Technology, «[Belize Education Upliftment Project](#)».

- ▶ **Work-based learning:** Two-week work experience placements for tourism students. Partnerships with Belize Electricity Limited (BEL), Silk Grass Farms and Sheena Engineering. Construction and electrical programmes operate without formal industry partnerships for work-based learning.
- ▶ **Key strengths:** All technical areas include basic entrepreneurship projects; tourism and business courses are sex-balanced.

3.1.4 Independence High School (Independence)

- ▶ **Location and reach:** Located in Independence Village; serving Independence Village, Placencia, Seine Bight, San Juan, Georgetown, Maya Mopan, Red Bank, Santa Rosa, San Roman, Santa Cruz, Riversdale, Maya Beach, Bladen, San Pablo, San Isidro, Bella Vista and Monkey River.
- ▶ **Student population:** 1,055 students (486 males and 569 females).
- ▶ **Programmes offered:** Woodwork and Building Construction (preliminary site inspections, foundations, walls, floors, roofs, windows, doors, stairs, electrical, drainage, plumbing), Electrical (electrical systems, power, electronics), Tourism (introduction to tourism, food and beverage, introduction to hotel and restaurant management), Agriculture (animal science, plant science, horticulture, natural resources, soils, agricultural construction, food science), Science, Business/Accounting.
- ▶ **Facilities and equipment:** Tools for woodwork, electrical, building construction and tourism practicals are insufficient for class-size groups; science lab equipment does not meet current programme requirements; insufficient computers for student research and project work. Limited internet connectivity.
- ▶ **Work-based learning:** Two-week third- and fourth-form internship placements at institutions including the polyclinic, Placencia Pharmacy and Fyffes.
- ▶ **Key strengths:** Structured internship programme begins in third form; students report practical workshops and hands-on lab work as most useful learning; entrepreneurship is encouraged; students feel confident skills will help them secure employment or start a business.
- ▶ **Additional context:** School buses are periodically unavailable due to mechanical issues, affecting student attendance. Students lack required materials and resources including textbooks.

3.1.5 Georgetown Technical High School (Georgetown area, Stann Creek/Toledo border)

- ▶ **Location and reach:** Located in Georgetown Village on the border between Stann Creek and Toledo Districts; serving communities in both districts.
- ▶ **Student population:** 711 students.
- ▶ **Programmes offered:** Tourism and Hospitality (Food, Nutrition and Health, Housekeeping, Front Desk Operations), Agriculture (cabbage and vegetables), Plumbing, Pharmacy, Science, and Entrepreneurship (budgeting, marketing, record keeping, customer service). Entrepreneurship includes small business exercises such as selling cabbage and designing product logos. The science programme does not include chemistry as the school does not have the required laboratory facilities. Students often purchase their own ingredients for practicals.
- ▶ **Facilities and equipment:** Tools for plumbing, tourism and kitchen practicals are insufficient for class-size groups; science lab equipment does not meet current programme requirements; insufficient computers for student research and project work; no audiovisual equipment for demonstrations. Limited internet connectivity.

- **Work-based learning:** Internship placements for tourism and pharmacy students at resorts (Umayá, Hamanasi, Little Harvest Caye) and clinics in Independence, Placencia and Dangriga; some internships lead to ongoing weekend jobs; students often secure their own placements; teachers assist when needed. Transportation and materials costs for work-based learning placements are the responsibility of students and their families.
- **Key strengths:** Part of MoECST EUp, providing students with meals, uniforms, school resources, transportation support and payment of school fees. Consistent internship placements leading to employment opportunities; entrepreneurship course includes practical small business exercises; tourism programme is sex-balanced.
- **Additional context:** School materials and other costs not covered by the EUp programme remain the responsibility of students and their families.

3.2 Institutional profiles – Toledo District

3.2.1 ITVET Toledo (Crique Jute Village)

- **Location and reach:** Located in Crique Jute Village; serving diverse communities across Toledo with student catchment areas across the entire district.
- **Student population:** 66 students (42 males and 24 females).
- **Programmes offered:** Tourism (front desk operations, food and beverage service, housekeeping), Agriculture (vegetable production including cabbage, carrots, sweet peppers, tomatoes, cilantro and fruits including papaya, oranges and plantains), Animal Husbandry, and Agro-processing (jams and fruit preserves using star fruit and carambola). Agroforestry and sustainable agricultural practices are covered at an introductory level; cacao grows on the agricultural plots but is not a formal part of the curriculum; practical application is not offered due to equipment unavailability. Practical assessments include castration, sanitation and role-play exercises in tourism.
- **Facilities and equipment:** Multi-building campus with classrooms, workshop spaces, demonstration kitchen and agricultural plots. Limited internet connectivity. The agriculture programme lacks sheds, farm equipment, irrigation and processing areas. Raw materials for practical training are not consistently available.
- **Work-based learning:** Partnerships with Copal Tree Lodge, Coral House Inn and other local resorts for internships and community service placements. Employers provide feedback that informs training content adjustments. Students are responsible for their own transportation to placement sites. Employers can accommodate a small number of trainees at a time. Student schedules do not always align with employer operations.
- **Key strengths:** The only ITVET facility in Toledo providing technical training; entrepreneurship training through value-added product development; employer feedback mechanisms to adjust training content.

3.2.2 Julian Cho Technical High School (Big Falls Village, Dump, Southern Highway)

- **Location and reach:** Located in Dump Village, on the Southern Highway; serving 22 communities including Aguacate, Big Falls, Blue Creek, Crique Jute, Dump Area, Golden Stream, Hicatte, Indian Creek, Jalacte, Mafredi, Medina Bank, Pueblo Viejo, Punta Gorda, San Antonio, San Jose, San Marcos, San Miguel, San Pedro Columbia, San Vicente, Santa Cruz, Santa Elena and Silver Creek.
- **Student population:** 1,001 students (491 males and 510 females); 80 per cent completion rate; 20:1 student-teacher ratio.

- ▶ **Programmes offered:** Agriculture (vegetable production including cabbage, radish and cilantro; poultry and pig farming), Agrobusiness, Industrial Arts, Construction, Business (including embroidery, sewing and food preparation projects), Hospitality and Management, and Science. The most popular programme is Hospitality and Management; least popular is Industrial Arts/Construction.
- ▶ **Facilities and equipment:** Inclusive classroom for students with disabilities; science labs with non-functioning electrical outlets requiring students to share or rotate between labs; science lab equipment insufficient for class-size groups; computer lab with insufficient computers for class-size groups; agriculture plots; poultry and piggery facilities. Limited internet connectivity. The electrical programme operates without a dedicated workshop or safety equipment.
- ▶ **Work-based learning:** Some linkages with Belize Agricultural Health Authority (BAHA), Reimers and Pesticide Control Board for presentations. Past internship programmes were discontinued as local businesses could not accommodate large student groups. No formal internship or apprenticeship arrangements currently in place.
- ▶ **Key strengths:** Serves students from a wide geographic area across Toledo; inclusive classroom; collects disaggregated data on sex, ethnicity and special needs enrolment; agriculture students learn practical skills like planting, slaughtering and castration; teachers assist students with résumé preparation; plans for a graduate database are under discussion.

3.2.3 Corazon Creek Technical High School (Corazon Creek Village, off Southern Highway)

- ▶ **Location and reach:** Located in Corazon Creek Village, approximately one hour from the main highway; serving remote indigenous villages including San Benito Poite, Jordan, Santa Teresa, Mabil Ha, San Lucas, Corazon Creek, Otoxha, Dolores, Machakilha, Crique Sarco, Sunday Wood, Conejo, Midway and Santa Anna.
- ▶ **Student population:** 351 students (209 males and 142 females); 85 per cent completion rate; 13:1 student-teacher ratio.
- ▶ **Programmes offered:** Electrical, Clothing and Textile, Building Construction, Information Technology, and Agriculture.
- ▶ **Facilities and equipment:** Basic classroom facilities; science lab operates without laboratory equipment; computer lab has insufficient computers for class-size groups. Limited internet connectivity.
- ▶ **Work-based learning:** No formal internship, apprenticeship or work-based learning arrangements currently in place.
- ▶ **Key strengths:** Part of MoECST EUP, providing students with meals, uniforms, school resources, transportation support and payment of school fees; serves many isolated Maya communities in Toledo; students feel encouraged to explore entrepreneurship.
- ▶ **Additional context:** School materials and other costs not covered by the EUP programme remain the responsibility of students and their families.

3.2.4 Tumul K'in Center of Learning (Blue Creek Village)

- ▶ **Location and reach:** Residential school in Blue Creek Village, Toledo District. Students stay ten days at school and four days at home; serving San Benito Poite, Aguacate, Punta Gorda Town, Jalacte, Bladen, San Antonio, Corazon and Blue Creek.
- ▶ **Student population:** 24 students (18 males and 6 females); 90 per cent completion rate; accepts primary school graduates and high school dropouts with transcripts. Enrolment declined following the introduction of the government's free education programme for high schools.

- **Programmes offered:** Four-year Agriculture Programme: Year 1 (vegetable gardening), Year 2 (root crops including corn, rice, banana, pineapple, cacao, yam and cassava), Year 3 (livestock including pigs, chicken and sheep), Year 4 (agroforestry with timber and fruit trees). Curriculum integrates Q'eqchi'/Mopan language, Maya Studies and entrepreneurship. Sunday clubs offer hammock making, jippi jappa basket weaving, embroidery, woodwork, copal extraction, marimba, dancing and radio programming. Cacao is cultivated but cacao processing is not taught.
- **Facilities and equipment:** Residential campus. Computer lab with insufficient computers for all students; limited internet connectivity; on-site radio station covering the entire Toledo District; kitchen facilities; livestock areas; agricultural plots. Basic honey processing equipment is available but honey is not part of the curriculum.
- **Work-based learning:** No formal external internships or apprenticeships with employers. senior entrepreneurship project in year four where students develop a business, operate in their home community and sell products including vegetables, corn, beans, chicken or pigs. The school provides piglets to students who select pig rearing; families provide financial support.
- **Key strengths:** 90 per cent completion rate; practical entrepreneurship through senior project; integration of Maya culture and indigenous languages into curriculum. Sunday clubs teach marketable cultural skills relevant to tourism; on-site radio station provides hands-on media experience. Residential model allows individualized attention with evening tutoring (7–9 p.m.); CV writing, cover letters and interview preparation are taught; home visits are conducted for student recruitment; female students receive full scholarships through Maya Education Foundation.
- **Additional context:** No school supply shops in Blue Creek; students travel to Punta Gorda for supplies. Bridge flooding periodically disrupts student travel between the school and home communities. Recruiting qualified teachers willing to reside on the compound is challenging. Most students do not have internet access at home.

3.3 Cross-cutting institutional characteristics

The following characteristics emerged across the nine assessed institutions in Stann Creek and Toledo Districts.

Governance and oversight: ITVET institutions operate under Ministry of Education oversight with ITVET national coordination. Technical high schools are government-operated institutions following national curriculum frameworks.

Instructional capacity and support: Technical instructors are required to hold pedagogical qualifications (a minimum of an Associate Degree in a trade area along with a Diploma in Competency-based Education and Training)²⁰. They must also complete 120 Continuing Professional Development hours annually through the Ministry of Education's Teacher Learning Institute Platform to maintain their teaching licence. Most instructors also hold associate degrees or diplomas in relevant technical fields with practical work experience. Student-teacher ratios range from 7:1 to 22:1 depending on institution and programme area. Several institutions report difficulty recruiting and retaining qualified agriculture and tourism instructors, citing remote locations and compensation levels as contributing factors. Industry attachment is not a requirement for instructors.

The Ministry of Education certifies para-professionals to provide classroom support for students with special education needs; parents are responsible for hiring and funding these services. Special Education Officers conduct workshops for teachers on identifying and supporting students with special education needs. Barriers to inclusion for students with disabilities are examined in Section 5.

Student demographics: Approximately 60 per cent of TVET students are male. Female participation is higher in hospitality, food processing and traditional crafts; male participation is higher in agriculture,

²⁰ Belize, Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Technology, «[Technical and Vocational Education and Training \(TVET\)](#)».

construction and electrical programmes. The majority of students come from low-income households. Indigenous Maya students comprise the largest ethnic group overall, while Garifuna students predominate in Stann Creek urban areas.

Financial accessibility: ITVET Toledo charges approximately 800 Belize dollars annually for tuition; additional fees such as computer lab fees are not included. Technical high schools charge approximately 400 to 600 dollars annually. Students and their families are responsible for uniforms, books, materials, examination fees, project materials, and transportation to school and work-based learning placements. Technical high schools participating in EUp provide students with tuition coverage, transportation and one daily meal; first-form students also receive uniforms. Some institutions offer scholarship programmes, although application processes are not well publicized to rural communities.

Assessment and certification: Assessment and certification practices vary across institutions. Some technical high schools prepare students for Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) examinations in core academic subjects; the government subsidizes three exams (English, Mathematics and one core subject). CXC is not required for diploma completion. Other institutions, such as Tumul K'in, conduct institution-based assessments through practical projects, portfolios and presentations. All technical high schools award high school diplomas upon completion. ITVETs conduct competency-based assessments aligned with their vocational programmes, awarding institutional certificates while working toward Level 1 Caribbean Vocational Qualifications (CVQ) certification. Systematic tracer studies tracking graduate employment outcomes are not conducted; institutions maintain informal contact with alumni through social media and personal networks.

3.4 Summary assessment of institutions providing TVET in the region

The nine institutions assessed serve more than 4,400 students across Stann Creek and Toledo Districts, delivering training in various technical fields including agriculture, tourism, hospitality, business and construction. Table 3.1 summarizes programme coverage in relation to the priority value chains identified for the PROSPER project.²¹

► **Table 3.1: Institutional coverage of priority value chain areas**

Institution	Tourism	Cacao	Honey	Vanilla	Cardamom	Agro-processing
ITVET Stann Creek	Yes	No	No	No	No	Jams, pepper, pickles, oils
ANRI	No	No	No	No	No	Jams, oils
Ecumenical HS	Yes	No	No	No	No	No
Independence HS	Yes	No	No	No	No	No
Georgetown THS	Yes	No	No	No	No	No
ITVET Toledo	Yes	No	No	No	No	Jams, preserves
Julian Cho THS	Yes	No	No	No	No	No
Corazon Creek THS	No	No	No	No	No	No
Tumul K'in	Clubs only	Cultivation	Equipment only	No	No	No

21 ILO, «Belize Stakeholders Identify and Prioritize Value Chains at PROSPER Project Sector Workshop», 22 August 2025.

Tourism training is available at six of nine institutions. None of the institutions currently offer training in vanilla or cardamom cultivation. Cacao is cultivated at Tumul K'in, but post-harvest handling and processing are not part of the curriculum. Tumul K'in has basic honey processing equipment; however, beekeeping and honey production are not included in the curriculum. Agro-processing programmes at ITVET Toledo, ITVET Stann Creek and ANRI cover jams, peppers, pickles, preserves and oils. Food safety certification (Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points (HACCP), International Organization for Standardization (ISO)) required for commercial operations is not available at any assessed institution. Tourism programmes do not include digital marketing, online booking systems or guiding certification.

Institutions operate multi-building campuses with classrooms, workshop spaces, agricultural plots and demonstration areas. Computer labs, science labs and kitchen facilities are in place at most institutions. Computer labs do not have sufficient computers for class-size groups, and internet connectivity does not support video-based instruction or virtual training. Science labs operate without required equipment or with non-functioning electrical systems. Agriculture programmes lack sheds, mechanized farm equipment, irrigation systems and processing facilities. Raw materials for practical training are not consistently available, and students and their families are often responsible for these costs.

Work-based learning arrangements vary across institutions. ITVET Stann Creek operates a structured system with six weeks of industry attachment followed by eight weeks of on-the-job training with teacher supervision. Georgetown Technical High School and Independence High School have established internship placements with tourism operators and employers. Other institutions report no formal work-based learning arrangements. No institution conducts formal tracer studies. Currently, graduate tracking relies on informal contact through social media and personal networks.

Institutions have established practices that support skills development, presented in table 3.2. Tumul K'in integrates Q'eqchi'/Mopan language, Maya Studies and cultural skills training into its curriculum. Julian Cho Technical High School and Toledo Community College operate inclusive classrooms;²² ITVET Stann Creek accepts students with disabilities and provides unit certifications for appropriate employment. ITVET Stann Creek maintains structured employer partnerships, with 85 per cent of trainees receiving job offers during training. Georgetown Technical High School and Independence High School facilitate internship placements that lead to employment. Tumul K'in and Georgetown Technical High School provide practical entrepreneurship projects where students develop and operate small businesses.

22 Information on inclusive classrooms was provided by the Toledo District Special Education Officer in August 2025. Toledo Community College was not directly assessed as part of this study.

► Table 3.2: Institutional practices supporting skills development

Institution	Practice
ITVET Stann Creek	Curriculum aligned with regional occupational standards (CANTA); six-week industry attachment plus eight-week on-the-job training with teacher supervision (85 per cent job placement); BTB-certified tourism instructor and former executive chef as culinary instructor
ANRI	Joint training activities with ITVET Stann Creek; practical training in greenhouse maintenance, livestock care and agro-processing
Ecumenical HS	Entrepreneurship projects across all technical areas; two-week work experience placements for tourism students
Independence HS	Structured third-form internship programme at health clinics, pharmacies and agricultural operations
Georgetown THS	Practical entrepreneurship exercises including small business development; internships leading to employment
ITVET Toledo	Entrepreneurship training through value-added product development; employer feedback informs training content
Julian Cho THS	Inclusive classrooms; practical agriculture training including planting, slaughtering and castration
Corazon Creek THS	Students encouraged to explore entrepreneurship; practical training in electrical, construction and agriculture
Tumul K'in	Integration of indigenous languages and marketable cultural skills; senior entrepreneurship project where students develop and operate a business

These institutional profiles establish the foundation for the analyses presented in Section 4, which examines curriculum and market alignment with value chain requirements, and Section 5, which addresses access and inclusion barriers affecting vulnerable groups.



► 4. Development, recognition and certification skills

This section examines curriculum alignment with labour market requirements, assessment and certification systems, instructor capacity and quality assurance mechanisms. The analysis focuses on the extent to which current training addresses the skills identified in the PROSPER value chain analysis for tourism and agroforestry (cacao, honey, vanilla and cardamom). The assessment is guided by the ILO Skills System Assessment framework²³.

4.1 Curriculum content and market alignment

This subsection assesses curriculum coverage against the competencies highlighted in the value chain analysis, outlining which skill areas are currently incorporated and which are not yet reflected in programme content at the assessed institutions.

4.1.1 Agroforestry value chain skills

The value chain analysis identified specific technical competencies required for employment and self-employment in the agroforestry sector. Table 4.1 compares these requirements with current curriculum coverage.

► **Table 4.1: Agroforestry skills – value chain requirements and curriculum coverage**

Skill area	Value chain requirement	Current curriculum coverage
Cacao – cultivation	Shade management, pruning, pest and disease control, organic practices	Basic cultivation taught at Tumul K'in (Year 2 root crops); cacao grows on ITVET Toledo agricultural plots but is not a formal part of the curriculum
Cacao – post-harvest	Fermentation techniques, drying, moisture content management, bean grading, quality control for fine-flavour markets	Not addressed at any of the assessed institutions
Cacao – processing	Chocolate production, tempering, moulding, packaging for tourism and export markets	Not addressed at any of the assessed institutions
Vanilla – cultivation	Planting, vine training, shade management, hand-pollination	Not addressed at any of the assessed institutions
Vanilla – processing	Curing techniques (killing, sweating, drying, conditioning), moisture management, grading for gourmet markets	Not addressed at any of the assessed institutions

23 ILO, ILO Skills System, 2021.

► **Table 4.1: Agroforestry skills – value chain requirements and curriculum coverage** *(Continued)*

Skill area	Value chain requirement	Current curriculum coverage
Cardamom – cultivation	Planting, shade requirements, harvesting timing	Not addressed at any of the assessed institutions
Cardamom – processing	Drying methods, quality grading, packaging	Not addressed at any of the assessed institutions
Honey – beekeeping	Hive management, colony health, seasonal management, Africanised bee handling	Not addressed at any of the assessed institutions; Tumul K'in has equipment but bee colonies are not producing sufficient quantities for training
Honey – processing	Extraction, filtering, bottling, moisture testing, beeswax product development	Not addressed at any of the assessed institutions
Certification	Organic certification, HACCP, Food handler's certificate	Not addressed at any of the assessed institutions

Cacao cultivation is included in the Tumul K'in Year 2 root crops programme. Cacao grows on the agricultural plots at ITVET Toledo but is not part of the formal curriculum. Post-harvest handling, fermentation, drying, moisture management, bean grading and quality control are not addressed at any of the assessed institutions. The existing instruction on cultivation provides a foundation upon which post-harvest training could be developed.

Vanilla and cardamom cultivation and processing are not available at any of the assessed institutions. ANRI has informal work-based learning arrangements with Silk Grass Farm, which cultivates vanilla. This existing relationship provides a potential entry point for introducing vanilla-related training content.

Tumul K'in possesses basic honey processing equipment; however, beekeeping and honey production are not part of the curriculum. Teachers reported that existing bee colonies are not producing sufficient quantities to support practical training. If colony production were strengthened, the existing equipment could support practical instruction.

The value chain analysis identified several certifications relevant to agroforestry and agro-processing employment: HACCP certification for commercial food processing and export; organic certification (USDA Organic, Fairtrade) for premium market access; and the Ministry of Health (MOH) food handler's certificate required for food service employment. Training or preparation for these certifications is not included in any agriculture or agro-processing programme. Coordination with the MOH and the Belize Agricultural Health Authority (BAHA), which regulates food safety and export certification, could enable integration of certification preparation into agro-processing programmes.

4.1.2 Tourism value chain skills

The value chain analysis identified competencies required across tourism subsectors. Table 4.2 compares these requirements with current curriculum coverage.

► **Table 4.2: Tourism skills – value chain requirements and curriculum coverage**

Skill area	Value chain requirement	Current curriculum coverage
Hospitality – front office	Reservations, check-in/check-out, guest services, complaint handling	Taught at ITVET Toledo, ITVET Stann Creek, Georgetown THS, Ecumenical HS, Independence HS
Hospitality – food and beverage	Food preparation, service standards, menu knowledge, food safety	Taught at ITVET Toledo, ITVET Stann Creek, Georgetown THS, Ecumenical HS
Hospitality – housekeeping	Room preparation, cleaning standards, inventory management	Taught at ITVET Toledo, ITVET Stann Creek, Georgetown THS, Independence HS (room preparation)
Hospitality – digital systems	Online booking platforms, property management systems, digital payment processing	Not addressed at any of the assessed institutions
Hospitality – digital marketing	Social media marketing, online reputation management, website content	Not addressed at any of the assessed institutions
Tour guiding – certification	BTB tour guide certification, first aid, safety protocols	Not addressed at any of the assessed institutions; ITVET Stann Creek employs a BTB-certified instructor but certification preparation for students is not offered
Tour guiding – cultural interpretation	Storytelling techniques, visitor engagement, cultural protocols	Tumul K'in teaches Maya cultural knowledge through Maya Studies and Sunday clubs; formal interpretation training is not offered
Tour guiding – nature/adventure	Wildlife identification, ecosystem knowledge, safety procedures, equipment handling	Not addressed at any of the assessed institutions
Garifuna cultural tourism	Garifuna history, drumming, dance, culinary traditions, cultural storytelling	Not addressed at any of the assessed institutions
Agro-tourism	Integration of agricultural production with visitor experiences, e.g. chocolate tours, farm-to-table	Not addressed at any of the assessed institutions; tourism taught separately

Tourism and hospitality programmes are offered at six institutions: ITVET Stann Creek, ITVET Toledo, Georgetown Technical High School, Ecumenical High School, Independence High School and Julian Cho Technical High School. These programmes cover front office operations, food and beverage service and housekeeping. ITVET Stann Creek employs instructors with industry experience, including a BTB-certified professional trainer and a former Executive Chef from Naia Resort.

The Belize Tourism Board (BTB) licenses tour guides through a certification process. ITVET Stann Creek employs a BTB-certified instructor; however, preparation for this certification is not currently offered to

students at any institution. This existing capacity, combined with coordination between TVET institutions and BTB, presents an opportunity to integrate certification preparation into tourism programmes.

Digital skills, including online booking platforms, property management systems, digital payment processing and social media marketing, are not included in tourism curricula. Internet connectivity limitations at several institutions affect the feasibility of digital skills instruction.

Tumul K'in offers Sunday clubs that teach marketable cultural skills relevant to tourism, such as traditional crafts, marimba and traditional dance. Formal training in cultural interpretation techniques, storytelling methods, visitor engagement or cultural protocols for tourism contexts is not part of the curriculum at any institution.

Garifuna cultural tourism content is not addressed at any of the assessed institutions. The Garifuna communities in Dangriga, Hopkins and Seine Bight are established tourism destinations. The National Garifuna Council expressed interest during consultations in partnering on cultural tourism training. This presents an opportunity to develop Garifuna cultural interpretation content in collaboration with community organizations.

Agriculture and tourism are taught as separate subjects across all institutions. Agro-tourism, which integrates agricultural production with visitor experiences, is not addressed in current curricula.

4.1.3 Cross-cutting skills

The value chain analysis identified entrepreneurship, digital literacy and business skills as essential across both tourism and agroforestry sectors. Table 4.3 summarizes current curriculum coverage.

► **Table 4.3: Cross-cutting skills – requirements and curriculum coverage**

Skill area	Requirement	Current curriculum coverage
Business planning	Market analysis, financial projections, operational planning	ITVET Stann Creek teaches business plan development; Tumul K'in senior project requires a proposal
Financial management	Bookkeeping, cash flow management, pricing strategies	Principles of Accounts is taught at Tumul K'in, Julian Cho Technical High School and Georgetown Technical High School; practical application through entrepreneurship projects at Tumul K'in and Georgetown Technical High School
Costing and pricing	Cost calculation, profit margins, competitive pricing	Basic concepts introduced through entrepreneurship projects at Georgetown Technical High School (pricing, costing exercises); Tumul K'in teachers guide students in costing for senior entrepreneurship projects
Marketing and branding	Product positioning, packaging design, brand development	Basic concepts introduced at Georgetown Technical High School (logo design, product marketing); Tumul K'in senior project includes marketing guidance from teachers; not addressed at other institutions
Digital marketing	Social media, e-commerce, online sales platforms	Not addressed at any of the assessed institutions
Business registration	Legal requirements, tax compliance, permits and licences	Not addressed at any of the assessed institutions

► **Table 4.3: Cross-cutting skills – requirements and curriculum coverage (Continued)**

Skill area	Requirement	Current curriculum coverage
Cooperative management	Governance, collective marketing, benefit-sharing	Not addressed at any of the assessed institutions
Quality control	Product standards, grading, shelf-life management, packaging requirements	Not addressed at any of the assessed institutions
Financial literacy	Budgeting, savings, credit management	Principles of Accounts taught at Tumul K'in, Julian Cho Technical High School and Georgetown Technical High School covers bookkeeping concepts; budgeting, savings and credit management are not addressed as distinct topics
Digital literacy	Computer operations, internet use, digital tools for business	All institutions except ANRI have computer rooms and offer Information Technology covering basic Microsoft Office applications. Computer shortages at institutions require students to share devices. Institutions also have outdated or non-functional computers. Limited internet connectivity minimizes instruction across all institutions.
Climate-smart agriculture	Water management, drought-resistant varieties, sustainable practices	Not addressed at any of the assessed institutions

Entrepreneurship training varies in depth and approach across institutions. Tumul K'in's senior project requires students to develop and operate a business in their home community, which provides hands-on experience with production, sales and basic financial management. Georgetown Technical High School incorporates practical exercises including selling produce and designing product logos. ITVET Stann Creek teaches formal business plan development. These activities all introduce entrepreneurship concepts.

Costing and pricing concepts are introduced through entrepreneurship projects at Georgetown Technical High School and Tumul K'in. Marketing and branding concepts, including logo design and product marketing, are addressed at these two institutions. Digital marketing, business registration requirements, cooperative management and quality control are not addressed at any of the assessed institutions.

Principles of Accounts is taught at Tumul K'in, Julian Cho Technical High School and Georgetown Technical High School, covering bookkeeping concepts. Budgeting, savings and credit management are not addressed as distinct topics. Teachers at several institutions reported that some students enter with foundational numeracy challenges, limiting the depth of financial topics taught.

All institutions except ANRI have computer rooms and offer IT covering basic Microsoft Office applications. Computer shortages at institutions require students to share devices. Institutions also have outdated or non-functional computers. As noted in section 3, limited internet connectivity minimizes IT-based instruction across all institutions.

Climate-smart agriculture practices, such as water management, drought-resistant crop varieties and sustainable agroforestry practices, are not addressed at any of the assessed institutions.

4.2 Assessment and certification systems

Assessment practices differ between ITVETs and technical high schools, reflecting their distinct mandates and certification pathways.

4.2.1 ITVET assessment

ITVETs conduct competency-based assessments aligned with their vocational programmes. Students demonstrate practical skills through hands-on assessments in workshops, kitchens and field settings. ITVET Stann Creek's curriculum is derived from the Caribbean Association of National Training Agencies regional occupational standards, providing a framework for competency-based assessment.

Both ITVETs award institutional certificates upon programme completion. Students can sit Belize National Vocational Qualifications (BzNVQ) examinations at the end of their training programme; BzNVQ is a competency-based national certification system with three levels aligned to occupational standards. BzNVQ is not required for programme completion; students who successfully complete examinations are awarded a certificate indicating the components passed.

ITVETs are also working toward CVQ Level 1 certification. CVQ provides regionally recognized credentials that facilitate labour mobility within the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) member states. Implementation is in progress, but is not yet complete at either institution.

4.2.2 Technical high school assessment

Technical high schools employ varied assessment methods like written examinations, practical projects, portfolios and presentations. Assessment approaches reflect institutional philosophies and programme requirements.

Tumul K'in uses rubric-based assessment where teacher panels evaluate student work. Students present practical projects and portfolios demonstrating competency; written examinations are not administered. This approach aligns with the school's emphasis on practical skills (the competency-based curriculum) and accommodates students who might have stronger practical than academic abilities.

Other technical high schools combine practical assessments with written tests. Students in agriculture programmes demonstrate skills through planting, animal husbandry tasks and project-based assessments aligned with the competency-based curriculum. Tourism and hospitality students complete practical assessments in simulated or real service environments. Construction and electrical students demonstrate technical competencies through hands-on projects.

All assessed technical high schools, except Tumul K'in, prepare students for CXC examinations in academic subjects. The Government of Belize subsidizes three CXC examinations per student (English, Mathematics and one additional subject). CXC certification provides regionally recognized academic credentials. CXC is not required for high school diploma completion; students who do not pass CXC examinations can still graduate with a high school diploma based on institutional assessment.

4.2.3 Industry-recognized credentials

The value chain analysis identified several industry credentials relevant to employment in priority sectors. Table 4.4 summarizes these credentials and their availability in TVET programmes.

► Table 4.4: Industry-recognized credentials

Credential	Issuing body	Relevance	Availability in TVET curricula
BTB Tour Guide Licence	Belize Tourism Board (BTB)	Required for licensed tour guiding	Not offered; ITVET Stann Creek employs a BTB-certified instructor
Boat Captain Licence (Certificate of Competency)	Belize Port Authority ²⁴	Required for operating commercial passenger vessels and marine tourism	Not offered
Food Handler's Certificate	Ministry of Health (MOH)	Required for food service employment	Not offered
Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) Certification	International certification bodies	Required for commercial food processing and export	Not offered
Organic Certification	International certification bodies, e.g. Mayacert	Required for organic product markets	Not offered
Electrical Licence	Public Utilities Commission (PUC)	Required for electrical work	ITVET Stann Creek redesigned its curriculum in partnership with PUC to align with licensing examination requirements
CVQ Level 1–2	Caribbean Association of National Training Agencies (CANTA)	Regional vocational recognition	ITVETs are working toward implementation

Industry-recognized credentials provide graduates with qualifications that employers and markets recognize. The BTB Tour Guide Licence is required to legally conduct tours in Belize. The Ministry of Health food handler's certificate is required for individuals handling, preparing or selling food for public consumption. HACCP certification is required for processed food products entering the export market. Organic certification enables access to premium markets that pay higher prices for certified products. The PUC electrical licence is required to legally perform electrical work in Belize.

ITVET Stann Creek's partnership with the PUC demonstrates how TVET institutions can integrate industry certification preparation. The electrical curriculum was redesigned in collaboration with PUC to align with licensing examination requirements, enabling graduates to pursue electrical licensing. This partnership model could inform similar coordination, for example with BTB for tour guide certification or the Ministry of Health and BAHA for food safety credentials.

24 Belize Port Authority, «Certificate of Competency (Master's License)».

With the exception of electrical licensing, TVET programmes do not prepare students for the industry credentials identified in the value chain analysis. Graduates seeking BTB tour guide certification, boat captain licensing, food handler's certificates, HACCP certification or organic certification must pursue these credentials independently after completing their training.

4.2.4 Accessibility of assessments

Assessments are conducted in English at all institutions. Students whose primary language is Q'eqchi' or Mopan Maya face language barriers on written assessments, particularly those requiring reading comprehension or written responses.

Special Education Officers in the Stann Creek and Toledo Districts advise teachers on alternative assessment strategies. The Stann Creek Special Education Officer reported that teachers can administer oral examinations for students with reading or writing difficulties. At Tumul K'in, teachers prepare separate lessons for students with learning difficulties and provide individual instruction. ITVET Stann Creek accepts students with disabilities, including from Stella Maris School, and provides unit certifications for students with special needs that recognize competency in specific skills areas, enabling graduates to pursue employment in roles such as cleaning and food service. At Ecumenical High School, teachers use alternative teaching strategies but lack adaptive tools and infrastructure.

At ANRI, Corazon Creek Technical High School, Georgetown Technical High School, Independence High School and ITVET Toledo, teachers reported efforts to promote inclusive training. These institutions face constraints like limited infrastructure, absence of adaptive tools and insufficient specialized training for teachers.

Julian Cho Technical High School and Toledo Community College have inclusive classrooms. Special Education Officers are working to establish an inclusive classroom at Corazon Creek Technical High School. No high school in Stann Creek District has an inclusive classroom.

Assistive technologies and standardized assessment accommodations for students with disabilities are not systematically available. Despite training offered by Special Education Officers, teachers reported feeling ill-equipped to support students with disabilities. Assessment accommodations depend on individual teacher initiative; institutional policies do not mandate alternative assessment formats.

4.3 Instructor qualifications and professional development

A full licence for teaching in the TVET sector requires a minimum of an Associate Degree in a trade area along with a Diploma in Competency-based Education and Training. section 3.3 established that technical instructors hold required pedagogical qualifications and must complete 120 Continuing Professional Development hours annually to maintain their teaching licence. This section examines instructor capacity in relation to value chain skill requirements.

4.3.1 Technical expertise

Instructor expertise varies by programme area and institution. Table 4.5 summarizes instructor capacity and gaps in relation to value chain requirements.

► Table 4.5: Instructor capacity by value chain area

Area	Current instructor expertise	Gaps in relation to value chain requirements
Tourism/hospitality	ITVET Stann Creek employs a BTB-certified professional tourism hospitality trainer and a former Executive Chef from an eco-luxury resort (Naia Resort). Six of nine assessed institutions offer tourism programmes; none reported instructors with equivalent industry credentials.	Digital marketing, online booking systems, tour guiding certification preparation
Agriculture/ agroforestry	Instructors at ANRI, Independence High School, ITVET Toledo, Julian Cho Technical High School, Corazon Creek Technical High School, Georgetown Technical High School and Tumul K'in possess practical experience in vegetable production and livestock management. ITVET Toledo introduces agroforestry at an introductory level.	Agroforestry value chain requirements including fine-flavour cacao production, vanilla cultivation, cardamom processing, apiary/hive management and organic certification processes
Agro-processing	Instructors at ANRI and ITVET Toledo possess skills in basic value-added processing (jams, preserves, coconut products). The agro-processing instructor position at ITVET Stann Creek is vacant; the Ministry of Agriculture provides temporary coverage.	Processing skills for priority agroforestry products (cacao fermentation, honey extraction, vanilla curing, cardamom processing); HACCP/food safety certification; export-grade processing; quality control for premium markets
Cultural tourism	Tumul K'in employs teachers with Maya cultural knowledge who facilitate Maya Studies and Sunday clubs. No other assessed institution offers cultural tourism content.	Formal cultural interpretation training; Garifuna cultural content
Business/ entrepreneurship	Instructors across assessed institutions possess skills in basic business concepts including budgeting, marketing, record keeping and customer service. Tumul K'in employs an instructor with accounting industry experience.	Digital marketing, cooperative management

The value chain analysis identified technical requirements for both tourism and agroforestry that extend beyond current instructor capacity in all programme areas.

ITVET Stann Creek's employment of a BTB-certified tourism hospitality trainer and former Executive Chef at an eco-luxury resort illustrates a pathway for integrating industry expertise into TVET instruction. The agro-processing instructor vacancy at ITVET Stann Creek, currently covered by the Ministry of Agriculture on a temporary basis, also indicates difficulties in maintaining specialized technical capacity.

Tumul K'in's existing instructor capacity in Maya cultural knowledge provides a foundation for cultural tourism training. Training instructors in cultural interpretation pedagogy would enable the delivery of skills for tour guiding, visitor engagement and heritage site interpretation, which are employment areas identified in the tourism value chain. Instructor expertise in Garifuna cultural content is not present at any assessed institution; however, community-based cultural knowledge holders in Hopkins and Seine Bight represent a potential resource for developing this capacity.

4.3.2 Professional development needs

Instructors at all assessed institutions expressed interest in technical upskilling during consultations. Areas of interest include:

- food safety standards and HACCP certification processes;
- organic farming practices and certification requirements;
- value-added processing techniques for premium markets;
- climate-smart agriculture and water management;
- sustainable tourism practices;
- digital tools for instruction and business applications;
- updated hospitality industry standards;
- strategies for inclusive teaching and supporting students with disabilities.

Current professional development through the Teacher Learning Institute Platform addresses pedagogical requirements for teaching licence maintenance. The platform provides courses on instructional methods, classroom management and educational theory. Technical upskilling in industry-specific competencies is not systematically available through this platform. Special Education Officers in both districts conduct workshops for teachers; however, interviewed instructors reported feeling ill-equipped to support students with disabilities despite available training.

Mechanisms for industry attachment, such as temporary placements with employers to update technical skills and industry knowledge, are not in place. Instructors do not have structured opportunities to work alongside industry practitioners, observe current practices or acquire new technical competencies through workplace experience. Industry attachment is not a requirement for instructors, and institutions reported no formal arrangements for technical upskilling through employer partnerships.

4.3.3 Recruitment and retention

Assessed institutions reported difficulty recruiting and retaining instructors with specialized industry experience. Contributing factors include:

- **Remote locations:** Schools in rural Toledo and outlying Stann Creek areas face challenges attracting candidates who might prefer urban postings. Tumul K'in, a residential school in Blue Creek Village, requires teachers to reside on the compound, which limits the candidate pool.
- **Compensation levels:** Institutions reported that salary levels make it difficult to compete with industry employment for candidates with specialized technical skills. Instructors with industry experience in tourism, agriculture or trades can often earn more in private sector positions.

Current vacancies illustrate these recruitment constraints. The agro-processing instructor position at ITVET Stann Creek is vacant; the Ministry of Agriculture provides temporary coverage to maintain programme delivery. The carpentry instructor position at ITVET Stann Creek is also vacant; training is delivered through an apprenticeship arrangement with a practising carpenter. These arrangements maintain programme continuity, but represent interim solutions rather than permanent staffing.

4.4 Quality assurance mechanisms

Quality assurance operates through Ministry of Education oversight and institutional management. This section examines mechanisms for ensuring training quality and relevance to labour market requirements.

4.4.1 Oversight and standards

All TVET institutions operate under the Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Technology (MoECST) supervision. The Ministry establishes curriculum frameworks, teacher qualification requirements and institutional operating standards.

Technical high schools follow national curriculum frameworks that specify subject content and learning outcomes. Individual institutions have some flexibility in implementation, particularly for practical components. ITVET Stann Creek's curriculum is aligned with CANTA regional occupational standards, providing an external reference point for competency requirements.

Institutional management (principals, managers and department heads) oversees day-to-day programme delivery. Managers conduct classroom observations, review assessment results and address operational issues. The quality of institutional management varies; institutions with experienced, engaged leadership demonstrate stronger programme coherence.

4.4.2 Employer engagement

Employer involvement in curriculum design and quality assurance varies across institutions. Table 4.6 summarizes employer engagement mechanisms.

► **Table 4.6: Employer engagement by institution**

Institution	Engagement mechanism	Nature of input
ITVET Stann Creek	Partnerships with Marie Sharp's Fine Foods Ltd., Silk Grass Farms, tourism operators in Hopkins and Placencia	Feedback through work-based learning; employers are recognized at graduations
ITVET Toledo	Partnerships with Copal Tree Lodge and Coral House Inn	Employer feedback informs training adjustments
Tumul K'in	Board of Directors includes business representatives (Ixcaao), Toledo Alcalde Association	Input on curriculum direction and community relevance
Georgetown THS	Relationships with resorts (Umay, Hamanasi, Little Harvest Caye) and clinic placement sites	Informal feedback through internship arrangements
Independence HS	Internship placements at polyclinic, Placencia Pharmacy, Fyffes	Feedback through work experience placements
Julian Cho THS	Past linkages with BAHA, Reimers, Pesticide Control Board	Presentations to students; internship programmes discontinued
ANRI	Linkages with Marie Sharp's Fine Foods Ltd., CPBL, Silk Grass Farms	Work experience placements
Ecumenical HS	Partnerships with BEL, Silk Grass Farms, Sheena Engineering	Two-week work experience for tourism students
Corazon Creek THS	No formal engagement	No formal internship, apprenticeship or work-based learning arrangements

ITVET Stann Creek maintains the most structured employer engagement among the assessed institutions. Partnerships with Marie Sharp's Fine Foods Ltd., Silk Grass Farms and tourism operators in Hopkins and Placencia provide work-based learning placements and ongoing feedback. Students

complete six weeks of industry attachment followed by eight weeks of on-the-job training, while teachers conduct three supervisory visits per placement. Employers are invited to graduation ceremonies, where business representatives deliver speeches and present awards. The institution reported an 85 per cent job placement rate during on-the-job training.

Tumul K'in's governance structure incorporates employer and community perspectives. The Board of Directors includes representatives from Ixcacao (a chocolate producer), the Toledo Alcalde Association and community organizations. This structure provides a formal mechanism for stakeholder input into institutional direction.

Georgetown Technical High School and Independence High School have established internship placements that lead to employment opportunities. ITVET Toledo maintains partnerships with Copal Tree Lodge and Coral House Inn for tourism related internships; employer feedback also informs training adjustments. ANRI and Ecumenical High School maintain employer linkages for work experience placements. Julian Cho Technical High School discontinued internship programmes as local businesses could not accommodate large student groups. Corazon Creek Technical High School has no formal employer engagement arrangements.

At institutions without structured partnerships, employer engagement is informal and relationship-dependent. Individual teachers maintain connections with local businesses, but these arrangements depend on personal relationships rather than institutional systems.

Formal advisory committees enabling employer input into curriculum design, assessment validation or graduate competency review are not established at any assessed institution.

4.4.3 Graduate outcome tracking

Informal mechanisms to track graduate outcomes are present across institutions, although no assessed institution conducts formal tracer studies to systematically monitor employment outcomes.

ITVET Stann Creek maintains a WhatsApp group that remains open for three years after graduation to informally track student progress, although staff indicated that no structured surveys are conducted. The institution has received guidance materials on tracer study design from the Ministry of Education, but reported needing training to implement systematic tracking.

Meanwhile, ITVET Toledo maintains a tracking chart but experiences low response rates due to frequent changes in graduates' contact information; teachers also expressed interest in a formal digital system to record and analyse employment outcomes.

Julian Cho Technical High School reported that the creation of a graduate database is under discussion. If implemented, this database would provide a foundation for systematic tracking.

Across the other institutions assessed, teachers maintain contact with former students through social media platforms, primarily Facebook and WhatsApp, receiving voluntary updates about employment, further education or business activities. Some teachers encounter former graduates in their communities and receive informal updates, while employer feedback during ongoing partnerships provides minimal information on graduate performance.

These informal approaches provide anecdotal insights but do not generate systematic data on employment rates, sectors of employment, earnings or alignment between training and the labour market.

The absence of graduate outcome data limits programme effectiveness assessment, skills gap identification, evidence-based curriculum revision and institutional accountability to stakeholders including government, prospective students and development partners. Several institutional leaders expressed interest in implementing systematic tracking if provided with standardized tools, training and technical assistance. However, they currently lack capacity to independently design and implement such tracking. Table 4.7 summarizes current graduate tracking practices and their limitations.

► **Table 4.7: Graduate tracking practices**

Method	Description	Limitations
Social media contact	Teachers maintain contact with former students through Facebook or WhatsApp and personal accounts	Voluntary, self-selected sample; no systematic data collection
Personal networks	Teachers encounter former students in communities and receive informal updates	Anecdotal, incomplete coverage
Employer feedback	Some employers report on graduate performance during ongoing partnerships	Limited to students placed with partner employers
Graduation follow-up	Some institutions contact recent graduates informally	Not systematic; coverage varies

4.5 Summary assessment of development, recognition and certification of skills

The nine assessed institutions deliver training to over 4,400 students across Stann Creek and Toledo Districts. Programme offerings in tourism and hospitality, agriculture, agro-processing and construction trades provide a foundation upon which value chain-aligned training can be developed. ITVET Stann Creek's structured employer partnerships, industry-experienced instructors and PUC certification alignment demonstrate practices that strengthen the connection between training and employment outcomes.

The PROSPER value chain analysis identified skill requirements in fine-flavour cacao processing, vanilla and cardamom cultivation, beekeeping, food safety certification, digital marketing, tour guiding and cultural interpretation that are not addressed in current curricula of the assessed institutions. Industry-recognized credentials relevant to these value chains are not integrated into the programmes.

Instructor expertise aligns with current programme content. ITVET Stann Creek employs a BTB-certified tourism hospitality trainer and former Executive Chef from an eco-luxury resort; technical competencies for other priority value chain areas are not present among instructors at the other assessed institutions. Formal mechanisms for employer input into curriculum design and graduate outcome tracking are not established; current practices rely on informal relationships and social media contact with alumni.

These findings indicate that the TVET system in southern Belize has institutional capacity and programme coverage that can serve as entry points for strengthening skills development. Aligning training with priority value chains will require targeted investments in curriculum development, industry credential integration, instructor upskilling and labour market feedback systems.

Section 5 examines access and inclusion barriers affecting women, youth, persons with disabilities and indigenous communities in accessing TVET and transitioning to the labour market.



► 5. Inclusiveness and access to the labour market

This section examines barriers affecting access to TVET and transitions to the labour market for women, persons with disabilities (PWD), indigenous communities and rural populations in Stann Creek and Toledo Districts. The analysis draws on consultations with 12 community organizations, Special Education Officers from both districts and institutional stakeholders. Over 200 individuals participated in focus groups and consultations. The findings were validated during the stakeholder validation session held on 22 November 2025.

A summary of the findings, by barrier category, is presented in table 5.1. For each of the identified barriers, the table lists the severity of the barrier and the population groups affected by it. Severity reflects stakeholder rankings and consultation findings. Barriers vary across communities and individual circumstances.

► **Table 5.1: Barriers affecting access to skills development and labour market transition**

Category	Barrier	Severity	Population groups affected
Financial and logistical	Training costs (fees, materials, equipment)	High	Women, PWD, indigenous communities, rural populations
	Transportation costs and availability	High	Women, indigenous communities, rural populations
	Distance from training centres	High	Indigenous communities, rural populations
Family and cultural	Language	High	Q'eqchi'/Mopan speakers, indigenous communities (Maya), particularly older women
	Childcare responsibilities	High	Women with young children
	Traditional expectations/ household permission	Moderate	Some Maya communities (women)
Institutional and resource	Weak foundational skills (literacy, numeracy, digital)	High	PWD, indigenous communities, women with limited schooling
	Inadequate equipment and tools	High	All groups (affects training quality)
	Curriculum–industry mismatch	High	All groups (affects labour market relevance)
	Limited technology and internet	Moderate	Rural populations, indigenous communities
Accessibility	Physical infrastructure	High	Persons with disabilities
	Assistive technologies and learning materials	High	Persons with disabilities
	Support services (para-professionals, interpreters)	High	Persons with disabilities

5.1 Enrolment patterns by demographic group

5.1.1 Data availability

All assessed institutions collect enrolment data disaggregated by sex. Julian Cho Technical High School also collects data on ethnicity and special needs status. Enrolment data disaggregated by disability status, indigenous identity, household income level or geographic origin are not collected at the other eight institutions. Without these data, institutions cannot quantitatively assess participation patterns across demographic groups or monitor progress toward inclusion.

5.1.2 Sex patterns

Table 5.2 summarizes student enrolment by sex at assessed institutions. Female students comprise 48 per cent of total enrolment at the seven institutions that reported sex-disaggregated data during the consultations. Female participation varies by programme area; table 5.3 summarizes the programme area enrolment patterns by sex.

► **Table 5.2: Student enrolment by institution and sex**

Institution	Male	Female	Total	Female (%)
ITVET Stann Creek	116	38	154	25%
ANRI	50	6	56	11%
Independence HS	486	569	1,055	54%
ITVET Toledo	42	24	66	36%
Julian Cho THS	491	510	1,001	51%
Corazon Creek THS	209	142	351	40%
Tumul K'in	18	6	24	25%
Total (where reported)	1,412	1,295	2,707	48%
Ecumenical HS	n/a	n/a	1,002	n/a
Georgetown THS	n/a	n/a	711	n/a

Note: n/a = data not available. Sex-disaggregated enrolment data were not reported during the consultations at Ecumenical High School and Georgetown Technical High School.

► **Table 5.3: Programme enrolment patterns by area and sex**

Programme area	Sex pattern
Agriculture	Predominantly male
Construction	Predominantly male
Electrical	Predominantly male
Tourism/hospitality	Higher female than male participation; sex-balanced at Ecumenical HS and Georgetown THS
Agro-processing	Higher female than male participation
Traditional crafts	Predominantly female
Business	Sex-balanced at Ecumenical HS and Georgetown THS

The assessed institutions reported that female participation is higher in hospitality, food processing and traditional crafts programmes. Male participation is higher in agriculture, construction and electrical programmes. Ecumenical High School and Georgetown Technical High School reported sex-balanced enrolment in tourism and business courses.

5.1.3 Disability

Two institutions have established provisions for students with disabilities. Julian Cho Technical High School operates an inclusive classroom with adaptive workstations. ITVET Stann Creek accepts students with disabilities from Stella Maris School and provides unit certifications that recognize competency in specific skill areas, enabling graduates to pursue employment in roles such as cleaning and food service. Special Education Officers are working to establish an inclusive classroom at Corazon Creek Technical High School, and also reported that Toledo Community College operates an inclusive classroom; this institution was not included in the current assessment.

The Statistical Institute of Belize estimates 43,700 persons with disabilities in Belize, representing approximately 10 per cent of the population.²⁵ Recording disability status at enrolment would enable institutions to assess representation, plan for accommodations and monitor progress toward inclusion. Box 5.1 summarizes the current situation of inclusive classrooms in Belize.

Box 5.1: Inclusive classrooms in the Belizean context

As noted in section 3, two tertiary institutions in southern Belize operate inclusive classrooms. In this context, inclusive classrooms refer to learning environments where teachers have received some training in special education but are not specialists. These classrooms can incorporate low-cost sensory accommodations such as fidget toys, stress balls, weighted lap pads and sensory corners with soft mats or bean bags. Due to resource constraints, higher-cost assistive technology such as noise-reducing headphones, assistive listening devices and hearing aid-compatible microphones is typically not available.

25 UNICEF Belize, «Financing the Leave No One Behind Agenda», 27 March 2024.

5.1.4 Indigenous and rural participation

The assessed institutions in Toledo and Stann Creek serve large indigenous and rural catchment areas. Toledo institutions (Julian Cho Technical High School, Corazon Creek Technical High School, Tumul K'in, ITVET Toledo) and ANRI serve catchment areas that include predominantly Maya communities. In Stann Creek District, Garifuna comprise 27.5 per cent of the population and are concentrated in Dangriga, Hopkins and Seine Bight. ITVET Stann Creek and Ecumenical High School, both located in Dangriga, serve these communities. Students from Hopkins and Seine Bight travel to Dangriga to access these institutions.

Students from remote villages attend institutions across both districts. Corazon Creek Technical High School serves isolated rural communities including San Benito Poite, Jordan, Santa Teresa, Mabil Ha, Otoxha, Dolores, Machakilha, Crique Sarco, Sunday Wood, Conejo, Midway and Santa Anna. Tumul K'in operates as a residential school, enabling students from distant villages to access training.

Julian Cho Technical High School collects enrolment data disaggregated by ethnicity; other institutions do not record indigenous identity at enrolment. Enrolment data disaggregated by geographic origin are not collected at any assessed institution. Recording ethnicity and geographic origin would enable institutions to assess participation patterns and monitor access for indigenous and rural populations.

5.1.5 Completion patterns

Completion rates reported by institutions are as follows:

- ITVET Stann Creek: 95 per cent;
- Tumul K'in: 90 per cent;
- Corazon Creek Technical High School: 85 per cent;
- Julian Cho Technical High School: 80 per cent;
- ANRI: 60 per cent.

ITVET Stann Creek provides multiple access pathways. The institution enrolls high school dropouts and primary school graduates into its pre-vocational programme, providing a re-entry pathway for students who have left formal education. The institution accepts older students, including police officers and members of the Belize Defence Force, and offers Saturday classes for the elder care programme. The National Garifuna Council (Seine Bight) reported that ITVET Stann Creek has responded to requests from adult learners in the community by accommodating courses for groups seeking skills training for employment.

Teachers reported that students from low-income households face a higher dropout risk, particularly during the first year, when families assess whether they can sustain training costs. Seasonal agricultural demands affect attendance among students from farming households during planting and harvest periods. Female students with young children face additional challenges; pregnancies and childcare responsibilities contribute to programme departures. No institution provides childcare support for students with young children. ITVET Stann Creek is the only assessed institution offering weekend classes; evening classes and other flexible scheduling options are not available at any of the assessed institutions.

5.2 Barriers affecting women

Consultations with community organizations identified barriers affecting adult women seeking training and labour market opportunities. The women consulted are outside formal education systems (ITVETs and technical high schools), therefore the support mechanisms available to enrolled students, such as EUP and government-subsidized CXC examinations, do not extend to this population. Barriers fall into five categories: financial barriers, childcare responsibilities, transportation and mobility, information access, and skills gaps affecting women's transition to the labour market. Table 5.4 lists the organizations that participated in the consultations.

► **Table 5.4: Community organizations consulted (predominantly women)**

Organization	Location	Focus area
Toledo Maya Women's Council	Punta Gorda Town and approximately 20 villages	Women's empowerment, legal support, economic development
Productive Organization for Women in Action (POWA) Dangriga	Dangriga, Hopkins, Maya Center	Violence prevention, women's support services
Productive Organization for Women in Action (POWA) Dangriga	Dangriga, Hopkins, Maya Center	Violence prevention, women's support services
Maya Bags	Toledo District	Artisan craft production and sales (bags, carvings, embroidery)
Humana	Bella Vista	Community development, youth and women's support
National Garifuna Council (NGC Hopkins)	Hopkins	Cultural preservation, community development
National Garifuna Council (NGC Seine Bight)	Seine Bight	Cultural preservation, community development
Indian Creek Maya Women's Group	Indian Creek	Cultural tourism (chocolate making, traditional cooking, calabash service, craft sales, hosting of visitors for hands-on cultural learning sessions)
Ligimeri Haruga Farmer Group	Barranco	Agroforestry, vanilla cultivation; also grow cacao, cassava, plantain, coconut
San Lucas Women's Copal Tree Group	San Lucas	Agroforestry, copal resin harvesting and byproduct development (incense, oil, ointments)
Corazon Creek Chicken Group	Corazon Creek	Poultry production (local chickens), egg production
The Toledo Institute for Development and Environment (TIDE)	Punta Gorda	Conservation, ecotourism training, business development support for women's groups

5.2.1 Financial barriers

Financial barriers affect women across multiple phases: accessing training, sustaining participation and transitioning to the labour market. Table 5.5 summarizes these barriers.

► **Table 5.5: Financial barriers affecting adult women's participation in training**

Cost category	Timing	Effect on participation	Organizations reporting
Training fees	Pre-enrolment	Creates access barrier; women require free training or scholarships to participate	All groups consulted
Materials, supplies and equipment	Recurring/post-training	Unpredictable costs cannot be budgeted; women lack tools and equipment to apply skills after training	All groups consulted
Transportation	Weekly/daily	Cumulative daily costs over extended programmes become prohibitive	All groups consulted
Access to finance (startup capital and credit)	Post-training	Training does not lead to income generation without capital for equipment, inventory and operating costs; formal credit inaccessible due to high interest rates, short repayment terms, collateral requirements and age discrimination	All groups consulted reported a need for startup capital; six groups reported specific barriers to formal credit: POWA, NGC Hopkins, NGC Seine Bight, Indian Creek Maya Women's Group, TIDE, Humana
Opportunity costs	Throughout	Time in training cannot be spent on income-generating activities or household responsibilities	10 of the 12 groups: Humana, Ligemeri Haruga, POWA, Toledo Maya Women's Council, NGC Hopkins, NGC Seine Bight, TIDE, Indian Creek, Maya Bags, Corazon Creek Chicken Group

The consultations revealed strong interest in skills development across all groups. Women demonstrated a clear understanding of the training and resources required to strengthen their livelihoods. Groups also identified specific financial barriers and practical measures to address them.

Financial barriers operate cumulatively. Training fees and transportation costs affect initial access; materials and opportunity costs affect sustained participation; and lack of access to finance affects women's ability to apply acquired skills as entrepreneurs in the labour market.

Training fees and transportation emerged as cross-cutting access barriers. All consulted groups reported that the costs associated with training are not affordable for women from low-income households.

Transportation adds to this barrier, particularly for women in remote communities where bus services are infrequent or where fares accumulate over extended programme durations.

Materials, supplies and equipment constitute barriers both during and after training. Several organizations reported that unpredictable materials costs pose challenges, as families cannot budget for recurring expenses on short notice. Multiple groups identified specific tools required to apply their skills: sewing machines, weaving equipment, food processing tools and agricultural implements. Without access to post-training equipment, translating skills acquisition into income generation is difficult.

Opportunity costs affect women's ability to sustain their participation in training. Ten of the twelve groups consulted reported constraints related to work, childcare or household responsibilities. Childcare responsibilities are discussed further in section 5.2.2. POWA, the Ligemer Haruga Farmer Group and the Indian Creek Maya Women's Group reported that attending training results in lost income from work or enterprise activities. All groups indicated preferences for flexible training arrangements, whether evening or weekend sessions, shorter programmes or training delivered in their villages.

Access to funding for enterprise development emerged as a barrier to labour market transition. All consulted groups reported the need for startup capital. Several expressed a preference for grants or equipment provision rather than loans, citing irregular income and concerns about debt. Where women have sought formal credit, they encountered barriers such as collateral requirements that exclude those without land tenure, short repayment terms and lending restrictions affecting women over 50 years of age.

These findings point to practical measures that can be incorporated into training programme design. These include: shorter certificate courses and modular programmes to reduce accumulated costs; village-based delivery to reduce transportation requirements; flexible scheduling to reduce opportunity costs for women with work and household responsibilities; equipment provision linked to programme completion; and financial literacy and business skills training to strengthen women's capacity to manage enterprise finances.

5.2.2 Childcare responsibilities

Childcare was identified as a barrier by six of the twelve women's groups consulted. Training schedules that operate during standard working hours conflict with childcare responsibilities. Maya Bags reported that women cannot commit to full-time training because they have small children or grandchildren to care for. POWA reported that women who take care of children need childcare assistance to attend formal training. NGC Hopkins similarly reported that daycare for children and grandchildren would be needed for women to attend training programmes. Humana observed that women lack structures in which they can learn while managing children and household responsibilities, and recommended that women should be allowed to bring their children to training.

TIDE reported that women have childcare responsibilities that prevent them from working outside their homes, and noted that identifying livelihood options compatible with women's social roles and responsibilities is critical. TIDE recommended that women be offered opportunities that do not require full-time commitment.

Traditional support systems are increasingly limited. NGC Hopkins reported that economic pressures require multiple family members to seek wage employment, reducing the availability of extended family members for daytime childcare.

Groups identified practical scheduling solutions. The Corazon Creek Chicken Group reported that members could attend training for a few hours a day, in the evenings or on Saturdays. The Indian Creek Maya Women's Group reported willingness to attend training if scheduled during off-peak periods. As noted in section 5.2.1, all groups indicated a preference for flexible training arrangements like evening or weekend sessions, shorter programmes or training delivered in their villages.

These findings indicate that childcare constraints can be addressed through flexible programme design, such as scheduling to accommodate women's responsibilities and delivery options that reduce time away

from households. Furthermore, the Home of Indigenous Arts, Maya Bags, the San Lucas Women's Copal Tree Group and the Toledo Maya Women's Council described a cascade training approach, whereby younger women with higher levels of education attend formal training and return to share their skills with group members. These groups' willingness to use this model offers a potential pathway for reaching women who face barriers to attending training directly.

5.2.3 Transportation and mobility

Transportation barriers were reported across all groups consulted, with constraints varying by location and community.

Geographic access

Villages in Toledo District face transportation challenges related to infrastructure and seasonal conditions. Toledo District receives the highest rainfall in Belize, with the rainy season beginning in early May in the south and extending through November.²⁶ During this period, unpaved roads to remote villages can become difficult to pass or even impassable.

Groups across Toledo District reported that remote locations and infrequent public transport services limit access to training offered in district centres. The Corazon Creek Chicken Group, the San Lucas Women's Copal Tree Group, the Ligemeri Haruga Farmer Group (Barranco), Maya Bags, Humana and the Toledo Maya Women's Council reported that remote location, poor road conditions and infrequent public transport service affect their members' ability to reach training facilities. These groups reported that buses do not operate daily to many villages, and that training facilities in district centres are often hours away.

Coastal Garifuna communities in Stann Creek District have more regular bus services and year-round road access than remote inland villages. However, access constraints remain. NGC Seine Bight reported that the village is located off the main highway, which presents challenges for members seeking training opportunities.

Schedule coordination

Where public transportation is available, schedules do not always align with training hours. Maya Bags and the Home of Indigenous Arts reported that buses return to villages by mid-day, leaving limited time for women to attend training in Punta Gorda Town. The Home of Indigenous Arts noted that buses leave town at 11 a.m., providing insufficient time for women to attend programmes offered during standard working hours or to use equipment at the organization's office in town.

These scheduling constraints intersect with work and household responsibilities. The Corazon Creek Chicken Group, the Toledo Maya Women's Council, POWA and the Ligemeri Haruga Farmer Group reported that standard weekday training schedules conflict with other obligations. Transportation costs, discussed in section 5.2.1, compound these geographic access and scheduling constraints for all groups consulted.

Household considerations

Beyond physical transportation, women's mobility for training is affected by household dynamics. TIDE reported that in some communities, husbands and fathers do not permit daughters and wives to work or attend training outside the home. Maya Bags reported that cultural expectations in some households prioritize women's presence at home for meal preparation and domestic responsibilities.

Some organizations have developed approaches to address these dynamics. The Home of Indigenous Arts reported that the organization's leader conducts home visits to discuss training opportunities

26 Belize, National Meteorological Service of Belize, «Climate Summary».

with family members, explaining potential income benefits to gain household support for women's participation.

Household dynamics vary across communities. NGC Seine Bight reported that Garifuna communities are transitioning toward more balanced household decision-making, with women taking a more active role in decisions about training and employment. NGC Hopkins reported that several participants, particularly single mothers, make independent decisions about training.

These findings indicate that women's access to training is shaped by geographic, scheduling, financial and household factors. Village-based delivery and flexible scheduling can address transportation and mobility barriers, while approaches such as those used by the Home of Indigenous Arts demonstrate how organizations can engage households in supporting women's participation.

5.2.4 Information access

The consulted women's groups expressed interest in learning about training opportunities and identified specific factors that affect how information reaches their members. Institutions rely primarily on school-based recruitment; therefore, information about TVET opportunities does not consistently reach women in the remote and coastal communities of Stann Creek and Toledo, particularly adult women who are not connected to formal education systems.

Language

For Maya women, language impacts access to information and training. The Home of Indigenous Arts, Maya Bags and the San Lucas Women's Copal Tree Group reported that most of their older members do not speak or read English. Training information, application forms and programme documentation in English present challenges for women with limited English proficiency. These groups reported that information delivered through village-based sessions conducted in Q'eqchi' or Mopan Maya reaches women when written materials do not.

Literacy

Literacy levels vary across groups and affect women's ability to access training and transition to the labour market. In Maya women's groups, literacy challenges were consistently reported, particularly among older members. Maya Bags, the Home of Indigenous Arts, the San Lucas Women's Copal Tree Group, the Corazon Creek Chicken Group and the Toledo Maya Women's Council all reported that many older women cannot read, write or work with numbers. Humana, which provides training to women's groups across Toledo and Stann Creek Districts, similarly reported that many older women in the communities they serve cannot read, write, work with numbers or use computers, which hinders their learning of business skills such as costing, pricing, accounting and marketing.

The Indian Creek Maya Women's Group reported that elders prefer Maya language with translation, while younger women handle English communication with guests. The Ligemer Haruga Farmer Group identified literacy, numeracy and technology as areas where members need support.

Garifuna women's groups reported higher levels of literacy. The NGC (Hopkins and Seine Bight) and POWA reported that most members have at least a high school education and can read and write.

Across all groups, women with limited literacy rely on verbal communication and in-person sessions to receive information about training opportunities. Groups reported that the best approach is visual demonstrations delivered in their own language, with younger members who have attended high school bringing knowledge back to the group.

Digital literacy

Many women have access to cell phones and some have access to computers. However, digital literacy affects women across both Maya and Garifuna communities. Groups reported limited familiarity with using digital tools for business purposes. The NGC (Hopkins and Seine Bight) reported that women lack experience navigating online platforms needed to access market opportunities and business support

information. Maya Bags and the Toledo Maya Women's Council reported that members would benefit from training in computer skills. These limitations affect women's ability to participate in online training, access information shared through digital channels and execute online business processes, such as filing taxes, applying for grants, and so on.

Community networks

Women's organizations maintain established networks across Toledo and Stann Creek Districts. The Toledo Maya Women's Council serves over 500 women in Punta Gorda Town and approximately 20 villages. The Home of Indigenous Arts conducts home visits throughout member villages. The National Garifuna Council operates chapters nationwide, with southern chapters located in Hopkins, Seine Bight, Punta Gorda, Georgetown and Barranco.²⁷ POWA conducts outreach in primary schools, high schools and villages including Hopkins and Maya Center. These networks represent potential channels for TVET outreach. Systematic partnerships between TVET institutions and women's organizations for information dissemination would extend reach to women not connected to formal education systems.

5.2.5 Skills gaps affecting women's transition to the labour market

The consulted women's groups possess production skills and traditional knowledge relevant to priority value chains in tourism and agroforestry. Groups identified specific business and technical skills that would strengthen their ability to transition from training to the labour market. Table 5.6 summarizes the skills gaps identified through the consultations and their effect on women's economic participation.

► **Table 5.6: Skills gaps affecting women's economic participation**

Skill area	Current status	Effect on economic participation
Costing and pricing	Women fix product prices based on what customers can afford, rather than calculating actual costs	Income might not cover costs of production
Financial management	Women have difficulty separating business and household finances	Business revenue is used for household expenses; insufficient reinvestment
Market access	Women have limited knowledge of distribution channels beyond local sales	Sales are confined to local markets at low volumes
Business formalization	Women lack information about registration requirements, documentation for loans, tax obligations	Cannot access formal credit or government support programmes
Digital marketing	Women have limited computer skills and unfamiliarity with online platforms	Cannot access online marketplaces or reach customers beyond the immediate area
Value-added processing	Women have production skills but limited processing, packaging and branding skills	Raw products are sold at lower prices than processed goods

27 National Garifuna Council, «[National Garifuna Council Branch President's Contact Information](#)», Facebook, 25 October 2024.

Agricultural and agroforestry skills

Women from agricultural groups reported strong production and diverse production skills across multiple crops and livestock systems. The Ligemeri Haruga Farmer Group reported that members can cultivate and harvest vanilla, cacao, cassava, plantain and coconut. The San Lucas Women's Copal Tree Group reported knowledge in harvesting copal resin and its traditional uses. The Corazon Creek Chicken Group reported local chicken-raising skills passed down through traditional knowledge. The Indian Creek Maya Women's Group reported skills in cacao processing and chocolate making. POWA reported that members grow cassava, plantains and pineapples. The Toledo Maya Women's Council reported that members engage in farming and livestock rearing, including poultry, pigs and cattle, and produce coconut oil and coconut bread.

These groups identified gaps in post-harvest processing, packaging and marketing skills required to access higher-value markets. The Ligemeri Haruga Farmer Group identified a need for training in curing and drying vanilla, as members do not have access to processing facilities. The San Lucas Women's Copal Tree Group identified a need for training in turning copal resin into byproducts such as incense, oil and ointments for commercial sale. The Corazon Creek Chicken Group identified a need for training in animal health, sanitation and packaging products for sale beyond the village. The Indian Creek Maya Women's Group reported aspirations to expand into the production of packaged chocolate, identifying needs in hygiene, packaging and marketing skills. The Toledo Maya Women's Council reported members' interest in learning how to make value-added coconut products such as coconut milk and coconut flour, as well as sauces, syrups, jams and jellies from agricultural products. They also identified the absence of centralized selling locations in Toledo District as a barrier to reaching buyers beyond immediate villages.

Tourism skills

Garifuna and Maya communities possess rich cultural knowledge and traditional practices relevant to cultural tourism. The NGC (Seine Bight and Hopkins) reported that members practise singing, dancing, storytelling and music. Both chapters expressed interest in training on how to package and market cultural experiences for tourist markets. The Seine Bight chapter also has a multipurpose centre to host Garifuna cultural performances for tourists, including visitors from nearby Placencia. Members reported that the facility is currently underutilized and identified the need for equipment and technology to support performances of live music, song and dance, as well as capacity-building in performance delivery and tourism engagement.

The Indian Creek Maya Women's Group operates a cultural tourism enterprise offering chocolate making, traditional cooking and craft sales to visitors from resorts and universities. The Toledo Maya Women's Council reported that some members already work in tourism-related activities, such as cultural tours for foreign guests and marine tour guiding with TIDE. The Council expressed interest in expanding into eco, adventure and cultural tourism, for example by offering cooking classes, music, dance and storytelling experiences to tourists. Members identified training needs in customer service and digital marketing to strengthen visitor engagement and outreach.

TIDE has trained Toledo residents in ecotourism services like fly fishing, kayaking, bird-watching and hospitality as alternative livelihoods. TIDE offers ecotourism guide training and participates in career fairs at technical high schools to promote career paths in conservation and sustainable tourism.

Artisan skills

Women-led artisan groups have well-established craft skills covering a range of products. Women from Maya Bags and the Home of Indigenous Arts reported mastering traditional craft production techniques such as basket weaving, slate carving and embroidery. POWA reported that members produce baskets, bags, jewelry, soaps and healing oils, and also provide skills training to women in Hopkins and Maya Center. The Toledo Maya Women's Council reported that members have received training in sewing, candle making and soap making.

These groups identified challenges with costing and pricing, quality consistency, market access and business management. The Toledo Maya Women's Council noted that there is no standardization in

Maya weaving, handicrafts and clothing sizes, which affects pricing consistency. TIDE reported providing business proposal support to women's groups, including assistance with BTB matching grant applications for equipment.

There is an opportunity to build on existing partnerships and community-based training initiatives to deliver targeted training aligned with the value chain analysis. These findings indicate that women possess foundational production and cultural skills relevant to priority value chains. Skills gaps centre on business management, value-added processing and market access, areas that can be addressed through training that integrates technical skills with entrepreneurship and business development content. Organizations such as TIDE and Humana already provide training and support to women's groups in the region, including entrepreneurship, digital literacy and business development, and operate community hubs that bring services to rural areas.

5.3 Barriers affecting persons with disabilities

Consultations with Special Education Officers from the Stann Creek and Toledo Districts, as well as organizations that provide training and support services, identified barriers affecting persons with disabilities in accessing skills development opportunities and transitioning to the labour market. These barriers fall into five key areas: physical infrastructure, assistive technologies and learning materials, support services, attitudes and awareness, and skills gaps affecting labour market transition.

5.3.1 Physical infrastructure

Physical accessibility of training facilities varies across the region. Special Education Officers from both districts reported that accessibility features – such as wheelchair ramps and dedicated special education classrooms – are not widely available at schools. Table 5.7 summarizes the identified infrastructure barriers.

► **Table 5.7: Infrastructure accessibility**

Facility component	Current status
Building access	Classrooms, workshops and laboratories are accessed by stairs; ramps are available at limited locations
Doorways	Standard widths do not accommodate wheelchairs at most facilities
Restrooms	Accessible fixtures and adequate turning radius are not available at most facilities
Workshops	Equipment layout and workbench heights are designed for standing work

Training programmes aligned to priority value chains involve practical components that take place in diverse physical environments. Agriculture training includes fieldwork on farm plots, construction and food processing programmes use fixed-height equipment, and ecotourism training offered by organizations such as TIDE includes outdoor activities such as kayaking and bird-watching. Ensuring accessibility within these programmes requires consideration of both facility design and training delivery methods.

Progress has been made at two secondary institutions in the south. Julian Cho Technical High School and Toledo Community College have established inclusive classrooms which enable students with disabilities to learn alongside their peers in a supportive environment. These examples demonstrate that accessibility improvements can be achieved with existing resources. Section 5.3.2 expands on the assistive technology and learning materials available at these two institutions.

However, broader physical infrastructure improvements remain a priority, including wheelchair access and other accessible facilities, which will require further investment. Special Education Officers also reported ongoing efforts to establish an inclusive classroom at Corazon Creek Technical High School, which would expand access for students in that area. Currently, the Stann Creek District does not have special education classes at any high school.

5.3.2 Assistive technologies and learning materials

Access to assistive technologies and adapted learning materials supports participation by students with diverse learning needs. Special Education Officers from both districts identified equipment and materials necessary to support students with disabilities, for example: hearing aids, wheelchairs, walkers, sensory items, visual materials, alphabet cards, flash cards, braille machines and headphones. Table 5.8 summarizes the requirements and their current availability.

► **Table 5.8: Assistive technologies and learning materials**

Category	Requirements	Current availability
Visual impairments	Braille materials, screen readers, magnification devices	Not available at any of the assessed institutions
Hearing impairments	Hearing amplification, captioned video, sign language interpretation	Equipment not available at any of the assessed institutions; very few sign language interpreters in the region
Learning support	Sensory items, visual materials, flash cards	Available at Julian Cho Technical High School and Toledo Community College inclusive classrooms
Curriculum materials	Braille versions, audio recordings, large print, accessible digital formats	Standard print format only
Assessment accommodations	Extended time, oral examinations, alternative formats	Available options at individual teachers' discretion

As noted in section 5.3.1, Julian Cho Technical High School and Toledo Community College have established inclusive classrooms. These classrooms incorporate low-cost sensory accommodations, including fidget toys, stress balls, weighted lap pads and sensory corners. These materials support students requiring assistance with focus and self-regulation but do not address requirements for students with visual or hearing impairments. Curriculum materials across all institutions are available in standard print format; braille versions, audio recordings and large print options are not available.

Assessment accommodations, such as extended time or oral instead of written examinations, are available options for students with disabilities. The Stann Creek Special Education Officer noted that teachers can administer oral examinations to assess students who have difficulty with reading and writing. However, these accommodations are applied at the discretion of individual teachers rather than through formal institutional policy.

5.3.3 Support services

Support services enable students with disabilities to participate fully in training programmes; availability of these services in southern Belize is limited. Table 5.9 summarizes current support service availability.

► **Table 5.9: Support services for students with disabilities**

Service	Current status
Para-professional support	Ministry of Education certifies para-professionals; parents are responsible for hiring and funding; no para-professionals currently working in Toledo District schools
Sign language interpreters	Very few available in southern Belize
Special Education Officers	Two officers per district covering all education levels (primary, secondary, ITVET)
Special education teachers	Two in Toledo District (one at Julian Cho Technical High School, one at a primary school); data not available for Stann Creek
Teacher training	Workshops conducted by Special Education Officers; teachers reported uncertainty in applying training

Para-professional support is available but access depends on families' ability to fund the service privately. The Ministry of Education certifies para-professionals through a course requiring a high school diploma for a 100-dollar fee, delivered over five consecutive Saturdays. Certified para-professionals can work in primary schools, high schools and ITVETs. However, the Ministry does not employ para-professionals directly; parents hire them through private arrangements. For families with limited income, funding para-professional services over multi-year training periods presents a significant barrier. The Toledo District Special Education Officer reported that no para-professionals are currently working at schools in Toledo District.

The number of qualified special education personnel in southern Belize is limited. Toledo District has four individuals qualified in special education: two Special Education Officers at the District Education Centre and two special education teachers, one at Julian Cho Technical High School and one at a primary school. Stann Creek District has two Special Education Officers.

Special Education Officers play a central role in supporting inclusive education across both districts. Officers support teachers with strategies for working with students with disabilities, conduct training workshops, work with parents, conduct home visits and advocate for inclusive policies. When parents report that schools are reluctant to admit students with disabilities, Special Education Officers engage with school administrators to reinforce that every child has the right to an education. Special Education Officers assess students and provide recommendations to teachers; however, they cannot diagnose disabilities, as formal diagnosis requires clinical or medical assessment. With two officers per district covering all education levels and limited resources, the capacity to provide individualized support across institutions is constrained.

Geographic distance affects access to specialized services for people with disabilities. Diagnostic assessments and therapy services often require travel outside the district. Special Education Officers in Toledo work with the Hillside Clinic near Punta Gorda, which offers physical therapy, with speech pathology and paediatric services available occasionally. For specialized assessments or ongoing therapy, families are referred to private therapists in Belize City or Placencia. Transportation and accommodation costs for accessing these services are the responsibility of families, presenting a significant barrier for households with limited income.

Teacher preparedness to support students with disabilities remains a challenge. Despite training available through Special Education Officers, officers from both districts reported that many teachers still feel uncertain about supporting students with disabilities in the classroom.

5.3.4 Attitudes and awareness

Attitudes and levels of awareness among educators, communities and employers influence both the access to training opportunities and the transition of persons with disabilities to the labour market. Consultations identified examples of inclusive practices, alongside areas where further awareness and engagement could strengthen outcomes.

Training institutions in southern Belize have taken steps to support the inclusion of students with disabilities. The Stann Creek ITVET accepts students with disabilities, including trainees from Stella Maris School, and works with students during the pre-trade programme to identify their interests and strengths. The institution provides unit certifications that recognize completion of specific competencies, enabling transitions to employment in areas such as cleaning, dishwashing and similar roles. This approach supports flexible pathways to certification and transition to the labour market for students who may not complete a full trade programme.

Teachers at Ecumenical High School reported using alternative teaching strategies to accommodate diverse learning needs, although the range of support is influenced by the availability of adaptive tools and infrastructure. Across the other assessed institutions, teachers expressed interest in additional training on inclusive teaching strategies.

Special Education Officers play an active role in promoting inclusive education and supporting awareness at the school and community levels. Special Education Officers reported that they regularly engage with school administrators when concerns arise over the admission of students with disabilities, reinforcing that all students have the right to access education. Officers also work with parents and communities to promote participation in education and training. However, communities vary in their awareness of disability inclusion, which can influence families' decisions about seeking training opportunities.

Employer engagement in southern Belize includes examples of successful inclusion, with scope for broader participation. Special Education Officers reported that several employers have hired graduates with disabilities, including Maya Mountain Cacao in Toledo District and a butane company. Individuals with disabilities have also secured employment in service roles such as bartending, cooking, cleaning and food service. In Stann Creek District, examples of self-employment were reported in wreath production and appliance repair. At the same time, officers noted that many graduates with disabilities experience delays in securing employment, indicating a need for increased employer awareness and engagement.

5.3.5 Skills gaps affecting the transition of persons with disabilities to the labour market

Special Education Officers from both districts identified skills gaps that affect the ability of persons with disabilities to transition to the labour market. These gaps span foundational, soft and life skills areas.

Foundational skills in literacy, numeracy and digital literacy were identified as areas requiring additional support. Special Education Officers reported that many students with disabilities experience difficulty in reading, writing, working with numbers and basic computer use, which affects their ability to engage with training content and meet employer requirements for entry-level positions. The Stann Creek Special Education Officer noted that ITVET pre-vocational programmes include instruction in reading, writing, numeracy and computer use, providing a preparatory pathway for students prior to entry into trade programmes.

Soft skills like communication, collaboration, teamwork and interpersonal engagement were identified as areas requiring additional focus. The Toledo Special Education Officer noted that students with disabilities can lack communication skills such as listening and responding to conversations, and that soft skills training should be emphasized more in schools, to include active listening, collaboration, empathy

and conflict management. These competencies are essential for workplace integration and sustained employment.

Life skills including social skills, daily living tasks and workplace readiness were also identified. The Stann Creek Special Education Officer reported that students can lack skills in areas such as preparing basic dishes, performing routine tasks like stocking shelves and understanding workplace expectations. Life skills classes are included in the ITVET Stann Creek pre-trade programme, providing a model for integrating these competencies into training. Both officers noted that life skills classes are vital for students with disabilities and should be strengthened to support labour market transitions. The Stann Creek Special Education Officer also suggested that students can be taken outside the classroom environment to learn life skills through weekend or short-term field experiences, which offer flexible delivery approaches.

Existing training pathways provide entry points to employment in priority value chains. The Stann Creek ITVET's pre-trade programme and unit certification approach enables students with disabilities to develop competencies in food service, cleaning and hospitality, the sectors aligned with the tourism value chain. Maya Mountain Cacao's employment of graduates with disabilities in Toledo demonstrates that cacao processing offers accessible labour transition opportunities within the agroforestry value chain. These examples indicate that where accessible training pathways and employer engagement exist, persons with disabilities can transition to the labour market in priority sectors.

5.4 Summary assessment

Access to skills development and transitions to the labour market in Stann Creek and Toledo Districts are shaped by multiple, interrelated factors. These include financial conditions, geographic location, institutional capacity, availability of inclusive training pathways and alignment between skills development and labour market opportunities. The assessment indicates that training institutions and community organizations are actively supporting participation and that entry points to skills development exist. At the same time, access and outcomes vary across population groups, reflecting differences in resources, location and support needs. Table 5.10 summarizes key barriers by population group.

► **Table 5.10: Summary of barriers by population group**

Barrier category	Women	Persons with disabilities	Indigenous communities	Rural populations
Financial	Training fees, transport, materials, opportunity costs; startup inputs for enterprise	Transport to services, assistive devices, privately funded para-professional support	Same cost categories as for women and PWD; impacts can be higher in lower-income households	Higher transport and materials costs due to distance
Geographic access and transport	Remote villages and transport schedules constrain access	Inaccessible transport; travel required for specialized services	Distance from district centres; limited transport frequency	Seasonal road conditions; limited public transport
Care responsibilities and time constraints	Childcare and household responsibilities affect participation	Additional support needs affect scheduling and attendance	Similar constraints as for women, compounded by distance	Travel time increases time burden

► **Table 5.10: Summary of barriers by population group** *(Continued)*

Barrier category	Women	Persons with disabilities	Indigenous communities	Rural populations
Physical accessibility of facilities	Not consistently reported as a primary barrier	Stairs, narrow doorways, inaccessible restrooms, workshop layouts	Not consistently reported as a primary barrier	Not consistently reported as a primary barrier
Skills development gaps	Business, financial, digital and market access skills	Foundational, soft and life skills gaps affect readiness	Language, literacy and digital skills gaps	Same as the general population, with fewer local training options
Support services and institutional capacity	Limited childcare, mentoring and post-training support	Limited para-professionals, interpreters and specialized services	Limited language support	Distance to support services concentrated in district centres
Information access	Out-of-school women less reached by school-based recruitment	Limited disability-specific outreach	Information not consistently available in indigenous languages	Distance to information concentrated in district centres
Labour market transition	Startup capital, market access, business formalization	Employer awareness, workplace accessibility	Language barriers; limited formal employment locally	Distance to employment centres and markets

Women's participation in skills development and labour market transition is shaped by financial, time-related and social factors. Training fees, transportation costs, materials and opportunity costs affect access and sustained participation, particularly for adult women outside formal education systems. Childcare responsibilities and limited flexible scheduling further influence enrolment and completion. In some communities, expectations related to women's mobility and household decision-making also affect participation, as attendance at training sometimes requires family consent or negotiation of care and domestic responsibilities. Transition to income generation depends on complementary support, such as access to equipment, startup inputs, business development services and practical skills related to customer engagement and market access.

For persons with disabilities, access to training and the labour market transition depends on physical accessibility, availability of assistive technologies and adapted learning materials, access to support services and skills development. Physical infrastructure constraints, limited assistive technologies and shortages of specialized support services influence participation. Skills gaps in foundational, soft and life skills affect readiness for training and entry-level work. At the same time, existing practices, such as pre-vocational programmes, unit certification pathways, inclusive classrooms and examples of employer engagement demonstrate that adapted training pathways aligned with labour market needs can support transitions to the labour market.

Indigenous and rural populations face access constraints related to language, distance, transportation and information flows. Language barriers are a primary constraint for Q'eqchi' and Mopan Maya speakers, affecting comprehension of training content, engagement with instructors and access to written materials. Literacy levels in some communities further impact participation. Institutions in both

districts serve wide catchment areas through approaches that include village-based training, residential schooling and community-linked programmes. However, distance from training centres, seasonal road conditions and transport availability continue to influence access. Training delivery in indigenous languages and the use of bilingual instructional materials offer pathways to strengthen accessibility. Limited digital skills and access to technology also affect information access, training delivery and labour market engagement.

Across all population groups, labour market transitions are influenced by factors beyond skills acquisition alone. Proximity to employment opportunities, employer awareness, workplace accessibility, access to finance, availability of tools, and equipment and market access for self-employment affect outcomes. For individuals pursuing self-employment or microenterprise, access to physical market infrastructure and the cost of transporting goods present additional constraints. Individuals facing multiple barriers, such as care responsibilities, language constraints, limited support services or remote location, often require coordinated responses across training design, delivery and post-training support.

National and international commitments provide a reference point for advancing inclusive skills development and employment. Belize ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2011²⁸, which sets out commitments related to inclusive education, accessibility, reasonable accommodation and employment. These commitments align with ongoing efforts in southern Belize to expand access to training, adapt delivery approaches and strengthen pathways from skills development to work.

Overall, the findings highlight opportunities to build on existing initiatives to strengthen inclusive labour market transitions. Expanding flexible and community-linked delivery models, strengthening foundational, soft and life skills development, addressing gaps in equipment and tools, deepening employer engagement and improving data collection can support more inclusive participation and employment outcomes. Continued collaboration among training institutions, community organizations, employers and government actors provides a practical basis for translating skills development into labour market participation for women, persons with disabilities, indigenous communities and rural populations in the Stann Creek and Toledo Districts.

Section 6 examines work-based learning arrangements and employment linkages.

28 UN General Assembly, [resolution 61/106](#), *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*, A/RES/61/106 (2006).

► 6. Work-based learning and transition to the labour market

This section examines work-based learning arrangements in TVET institutions across Stann Creek and Toledo Districts. The analysis draws on institutional consultations, teacher surveys, student focus groups and findings from the PROSPER value chain analysis. Work-based learning encompasses learning that occurs in real work environments, for example internships, industry attachments, apprenticeships and on-the-job training.

6.1 Current work-based learning arrangements

Work-based learning arrangements are present at most of the assessed institutions, varying in structure, duration and formality. Table 6.1 summarizes the current arrangements by institution.

► **Table 6.1: Work-based learning arrangements by institution**

Institution	Programme structure	Duration	Placement sites and arrangements
ITVET Stann Creek	Phased: classroom combined with workplace learning, then full-time placement; three instructor site visits	6 weeks + 8 weeks	Marie Sharp's, Silk Grass Farms, resorts in Hopkins, Placencia and the Cayes
ITVET Toledo	Placements with employers	Variable	Copal Tree Lodge, Coral House Inn, local resorts; limited by employer capacity and scheduling
ANRI	Placements with employers	Variable	Marie Sharp's, CPBL, Silk Grass Farms
Independence HS	Third-form placements	2 weeks	Polyclinic, Placencia Pharmacy, Fyffes
Georgetown THS	Placements with employers	Variable	Resorts (Umaya, Hamanasi, Little Harvest Caye) and clinics; some lead to employment
Ecumenical HS	Placements with employers	2 weeks	BEL, Silk Grass Farms, Sheena Engineering
Julian Cho THS	No formal arrangements	—	Past arrangements discontinued; local businesses cannot accommodate large groups
Corazon Creek THS	No formal arrangements	—	Geographic isolation; limited employer access
Tumul K'in	Senior entrepreneurship project in Year 4	—	Students develop and operate enterprises in their home community

Note: — = not applicable.

6.1.1 Institutions with work-based learning arrangements

Six of the nine assessed institutions arrange work-based learning placements with employers, demonstrating varying levels of structure and formality (table 6.1). ITVET Stann Creek operates the most systematic programme, while other institutions arrange shorter placements that provide students with workplace exposure and practical experience.

ITVET Stann Creek operates the most structured work-based learning programme among assessed institutions. Students complete a phased programme beginning with six weeks of combined classroom and workplace learning (three days in class, two days with employers), followed by eight weeks of full-time on-the-job training. Instructors conduct three site visits during placements to monitor progress and maintain employer relationships.

The Housekeeping Instructor serves as the institution's internship and job placement officer, coordinating placements and employer solicitations on behalf of trainees. Partner employers are selected based on their capacity to provide multi-departmental exposure; tourism placements are arranged with resorts and hotels that have kitchen, bar, front desk and housekeeping sections, enabling trainees to rotate through these areas to gain broad practical experience.

Employers include Marie Sharp's Fine Foods Ltd. (agro-processing), Silk Grass Farms (agriculture) and resorts in Hopkins, Placencia and the Cayes (hospitality). Employers are invited to participate in graduation ceremonies. This practice strengthens institutional relationships and recognizes employer contributions to student training.

As noted in sections 3 and 4, ITVET Stann Creek reported that 85 per cent of trainees receive job offers during on-the-job training. Teachers noted that competition with other schools sending trainees to the same employers can create capacity constraints.

ITVET Toledo arranges placements with employers such as Copal Tree Lodge, Coral House Inn and local resorts. Employers provide feedback on student performance and workplace expectations, which is used to inform adjustments to training delivery. Employer capacity to host students is limited, and coordinating student schedules with operational and seasonal demands presents challenges.

ANRI arranges placements at Marie Sharp's Fine Foods Ltd., Citrus Products of Belize Ltd. (CPBL) and Silk Grass Farms, connecting agriculture students with agro-processing operations in Stann Creek District. Students reported that these placements increased their awareness of local agro-processing workplaces and potential employment options after graduation.

Independence High School operates a third-form placement programme with two-week placements at the polyclinic, Placencia Pharmacy and Fyffes. Students reported that these placements provided insight into professional workplace environments, business operations and career pathways.

Georgetown Technical High School has established internship placements for tourism and pharmacy students, for example with Umaya, Hamanasi and Little Harvest Caye, as well as clinics in Independence, Placencia and Dangriga. Some placements lead to ongoing part-time or weekend employment. Students often identify their own placement sites, with teachers providing assistance when needed. Employers satisfied with student performance have, in some cases, recommended graduates for employment.

Ecumenical High School arranges two-week placements for students. The school maintains partnerships with BEL, Silk Grass Farms and Sheena Engineering, although linkages for construction and electrical programmes remain limited due to scheduling constraints and employer availability.

With the exception of ITVET Stann Creek, work-based learning placements are arranged through informal, teacher-led networks rather than formal agreements with employers. Across the six institutions offering placements, students and their families are responsible for transportation and food costs associated with

work-based learning. These costs can present barriers for students from lower-income households or from remote communities where travel distances are greater.

Teachers also reported that sustaining employer relationships often depends on individual initiative, which includes conducting site visits using personal vehicles without fuel reimbursement. Approaches to assessing student performance during placements vary across institutions. Some placements include feedback from workplace supervisors, while others do not systematically document learning outcomes. The absence of structured coordination and monitoring mechanisms affects the consistency and quality of placements, particularly for institutions with limited employer networks within their catchment areas. Section 6.3 expands on factors affecting work-based learning.

6.1.2 Institutions without formal work-based learning

Three institutions, Tumul K'in, Julian Cho Technical High School and Corazon Creek Technical High School, do not currently arrange work-based learning. Tumul K'in has developed an alternative model centred on community-based entrepreneurship.

Tumul K'in Centre of Learning implements a senior entrepreneurship project in Year 4, through which students design, launch and manage enterprises within their home communities. This model provides practical experience in production, sales and basic business management, offering a community-based alternative to employer-led work-based learning that aligns with the institution's mission of supporting agricultural entrepreneurship among Maya youth.

Julian Cho Technical High School reported that earlier internship arrangements were discontinued because local businesses were unable to accommodate large numbers of students. Current exposure to industry is limited to occasional presentations from organizations such as BAHA, Reimers and the Pesticide Control Board.

Due to geographic isolation, Corazon Creek Technical High School does not have formal work-based learning arrangements. The nearest location with suitable employers requires several hours of travel via unpaved roads. Daily or weekly placements are not feasible, and residential placements during internships would involve additional costs and coordination that institutions are not currently resourced to manage.

6.1.3 Student perspectives

Students who completed work-based learning placements reported several positive outcomes. They cited that these experiences strengthened their practical skills, clarified career interests, and in some cases were followed by employment opportunities.

Independence High School business students placed at Fyffes reported gaining exposure to purchasing operations and professional workplace environments, and noted that placements helped them apply classroom learning in practice. Independence High School science students completing placements at the polyclinic and Placencia Pharmacy reported that these experiences clarified their career interests; one student noted that observing medical work helped confirm her goals, while another student gained a clearer understanding of pharmacy work.

Georgetown Technical High School students reported that placements helped them develop life skills, and confirmed that some placements were followed by ongoing weekend employment. ITVET Stann Creek students expressed confidence that their trade skills are marketable and relevant to employment opportunities after graduation.

Students also reported variability in placement experience. Some placements provided meaningful learning through engaged mentors who explained processes, allowed hands-on practice and provided feedback. Others involved primarily observation, limited opportunities to develop practical skills or tasks

unrelated to training content. These experiences indicate scope for improved coordination between institutions and employers to ensure placements align more closely with training objectives.

6.1.4 On-campus practical training

On-campus practical training forms a core component of technical and vocational education across institutions. It is delivered through school farms, demonstration facilities, workshops and production activities.

ITVET Stann Creek offers an Agro-processing course where students learn to produce jams, pepper sauces, pickles and oils from fruits and vegetables. ITVET Toledo and ANRI provide on-campus practical training through agricultural activities. Tumul K'in combines on-campus agricultural training with a community-based entrepreneurship project (see section 3.2.5).

As noted in section 3, resource constraints affect the scope of on-campus training across institutions; equipment is outdated or unavailable, materials for practical sessions are not consistently accessible, and infrastructure requires maintenance or replacement.

On-campus facilities provide supervised skills development in controlled environments but cannot fully replicate commercial production conditions, customer interactions or employment relationships that characterize workplace-based learning.

6.2 Potential partnership opportunities

The value chain analysis and community consultations identified organizations operating in priority value chains that could provide work-based learning opportunities aligned with labour market demand.

The National Garifuna Council's Hopkins and Seine Bight chapters identified training needs in cultural tourism, including how to package cultural experiences involving food, music, singing and dance for tourist markets. Both chapters suggested that ITVET Stann Creek and technical high schools could provide such training. The NGC's cultural knowledge and community networks represent a potential resource for developing cultural tourism training content in partnership with these institutions.

Similarly, women's artisan cooperatives have indicated willingness to contribute to skills training. Maya Bags members noted that one member previously taught weaving at Tumul K'in and stated they would offer teaching services if transportation costs were covered. These cooperatives could support instruction in traditional craft techniques relevant to the cultural tourism value chain.

The Toledo Cacao Growers Association (TCGA) represents over 1,100 smallholder cacao farmers across 55 communities in Toledo District and has a long history in Belize's cacao industry, including historic market ties through the "Maya Gold" brand. TCGA is currently transitioning from bean aggregation toward chocolate manufacture, presenting potential partnership opportunities in value-added processing skills. The association's established farmer networks, community reach and experience delivering training activities could support work-based learning in cacao cultivation, post-harvest handling and emerging chocolate production.

Artisan chocolate producers operating in southern Belize, including Cotton Tree Chocolate, Ixcacao and Moho Chocolate, maintain production facilities, farm shops and agro-tourism experiences. These enterprises represent potential partners for work-based learning in chocolate production and tourism.

Additionally, eco-lodges and tour operators in both districts require skilled staff for hospitality operations, tour guiding and cultural interpretation; establishing structured partnerships with tourism operators could expand work-based learning opportunities in the tourism value chain.

Formal partnership discussions between institutions and these organizations have not yet occurred. Establishing structured partnerships with documented expectations, roles and mutual benefits could expand work-based learning opportunities in priority value chains.

6.3 Factors affecting work-based learning

Five factors affect the development and quality of work-based learning arrangements in southern Belize, presented in this section.

6.3.1 Geographic distance and transportation

Geographic distance between training institutions, student residences and potential employers presents logistical challenges for work-based learning. Students from remote villages have limited ability to commute regularly to placement sites in Punta Gorda, Dangriga, Hopkins or Placencia. Transportation costs, travel time and seasonal road conditions, particularly during the rainy season, affect the feasibility of daily or weekly placements.

Institutions lack dedicated vehicles to transport students to placement sites or to support routine supervision visits. Teachers reported using personal vehicles to conduct site visits. For students from remote communities, participation in extended placements would require temporary accommodation near placement sites, with estimated costs of 200 to 400 dollars per month in addition to food and transportation expenses. These costs would require financial and administrative resources beyond current institutional budgets.

Access to work-based learning opportunities consequently varies by student location. Students residing closer to towns with higher concentrations of employers have greater access to placements, while students from remote rural communities have more limited options.

6.3.2 Employer capacity

Employers in southern Belize have demonstrated willingness to host students for work-based learning, although capacity constraints affect the scale of placements. Most businesses in southern Belize are micro, small and medium-sized enterprises.²⁹ These enterprises typically operate with limited human and financial resources, which minimizes the number of students they can host for work-based learning at any given time.

Southern Belize has a concentration of tourism employers such as hotels, lodges, resorts and tour operators. However, tourism demand is seasonal: peak arrivals occur December–April, with a secondary peak in July–August, while September–October is the off-peak hurricane season. Many smaller operators struggle to remain open during low-occupancy months, which affects year-round placement availability.

6.3.3 Teacher workload

Supervising work-based learning requires teachers to visit placement sites, monitor student performance, maintain employer relationships and coordinate scheduling between classroom instruction and workplace experience. Teachers reported that these responsibilities are added to existing classroom workloads without dedicated time allocation, fuel allowances or transportation support.

6.3.4 Liability and safety

Workplace learning involves risks associated with equipment operation, agricultural activities, construction sites, food handling and transportation. Administrators reported uncertainty about liability if students were to be injured during placements. Institutions do not have formal policies addressing insurance coverage, safety protocols or emergency procedures for work-based learning.

²⁹ Miguel Macias, *A Sector Selection and Value Chain Analysis in Belize: Sustainable Tourism and Dehydrated Fruits Processing in the Districts of Toledo and Stann Creek* (ILO, 2023), page 15.

6.3.5 Policy framework

National policy guidance on work-based learning standards was not referenced or applied by institutions during the assessment. As a result, institutions implement work-based learning arrangements without standardized frameworks for placement duration, assessment procedures, workplace mentor roles or quality assurance mechanisms.

International reference frameworks provide guidance and standards that could inform the future development of policy and implementation frameworks for work-based learning. For instance, the European Union's 20 Guiding Principles for High-Performance Apprenticeships and Work-Based Learning (European Commission 2019) outlines comprehensive standards for governance, company support, attractiveness and quality assurance in work-based learning systems.³⁰

6.4 Opportunities for strengthening work-based learning

Based on the assessment of current arrangements, employer interest and international practice, several opportunities exist for strengthening work-based learning in southern Belize.

6.4.1 Formalizing partnerships

Partnership arrangements between institutions and employers are currently informal. Formalising partnerships through written agreements (MoUs) that document roles, expectations and mutual commitments could strengthen sustainability and quality. Agreements could specify placement duration, learning objectives, supervision arrangements, student engagement and assessment procedures and feedback mechanisms.

6.4.2 Extending placement duration

Current work-based learning placements ranging from two to eight weeks provide valuable introductory exposure to workplace environments. Extending placements to 12–16 weeks would allow students to progress beyond initial orientation to sustained skill application and, where appropriate, more independent task completion.

International guidance highlights the importance of placement duration for learning outcomes. The Council of the European Union's Quality Framework for Traineeships (CEU 2024) emphasizes that work placements require "reasonable duration" sufficient to achieve defined learning and training objectives.³¹ More recently, the European Committee of the Regions recommended a minimum duration of at least one month to ensure meaningful learning experiences, while noting that quality traineeships require sufficient time for trainees to acquire professional skills and contribute productively to business operations.³² The European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships (CEU 2018) further underscores that quality work-based learning must enable learners to acquire knowledge, skills and competences with direct relevance for the labour market.³³

30 European Commission: Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, [High-Performance Apprenticeships & Work-Based Learning: 20 Guiding Principles](#), 2019.

31 Council of the European Union (CEU), [Council Recommendation of 10 March 2014 on a Quality Framework for Traineeships](#), 2014/C 88/01 (2014), para. 11.

32 European Committee of the Regions, [Reinforced Quality Framework for Traineeships: Opinion Factsheet](#), CDR-1795-2024 (2024).

33 CEU, [Council Recommendation of 15 March 2018 on a European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships](#), 2018/C 153/01 (2018).

6.4.3 Workplace mentor development

Workplace supervisors who host students bring industry expertise but have not received training in mentoring or instructional techniques. Developing mentor capacity, including guidance on instructional techniques, assessment approaches and working with young learners, could improve placement quality and consistency. International frameworks recognize in-company trainer development as essential to quality work-based learning. The European Union's 20 Guiding Principles for High-Performance Apprenticeships (European Commission 2019) specifically calls for supporting companies to assign qualified trainers and for continuous professional development of in-company trainers.³⁴

6.4.4 Industry advisory input

Employer input into curriculum development and programme quality varies across institutions, creating opportunities to strengthen engagement through advisory mechanisms. Tumul K'in Centre of Learning, while not offering work-based learning placements, incorporates employer perspectives through its Board of Directors, which includes business representatives from enterprises such as Ixcacao and local small businesses. These representatives provide advisory input on curriculum design, ensuring that programme content reflects employer perspectives on skills requirements for agricultural entrepreneurship.

In contrast, ITVET Stann Creek maintains employer relationships through its work-based learning programme. Instructors collect feedback from host businesses during site visits and incorporate this information into curriculum adjustments. However, this engagement centres primarily on placement facilitation rather than structured advisory functions such as curriculum review or competency standard development.

The other assessed institutions offering work-based learning did not report systematic mechanisms for collecting employer input into curriculum development. Formalising employer advisory input across institutions could strengthen curriculum relevance and facilitate responsive training aligned with evolving labour market requirements.

6.4.5 Graduate tracking systems

Establishing systematic graduate tracking would strengthen the evidence base for programme improvement and accountability. As noted in section 4.4.3, informal tracking mechanisms exist across institutions, including social media groups, personal networks and employer feedback, although these systems do not generate reliable data on employment outcomes.

Several institutional leaders expressed willingness to implement formal tracer studies if provided with appropriate support. Building on existing informal practices, standardized survey instruments for these institutions could be developed and shared across institutions. Coordinated data collection could reduce individual institutional burden while generating comparable data on employment status, sectors of employment, skill utilization and graduate satisfaction.

Systematic tracking would enable institutions to assess programme effectiveness, identify skills gaps and demonstrate training value to prospective students, government and development partners. Such data would also provide evidence on whether skills development interventions translate into productive employment and entrepreneurship within the identified priority value chain sectors. Disaggregation by sex, disability status and geographic origin would support analysis of whether different groups experience distinct employment trajectories requiring targeted interventions.

³⁴ European Commission, High-performance apprenticeships, principle 10.

6.5 Summary assessment for work-based learning and transitions to the labour market

Work-based learning arrangements in southern Belize demonstrate institutional commitment and employer engagement, with opportunities to strengthen structure, coverage and quality.

Six of nine assessed institutions have established work-based learning placements with employers, with ITVET Stann Creek operating the most systematic programme. Placements provide students with workplace exposure, practical skills development and in some cases, direct pathways to employment. Students reported that these experiences clarified their career interests, strengthened their practical competencies and helped them apply classroom learning in authentic settings. Employers across tourism, agro-processing and agriculture sectors have demonstrated willingness to host students, and several value chain actors identified through research and consultations represent potential new partners.

At the same time, current arrangements face constraints that limit their reach and consistency. Geographic distance and transportation costs restrict access for students from remote communities. Employer capacity, particularly among micro, small and medium-sized enterprises and seasonal tourism operators, affects the number of students who can be placed at any given time. Teacher workload for coordinating and supervising placements is not formally recognized or resourced. Placement duration, typically between two and eight weeks, provides introductory exposure but limits progression to sustained skill application. Assessment procedures and learning objectives vary across institutions and placements.

Opportunities for strengthening work-based learning include formalizing partnerships through written agreements, extending placement durations to enable deeper skill development, developing workplace mentor capacity, strengthening industry advisory input into curriculum design and establishing systematic graduate tracking to generate evidence on employment outcomes. International frameworks such as the European Union's 20 Guiding Principles for High-Performance Apprenticeships (European Commission 2019) provide guidance that could inform the development of quality assurance mechanisms and policy frameworks for work-based learning in Belize.

Building on existing institutional efforts and employer relationships, targeted investments in coordination, quality assurance and support systems could expand access to meaningful work-based learning and strengthen transitions from training to the labour market in priority value chain sectors.

Appendix A: Stakeholder engagement

This appendix documents the stakeholder engagement activities conducted as part of the TVET Situational Analysis for the PROSPER Project in Southern Belize. The consultations were carried out between August and October 2025, covering Stann Creek and Toledo Districts.

► A1 Consultation summary

The consultations engaged a total of 237 participants, of whom 162 (68 per cent) were female. This sex composition reflects the deliberate effort to engage women's groups, indigenous women's organizations and female-led community enterprises as key informants for the situational analysis. Table A1.1 summarizes the consultation participants.

► **Table A1.1: Consultation participants by category and sex**

Category	Male	Female	Total
TVET institutions (students, teachers, principals)	43	43	86
Community organizations and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)	24	117	141
Special Education Officers	1	2	3
Secondary stakeholders (survey respondents)	7	0	7
Total Participants	75	162	237

► A2 TVET institutions engaged

Tables A2.1 and A2.2 present the TVET institutions consulted.

► **Table A2.1: Institutions consulted in Stann Creek District**

No.	Institution	Location	Date	Method	Participants (M/F)	Total
1	Stann Creek ITVET	Hope Creek Village	6 Oct. 2025	Student FGD, teacher FGD, principal interview	13M, 7F	20
2	Agriculture and Natural Resource Institute (ANRI)	Hope Creek Village	30 Sep. 2025	Student FGD, teacher interview, principal interview	5M, 3F	8

3	Stann Creek Ecumenical High School	Dangriga Town	13 Oct. 2025	Teacher and principal FGD	4M, 2F	6
4	Independence High School	Independence	29 Oct. 2025	Principal questionnaire, student FGD, teacher questionnaire	5M, 8F	13
5	Georgetown Technical High School	Georgetown Village	30 Sep. 2025	Student FGD, teacher interview	1M, 8F	9
Stann Creek TVET subtotal					28M, 28F	56

Note: FGD = focus group discussion; M = male; F = female.

► **Table A2.2: Institutions consulted in Toledo District**

No.	Institution	Location	Date	Method	Participants (M/F)	Total
1	Toledo ITVET	Crique Jute Village	3 Oct. 2025	Teacher and principal FGD, teacher questionnaire	3M, 1F	4
2	Julian Cho Technical High School	Dump Village	9 Oct. 2025	Student FGD, teacher FGD, principal interview	7M, 6F	13
3	Corazon Creek Technical High School	Corazon Creek Village	3 Oct. 2025	Student FGD, teacher questionnaire, principal interview	2M, 5F	7
4	Tumul K'in High School	Blue Creek Village	26 Sep. 2025	Teacher FGD, principal interview	3M, 3F	6
Toledo TVET subtotal					15M, 15F	30

Note: FGD = focus group discussion; M = male; F = female.

► A3 Community and civil society organizations

Table A3.1 and table A3.2 present the community and civil society organizations consulted.

► **Table A3.1: Organizations consulted in Stann Creek District**

No	Organization	Location	Date	Method	Participants (M/F)	Total
1	National Garifuna Council – Seine Bight	Seine Bight Village	29 Sep. 2025	Focus group	5M, 2F	7
2	National Garifuna Council – Hopkins	Hopkins Village	29 Sep. 2025	Focus group	0M, 11F	11
3	Productive Organization for Women in Action (POWA)	Dangriga Town	11 Sep. 2025	Focus group	0M, 14F	14
Stann Creek CSO subtotal					5M, 27F	32

Note: M = male; F = female.

► **Table A3.2: Organizations consulted in Toledo District**

No	Organization	Location	Date	Method	Participants (M/F)	Total
1	San Lucas Women's Copal Tree Group (Julian Cho Society)	San Lucas Village	2 Sep. 2025	Focus group	4M, 21F	25
2	Corazon Creek Chicken Group (Julian Cho Society)	Corazon Creek Village	2 Sep. 2025	Focus group	9M, 10F	19
3	Home of Indigenous Arts Belize Ltd.	Punta Gorda	27 Aug. 2025	Focus group	0M, 17F	17
4	TIDE Belize	Punta Gorda	27 Aug. 2025	Focus group	1M, 2F	3
5	Humana	Bella Vista	29 Aug. 2025	Interview	0M, 3F	3
6	Toledo Maya Women's Council	Big Falls Village	30 Aug. 2025	Focus group	0M, 12F	12
7	Maya Bags	Indian Creek Village	29 Aug. 2025	Focus group	0M, 9F	9
8	Indian Creek Maya Women's Group	Indian Creek Village	9 Oct. 2025	Focus group	0M, 6F	6
9	Ligemeru Haruga Farmer Group	Barranco	27 Sep. 2025	Focus group	5M, 10F	15
Toledo CSO subtotal					19M, 90F	109

Note: M = male; F = female.

► A4 Special Education Officers

Table A4.1 presents the Special Education Officers consulted.

► **Table A4.1: Special Education Officers consulted**

Position/District	Date	Method	Participants (M/F)	Total
Special Education Officer – Stann Creek District	28 Aug. 2025	Online interview	0M, 2F	2
Special Education Officer – Toledo District	29 Aug. 2025	Online interview	1M, 0F	1
Special Education Officers subtotal			1M, 2F	3

Note: M = male; F = female.

► A5 Secondary stakeholders (survey respondents)

Secondary stakeholders were engaged through a structured questionnaire administered in October 2025. The questionnaire was designed to gather policy-level insights on TVET governance, labour market information systems, skills certification and value chain coordination. Table A5.1 presents the stakeholders that participated in the survey.

► **Table A5.1: Secondary stakeholders consulted**

Agency/Organization	Focus area
Ministry of Labour and Rural Transformation	Policies and coordination
District Education Manager – Stann Creek	Regional education context and TVET oversight
District Education Manager – Toledo	Regional education context and TVET oversight
University of Belize – Central Farm	Tertiary education pathways and regional programming
University of Belize – Toledo Campus	Tertiary education pathways and regional programming
Belize Tourism Board	Tourism sector training and capacity-building
Ministry of Agriculture – Toledo District	Agriculture sector extension and training
Ministry of Agriculture – Stann Creek District	Agriculture sector extension and training
Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Technology	ITVET system coordination and management
Secondary stakeholders subtotal	7

► A6 Data collection methods

A6.1 Focus group discussions

Focus group discussions were conducted with the following stakeholder categories:

- TVET students (with parental consent for minors under 18)
- TVET teachers and instructors
- indigenous Maya women's groups
- Garifuna community organizations
- CSOs and NGOs
- farmer groups and agricultural cooperatives.

A6.2 Key informant interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with:

- school principals and ITVET managers
- Special Education Officers for Toledo and Stann Creek Districts
- senior staff of community-based organizations.

A6.3 Structured questionnaires

A secondary stakeholder survey was administered to government agencies, education managers and sector bodies to assess policy coherence, labour market information systems and coordination mechanisms.

A6.4 Ethical considerations

All consultations were conducted in accordance with ethical research standards:

- Informed consent was obtained from all adult participants.
- Parental consent was obtained for all student participants under 18 years of age.
- Participants were informed of the voluntary nature of participation.
- Confidentiality of responses was assured, with data reported in aggregate form.
- Audio recording was conducted only with explicit consent.
- Cultural sensitivity was maintained through engagement of local facilitators and cultural liaisons for indigenous community consultations.

► A7 Geographic coverage

A7.1 Stann Creek District locations

- Dangriga Town
- Georgetown Village
- Hope Creek Village
- Hopkins Village
- Independence
- Seine Bight Village

A7.2 Toledo District locations

- Barranco Village
- Bella Vista
- Big Falls Village
- Blue Creek Village
- Corazon Creek Village
- Crique Jute Village
- Dump Village
- Indian Creek Village
- Punta Gorda Town
- San Lucas Village

Total consultations: 237 participants from 9 TVET institutions and 12 community organizations, 2 Special Education Officers and 9 secondary stakeholder agencies.

Appendix B: Data collection tools

► B1 Focus group discussion guide for women

Section 1: Daily Life and Current Economic Activities

1. Tell us about a typical day in your life; what activities do you do to support your family?
 - a. **Probe:** What activities bring money into your household? Which activities take the most time?
 - b. **Data captured:** Current economic activities, time allocation barriers, existing informal work, unpaid care responsibilities.
2. What products do you make or grow that you sell or could sell as work opportunities to earn money?
 - a. **Probe:** What do other women in your village do to earn money that you admire or would like to try?
 - b. **Data captured:** Existing marketable skills, entrepreneurial potential, informal economy participation, peer learning opportunities
3. Do you work alone or with other women? How do you make decisions about pursuing work opportunities?
 - a. **Probe:** Tell us about times when working with others has helped you or made things more difficult.
 - b. **Data captured:** Social capital and networks, collaborative work patterns, decision-making autonomy, support systems.
4. What has your learning journey been like, and in which languages are you most comfortable communicating for work opportunities?
 - a. **Probe:** When you help your children with schoolwork, what subjects are easy or difficult for you?
 - b. **Data captured:** Educational barriers, language barriers in formal employment, foundational skill gaps, literacy and numeracy levels.

Section 2: Barriers and Challenges to Labour Market Transition

5. Think of a woman you know who has been successful in transitioning to the labour market. What made it possible for her to succeed?
 - a. **Probe:** What challenges do you face that might be different from hers?
 - b. **Data captured:** Success factors for labour market transition, comparative analysis of barriers, role model accessibility.

6. If your daughter wanted to transition to the labour market or pursue work opportunities, what concerns would you have for her success?
 - a. **Probe:** Do you face similar concerns in your own economic activities?
 - b. **Data captured:** Sex-specific safety barriers, cultural concerns about women's labour market participation.
7. When you want to start working or try a new business opportunity, what typically happens at home? How are these decisions usually made?
 - a. **Probe:** If you wanted to take a job or start selling something, what steps would you need to take at home first?
 - b. **Data captured:** Family support barriers, cultural and social norm constraints, decision-making power within households.
8. How do you get to places where you might find work opportunities or access training for labour market transition?
 - a. **Probe:** Tell us about a time when transportation was a problem for you.
 - b. **Data captured:** Transportation barriers to labour market access, geographic isolation challenges, infrastructure gaps.
9. If someone offered you a loan to help you transition to the labour market or start work opportunities, what worries would you have about taking it?
 - a. **Probe:** What prevents you from accessing credit or startup money when you need it?
 - b. **Data captured:** Financial barriers to labour market entry, access to credit constraints, financial literacy gaps.
10. Have you ever felt that people treated you differently because you are Mayan or because you are a woman when seeking work opportunities?
 - a. **Probe:** Can you share an example? How did this affect your labour market activities?
 - b. **Data captured:** Discrimination barriers in labour market, intersectional barriers (sex + ethnicity), workplace bias experiences.

Section 3: Skills gaps for labour market transition

11. What skills do you have that would help you transition to the labour market?
 - a. **Probe:** What skills do you see in other women that would help with work opportunities that you wish you had?
 - b. **Data captured:** Existing skills inventory, skills gaps identification, peer comparison of labour market readiness
12. Thinking about future work opportunities, what kinds of tasks, such as reading, writing, or working with numbers, might feel more challenging for you?
 - a. **Probe:** What kinds of supports or learning opportunities would make it easier for you to move into the type of work you'd like?
 - b. **Data captured:** Experience with foundational skills (literacy, numeracy), barriers related to documentation or formal requirements

13. What have you heard about technical schools or training programmes that could help with labour market transition?
 - a. **Probe:** What would make it possible for you to attend formal training for work opportunities?
 - b. **Data captured:** Awareness of TVET options, community perceptions of formal training, accessibility barriers
14. People sometimes face different challenges when trying to attend training programmes for work skills. What kinds of things might make it difficult for you to participate?
 - a. **Probe:** What times of day, week, or year would make it easiest for you to take part in training?
 - b. **Data captured:** Training accessibility barriers, scheduling constraints, care responsibilities conflicts
15. How do you prefer to learn new skills that could help with work opportunities: by watching, doing, listening, or reading?
 - a. **Probe:** Tell us about a time you learned something new successfully. How did that happen?
 - b. **Data captured:** Learning preferences and styles, effective training modalities, previous successful learning experiences
16. When you think about using computers or phones for work or income opportunities, what comes to mind?
 - a. **Probe:** What kinds of technology skills or support would help you feel more confident in pursuing work opportunities?
 - b. **Data captured:** Digital skills gaps, technology access barriers, attitudes toward digital literacy

Section 4: Traditional knowledge and business skills

17. Many families and communities have traditional knowledge, such as making products or trading. How do you think this kind of knowledge could support or connect with today's work opportunities?
 - a. **Probe:** Are there business or financial skills that would help you succeed in today's labour market that weren't as necessary for previous generations?
 - b. **Data captured:** Traditional knowledge and assets, intergenerational transfer of skills, gaps in modern business skills
18. When you sell a product or service, how do you usually decide what price to charge?
 - a. **Probe:** What kinds of information, skills, or support would help you feel more confident about setting prices?
 - b. **Data captured:** Business and financial decision-making approaches, pricing practices, gaps in market awareness
19. If you had more money to invest in your work or business, what kinds of concerns or questions might come up for you about how to manage it?
 - a. **Probe:** Do you keep track of your income and expenses in any way? If so, how?
 - b. **Data captured:** Financial management skills gaps, record-keeping barriers, business administration knowledge deficits

Section 5: Support systems and infrastructure

20. What information do you wish you had about work opportunities, training programmes, or how to transition to the labour market?
 - a. **Probe:** Whom do you usually ask when you need information about work opportunities?
 - b. **Data captured:** Information access barriers, awareness gaps about labour market opportunities, informal information networks
21. In your community, what happens when the electricity or internet is not available? How does this affect your daily activities or opportunities for work and learning?
 - a. **Probe:** In what ways do challenges with electricity, internet, or other infrastructure make it harder for you to access training or work opportunities?
 - b. **Data captured:** Infrastructure barriers to labour market participation, technology access constraints
22. Have you ever learned skills by working alongside someone experienced in labour market activities? How was that experience?
 - a. **Probe:** What kinds of support or opportunities would make learning from others at work easier or more useful?
 - b. **Data captured:** Work-based learning experiences, mentorship and apprenticeship accessibility

Section 6: Future aspirations and solutions

23. When you think about your children's future, what kind of work opportunities do you hope will be available to them?
 - a. **Probe:** What are your hopes for your own work in the next year or two? What would need to happen to make that possible?
 - b. **Data captured:** Future labour market aspirations, intergenerational mobility goals, support needs for goal achievement
24. Based on our discussion today, what are the most important things that need to change to help you successfully transition to the labour market?
 - a. **Probe:** What would you tell someone who wanted to help women access better work opportunities in your community?
 - b. **Data captured:** Priority interventions needed, systemic changes required, community-level solutions

Closing questions

25. If you could give one piece of advice to other women who want to improve their transition to the labour market, what would you say?
26. Is there anything important about the challenges or opportunities for women transitioning to the labour market that we haven't discussed but you'd like to share?
27. Use one or two words to describe how you feel about your work opportunities and labour market future right now.

► B2 Focus group discussion guide for civil society organizations

This guide is designed for engagement with CSOs and NGOs supporting women and persons with disabilities in Southern Belize.

Organizational profile

1. How was your group/organization formed?
2. What types of products/services does your group/organization provide?
3. How many people are in your group/organization?
4. Which village/town does your group/organization's membership come from?
5. How does your organization obtain funding?

Work-based learning environment

6. Do the women go to an employer to learn (on the job training) how to create their product/service? Do women go to an experienced entrepreneur to learn how to create their product/service?
7. How can the current work-based learning environment of women be improved?
8. Do the persons with special needs go to an employer to learn (on the job training) how to create their product/service?
9. How can the current work-based learning environment for persons with special needs be improved?

Barriers and skills gaps, women

10. What barriers do women face in accessing an ITVET/technical high school?
11. How can these barriers be removed?
12. What skills gaps do women face to be able to access a technical high school or an ITVET?
13. How can women learn these skills so that it will be easier for them to access a technical high school or ITVET? (e.g. literacy, numeracy, computer skills)
14. What challenges/barriers do you see relating to women transitioning to the labour market/becoming an entrepreneur? (Be comprehensive: financial, literacy, transportation, electricity, lack of knowledge/networks, technology, cultural, etc.)
15. How can these barriers that you have identified be addressed?
16. What skills gaps do women face in transitioning to the labour market/becoming an entrepreneur?
17. How can these skills gaps be narrowed/closed?

Barriers and skills gaps, persons with disabilities

18. What challenges/barriers do you see as existing relating to persons with special needs transitioning to the labour market/becoming an entrepreneur?
19. How can these barriers that you have identified be addressed?

20. What skills gaps do persons with special needs face in transitioning to the labour market?
21. How can these skills gaps be narrowed/closed?
22. How receptive are employers to hiring persons with special needs?
23. Which industry is most likely to employ workers with special needs?
24. What type of jobs do the workers with special needs do?
25. What barriers do persons with special needs face in accessing an ITVET/technical high school?
26. How can these barriers be removed?
27. What skills gaps do persons with special needs face to be able to access a technical high school or an ITVET?
28. How can persons with special needs learn these skills so that it will be easier for them to access a technical high school or ITVET?

TVET system capacity

29. How can the capacity of ITVET's / Technical High Schools be increased to reduce the barriers and skills gaps women face?
30. How can the capacity of ITVET's / Technical High Schools be increased to reduce the barriers and skills gaps persons with special needs face?
31. How can the capacity of ITVET's / Technical High Schools be increased to help women to better transition to the labour market/become entrepreneurs?
32. How can the capacity of ITVET's / Technical High Schools be increased to help persons with special needs better transition to the labour market/become entrepreneurs?
33. How can the capacity of TVET providers (other than schools) be increased to help women access training?
34. How can the capacity of TVET providers (other than schools) be increased to help persons with special needs access training?
35. How can the capacity of TVET providers (other than schools) be increased to help women better transition to the labour market/become entrepreneurs?
36. How can the capacity of TVET providers (other than schools) be increased to help persons with special needs better transition to the labour market/become entrepreneurs?

► B3 Interview protocol for school principals

This protocol guided semi-structured interviews with principals of TVET institutions, covering institutional capacity, curriculum relevance, resource constraints and strategic priorities.

School profile

1. How many students are enrolled at your school?
2. From which villages/towns do the students come from?
3. What are the entrance qualifications for your school? (e.g. primary school graduate, high school dropout)
4. How many males/females are enrolled at your school?
5. What percentage of students who enroll complete their programme of studies?

6. What technical subjects/trade programmes does your school provide?
7. For ITVETs: Does your school have a prevocational programme? If so, describe the subjects taught, length of programme and who is required to enroll.
8. What is the average student/teacher ratio at your school?
9. What is the minimum number of students required to enroll in a certain trade?
10. What is the most popular programme at your school?
11. What is the least popular programme at your school?
12. Do you collect data related to male/female enrollment and completion rates, special needs enrollment and completion rates, and indigenous enrollment and completion rates?

Governance structure

13. What is the governance structure of your ITVET/technical high school and the roles/responsibilities of each stakeholder? (e.g. board of directors)
14. What role does the TVET Manager/Principal play in school governance?
15. What role does the Ministry of Education play in your school?

Fees and inclusiveness

16. Does your school charge fees or is it one of the free high schools? If fees are charged, what is the yearly cost to attend?
17. Does your school have an inclusion policy/guidelines?
18. Does your school have any special accommodations for women or special needs students? (e.g. tutoring, mentoring, feeding programmes, scholarships, class aides, accommodation, wheelchair access, braille machines)
19. How does your school promote enrolment of females to study in programmes that are traditionally male dominated?
20. What are the best options for improving access to TVET for female, special needs, and indigenous students?

► B4 Teacher focus group discussion guide

This guide structured focus group discussions with instructional staff, examining training delivery, student needs, resource adequacy and relationships with local employers. Questions are mapped to the ILO Skills System Assessment Tool Building Blocks.

Biographical questions

1. How many years have you been teaching in total, and how many of those years have been in technical or vocational education?
2. What is your highest level of academic or professional qualification?
3. Do you hold any specialized training or certification related to technical or vocational education?
4. What subjects or technical areas do you currently teach, and at what levels?
5. Have you had direct experience in designing or delivering technical curricula linked to industry standards?

Curriculum and labour market alignment

(Mapped to ILO Building Blocks 2 and 3)

6. How well does your current curriculum align with the skills demanded by local industries and employers?
7. What challenges do you face in adapting your teaching to new labour market needs (e.g. technology, green economy, tourism, agroforestry)?
8. To what extent do you have access to reliable labour market information in your district when designing or delivering courses?
9. How effective are your linkages with local employers in shaping training content or offering work-based learning opportunities?

Resources and quality

(Mapped to ILO Building Block 3)

10. What resources (tools, materials, technology) are most lacking in your classrooms or technical sessions?
11. How do you currently assess student skills, and what improvements could strengthen certification and recognition of competencies?
12. What professional development or upskilling opportunities do you receive, and what further support is needed?

Inclusiveness and transition support

(Mapped to ILO Building Blocks 4 and 5)

13. How inclusive do you feel your training programmes are for female students and students with disabilities?
14. What challenges do you face in supporting students' transitions into the labour market after graduation?
15. What role do employers play in shaping internships, apprenticeships, or practical placements?
16. What role does your institution play in preparing students for entrepreneurship or self-employment?

Value chain-specific questions

17. What training do you provide in agroforestry (cacao, spices, honey, vanilla)?
18. What type of training do you provide in general literacy, business and financial literacy?
19. Is there an entrepreneurship course at your school? If so, can you share what is taught?
20. What type of training do you provide in ecotourism, adventure, and cultural tourism?
21. If your school does not provide training in specific agriculture and tourism areas, what would be required to develop such programmes? (teachers, curriculum, facilities, equipment)

► B5 Student focus group discussion guide

All student focus group participants received parental consent prior to participation.

Biographical questions

1. What year or level are you currently in at this technical school?
2. Which technical or vocational programme are you enrolled in?
3. How many years have you been attending this school, and what was your previous school background?
4. Have you had any work experience, internships, or apprenticeships outside of school so far?
5. What are your future plans after graduation — further studies, employment, or starting your own business?

Training relevance and experience

(Mapped to ILO Building Blocks 3, 4, and 5)

6. How relevant do you find the courses and skills you are learning to the type of work you want to do after school?
7. What do you find most useful in your training — practical workshops, classroom theory, or internships?
8. What challenges do you face in completing your training? (fees, materials, transport, access to resources)
9. Have you had opportunities for internships, apprenticeships, or work-based learning? If yes, how useful were they?
10. How confident are you that the skills you are gaining will help you get a job after graduation? Open a business? Help your community?

Skills and preparation

11. What additional skills (technical, digital, life skills) do you feel you need to be more prepared for work?
12. Do you feel the school provides equal opportunities for male and female students? For students with disabilities?
13. How well does the school prepare you to seek employment (job search, CV writing, interview skills)?
14. Are you aware of any follow-up or support services to help graduates transition to jobs or further study?

Technology and entrepreneurship

15. What role does technology (computers, internet, digital tools) play in your training, and what is missing?
16. Do you feel encouraged to explore entrepreneurship or start your own business?
17. What are the main barriers you see to getting a good job after graduation in your community or starting a business?
18. If you could change three things in your school or programme to make it more useful for your future, what would they be?

► B6 Interview protocol for special education officers

This protocol guided interviews with Special Education Officers for Toledo and Stann Creek Districts, focusing on barriers and skills gaps for persons with disabilities in accessing TVET and transitioning to the labour market.

Labour market transition

1. What challenges/barriers do you see relating to persons with special needs transitioning to the labour market/becoming an entrepreneur? (Be comprehensive: financial, literacy, technology, transportation, electricity, cultural, etc.)
2. How can these barriers be addressed?
3. What skills gaps do disability groups face in transitioning to the labour market?
4. How can these skills gaps be narrowed/closed?
5. How receptive are employers to hiring persons with special needs?
6. Which industry is most likely to employ workers with special needs?
7. What type of jobs do workers with special needs do?

TVET access and support

8. What services do Special Education Officers offer to TVET providers (schools, NGOs/CSOs)?
9. How can other organizations help with special education at TVET providers? (e.g. Ministry of Health)
10. What barriers do persons with special needs face in accessing a technical high school or ITVET?
11. How can these barriers be removed?
12. What skills gaps do persons with special needs face to be able to access a technical high school or an ITVET?
13. How can persons with special needs learn these skills so that it will be easier for them to access a technical high school or ITVET?

Institutional capacity and support

14. Do students with special needs express lack of safety as a barrier to enrolling at an ITVET/Technical High School? When enrolled, is safety a concern?
15. Do you track the enrolment and progress of students with special needs?
16. Based on your knowledge and experience, how can ITVETs, technical high schools, and other training institutions accommodate persons with special needs? (e.g. language support, classroom aides, tutoring, mentoring, different assessment options)
17. Are there sufficient Special Education Officers in southern Belize with the skills and knowledge to succeed in their work?
18. What area of special needs training is most needed by Special Education Officers, teachers and parents?
19. What support do you provide to teachers?
20. What support do you provide to parents? Do you do home visits?

► B7 Questionnaire for secondary stakeholders

This structured questionnaire was administered to secondary stakeholders including the Ministry of Labour and Rural Transformation, District Education Managers, University of Belize, Belize Tourism Board and Agriculture Extension Officers. Table B7.1 summarizes the participating secondary stakeholders.

► **Table B7.1: Target stakeholders**

Agency/Organization	Contact	Focus area
Ministry of Labour and Rural Transformation	Labour Commissioner	Work-based learning policies and coordination
District Education Managers (DEMs)	Stann Creek and Toledo DEMs	Regional education context and TVET oversight
University of Belize	Central Farm Agriculture; Toledo Campus	Tertiary education pathways
Belize Tourism Board	Head of Capacity Development	Tourism sector training and capacity-building
Agriculture Extension Officers	Toledo and Stann Creek Districts	Agriculture sector training

We kindly invite you to participate in this survey as part of the ILO PROSPER Belize Project: Situational Analysis of TVET and Skills Development in Southern Belize. The objective of this survey is to gather insights into policies, oversight, and initiatives that shape Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in Belize, especially in Stann Creek and Toledo. Your input will help identify strengths, challenges, and opportunities in work-based learning, education pathways, and sector capacity development. The findings will guide strategies to strengthen the TVET system and better align training with labour market needs, especially in high-potential value chains.

Participation and data use

- Participation is voluntary
- Responses will remain confidential and reported in aggregate form
- We may follow up for clarification where needed
- Your participation supports more inclusive and effective education and employment systems in Belize

Time: Approximately 10-15 minutes

Section A: Policies, structures, and resources

Please rate the extent to which you agree with the following statements:

Rating Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree | 2 = Disagree | 3 = Neutral | 4 = Agree | 5 = Strongly Agree

- National and regional policies effectively integrate TVET into broader economic development goals.
- There are clear mechanisms for coordination across ministries and agencies in skills development.
- Financing arrangements for TVET institutions and programmes are adequate and sustainable.
- TVET planning and budgeting adequately consider disadvantaged groups (women, youth, persons with disabilities).

1. Please describe any key policy, structural or financing gaps you see in the TVET system (formal and informal) for Stann Creek and Toledo Districts.

2. Agroforestry and tourism have been identified as priority value chains. What specific policy changes are needed to strengthen TVET support for these sectors in Stann Creek and Toledo?

Section B: Anticipating, planning, and monitoring

Please rate the extent to which you agree with the following statements:

Rating Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree | 2 = Disagree | 3 = Neutral | 4 = Agree | 5 = Strongly Agree

- There are effective systems in place for collecting, analyzing, and using labour market information to guide TVET planning and policy decisions.
- Labour market data are regularly shared with training institutions and used to inform curricula.
- Tracer studies and graduate follow-ups are effectively used to shape TVET policy decisions.
- Sector-specific skills gaps (e.g., tourism, agriculture, construction, ICT) are well identified and addressed in TVET planning.

Rate the adequacy of TVET training provision for these specific skills in Southern Belize:

Rating Scale: 1 = Very Inadequate | 2 = Inadequate | 3 = Neutral | 4 = Adequate | 5 = Very Adequate

- Post-harvest handling (fermentation, drying, curing)
- Quality control and grading standards
- Food safety certifications (HACCP, ISO, organic)
- Chocolate processing and product development
- Beekeeping and honey extraction
- Spice cultivation and processing (vanilla, cardamom)
- Tourism guiding and interpretation
- Hospitality and customer service
- Cultural tourism facilitation
- Digital marketing for local products and services
- Business management for microenterprises

3. What are the main barriers preventing TVET institutions from offering training in post-harvest processing, quality standards, and certifications for agricultural products?

Section C: Developing, certifying, and recognising skills

4. How are skills that are gained through formal institutions (such as ITVETs and Technical High Schools) and informal settings (such as community groups or women's organizations) currently recognized or validated in Southern Belize?

TVET institutions effectively provide training and certification in the following areas:

Rating Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree | 2 = Disagree | 3 = Neutral | 4 = Agree | 5 = Strongly Agree

- ▶ Organic certification processes
- ▶ Fair Trade standards
- ▶ Food safety (HACCP/ISO)
- ▶ Tourism guiding certification
- ▶ Cultural heritage interpretation
- ▶ Post-harvest quality control
- ▶ Small business management

Skills recognition mechanisms exist for:

Rating Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree | 2 = Disagree | 3 = Neutral | 4 = Agree | 5 = Strongly Agree

- ▶ Traditional Maya/Garifuna agricultural knowledge
- ▶ Indigenous craft-making
- ▶ Traditional ecological knowledge (forest products, medicinal plants)
- ▶ Informal tourism services

5. How are traditional skills (e.g., cacao cultivation, craft-making, cultural knowledge) currently recognized and integrated into formal TVET certification systems in Southern Belize?

6. What mechanisms exist for certifying skills learned through cooperatives, women's groups, or community-based training in agroforestry and tourism?

Section D: Access and inclusiveness

Please rate the extent to which you agree with the following statements:

Rating Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree | 2 = Disagree | 3 = Neutral | 4 = Agree | 5 = Strongly Agree

- ▶ TVET institutions provide equal access and opportunities for women, rural youth, and persons with disabilities.
- ▶ Effective policies exist to support the transition of graduates into jobs or further education.
- ▶ Regional education managers and agencies provide strong oversight for inclusive TVET delivery.

- Barriers to equitable participation in TVET (e.g., fees, distance, social norms) are being addressed effectively.

The following barriers limit equitable participation in TVET for the agroforestry and tourism sectors:

Rating Scale: 1 = Not a Barrier | 2 = Minor Barrier | 3 = Moderate Barrier | 4 = Significant Barrier | 5 = Major Barrier

- Training fees and costs
- Distance to training centers
- Lack of child care
- Training schedules (conflict with farming cycles or work)
- Language barriers (e.g., training not in Maya languages)
- Lack of basic literacy/numeracy
- No access to certification pathways
- Insecure land tenure is limiting access to finance
- Sex norms restricting women's participation
- Limited internet connectivity for online training

7. What do you see as the biggest challenge(s) to making TVET training and work-based learning more inclusive (e.g., women in rural communities, persons with disabilities)?

8. What initiative(s) would you recommend to overcome this challenge(s)?

Section E: Skills for employability and productivity

Please rate the extent to which you agree with the following statements:

Rating Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree | 2 = Disagree | 3 = Neutral | 4 = Agree | 5 = Strongly Agree

- Internships, apprenticeships, and other types of work-based learning arrangements are effectively structured and implemented.
- Employers have sufficient incentives to participate in TVET training and capacity-building.
- Ministries and agencies provide effective support for entrepreneurship and small enterprise development through courses in informal TVET settings (communities and/or women's groups).
- The TVET system is preparing students with the skills needed for decent work, productivity, and lifelong learning.

For agroforestry (cacao, spices, vanilla, honey), employers and cooperatives have sufficient incentives to provide on-the-job training in:

Rating Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree | 2 = Disagree | 3 = Neutral | 4 = Agree | 5 = Strongly Agree

- ▶ Post-harvest processing
- ▶ Quality control
- ▶ Organic/sustainable farming practices
- ▶ Value-added product development

For tourism, employers have sufficient incentives to provide on-the-job training in:

Rating Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree | 2 = Disagree | 3 = Neutral | 4 = Agree | 5 = Strongly Agree

- ▶ Customer service
- ▶ Cultural interpretation
- ▶ Guiding and safety
- ▶ Digital tools (e.g., booking, marketing)

Rate the effectiveness of entrepreneurship support for:

Rating Scale: 1 = Very Ineffective | 2 = Ineffective | 3 = Somewhat Effective | 4 = Effective | 5 = Very Effective

- ▶ Women-led chocolate/spice processing enterprises
- ▶ Community-based tourism initiatives
- ▶ Youth agro-tourism ventures
- ▶ Artisan craft cooperatives

The TVET system is preparing students with the skills needed for decent work in (select all that apply):

- ▶ Agroforestry value chains (cacao to chocolate, spices, vanilla, honey)
- ▶ Sustainable tourism enterprises
- ▶ Value-added food processing
- ▶ Artisan crafts and cultural products
- ▶ None

9. What three system-level changes would most strengthen the relevance and impact of TVET training and work-based learning opportunities in: (a) Agroforestry sectors, (b) Sustainable tourism in Maya and Garifuna communities, (c) Women and youth seeking to enter these priority sectors?

10. How can TVET institutions strengthen partnerships with cacao buyers, chocolate manufacturers, tourism operators, and craft exporters to provide work-based learning?

Section F: Infrastructure and support systems for priority value chains

Rate the adequacy of the following support systems for TVET graduates entering agroforestry or tourism:

Rating Scale: 1 = Very Inadequate | 2 = Inadequate | 3 = Neutral | 4 = Adequate | 5 = Very Adequate

- Processing facilities (fermentation, drying, extraction)
- Cold storage and warehousing
- Testing laboratories (moisture content, quality standards)
- Business incubation services
- Access to startup capital/micro-finance
- Marketing and branding support
- Digital connectivity for online sales
- Transport and logistics
- Cooperative development support

Coordination exists between TVET institutions and:

Rating Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree | 2 = Disagree | 3 = Neutral | 4 = Agree | 5 = Strongly Agree

- Cacao cooperatives (e.g., TCGA, Maya Mountain Cacao)
- Tourism associations
- Women's groups doing processing/crafts
- Agricultural extension services
- Certification bodies (organic, Fair Trade)
- Export buyers and traders

11. What infrastructure investments would most support TVET graduates to successfully enter and thrive in the agroforestry or tourism sectors in Southern Belize?

12. How can TVET institutions better coordinate with cooperatives, community groups, and private sector employers in priority value chains?

Section G: Closing reflection

13. What three priority actions would have the greatest impact on strengthening the overall TVET ecosystem in Southern Belize over the next 3–5 years? (Examples: policy reform, institutional coordination, financing, infrastructure, private-sector engagement, community participation, or digital/green innovation.)

Appendix C: Validation session results

► C1 Participants

A regional validation session was conducted on 22 November 2025 at Hope Centre, Punta Gorda to review the findings from the TVET Situational Analysis. The session engaged 30 stakeholders from the Stann Creek and Toledo Districts, organized into three working groups of 8, 13 and 9 participants respectively. Stakeholders represented the following categories, listed in table C1.1:

► **Table C1.1: Validation session participants by category and sex**

Category	Male	Female	Total
TVET institutions (principals, teachers)	7	5	12
Community organizations (women's groups, indigenous organizations)	3	13	16
Government agencies (ILO, Ministry of Labour)	1	3	4
Total	11	21	32

Participants reviewed preliminary findings on barriers to skills development, providing feedback on accuracy and completeness. Stakeholders also identified which barriers and interventions they considered most critical, offering insight into potential prioritization for phased implementation. The results reflect stakeholder consensus.

► C2 Barriers to skills training access

Stakeholders reviewed barriers across three categories corresponding to the barrier analysis presented in section 5: financial and geographic constraints, family and cultural factors, and institutional challenges. Within each category, participants confirmed the barriers identified in the situational analysis and indicated which they considered most critical.

C2.1 Financial and geographic barriers

Stakeholders confirmed cost of training as the primary barrier, followed by transportation costs and distance from training centres. Transportation was highlighted as a cascading barrier: when a single daily bus is missed, trainees must cover additional costs for alternative transport or accommodation. The ITVET Stann Creek's provision of bus services was cited as a model.

C2.2 Family and cultural barriers

Language barriers affecting Q'eqchi' and Mopan Maya speakers emerged as the most critical barrier, followed by childcare responsibilities and traditional expectations limiting women's mobility. Stakeholders reported very low literacy levels in some indigenous communities and noted that flexible scheduling and village-based delivery would improve accessibility.

C2.3 Institutional and foundational skills barriers

Weak foundational skills among trainees (numeracy, literacy, digital literacy) were identified as the primary institutional barrier, followed by inadequate equipment and tools, curriculum-industry mismatch, and limited technology and internet connectivity.

C2.4 Barriers affecting persons with disabilities

Stakeholders confirmed that physical infrastructure (lack of ramps, accessible facilities), limited provision of assistive technologies and insufficient support services constrain access for persons with disabilities. Attitudes and awareness among educators were also noted as areas requiring attention.

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