

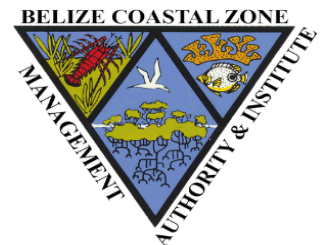


Future Planning Workshop

Grand Resort & Residences
Belize City, Belize
February 25th - 27th , 2026

SUMMARY REPORT

April 1, 2026



BSOP Future Planning Workshop - February 25 to 27, 2026

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BACKGROUND & OBJECTIVES

The Belize Sustainable Ocean Plan (BSOP) represents Belize's national Marine Spatial Plan (MSP), developed under the Blue Bonds for Ocean Conservation agreement. Led by the Coastal Zone Management Authority and Institute (CZMAI) under the Ministry of Blue Economy and Marine Conservation (MBEMC), the BSOP provides a comprehensive framework to guide the sustainable use, protection, and development of Belize's marine resources, balancing environmental integrity, social equity, and economic growth.

As part of the continued advancement of the BSOP process, the MSP Future Planning Workshop was convened to transition from the assessment of existing ocean uses toward forward-looking spatial planning. The workshop brought together a diverse group of stakeholders to validate prior technical outputs, explore future ocean-use scenarios, and strengthen alignment across sectors in preparation for the next phase of plan development.

This workshop builds on previous technical sessions, including SeaSketch and Marxan engagements, and reflects Belize's commitment to an inclusive, science-based, and participatory planning approach. Particular emphasis was placed on ensuring that stakeholder knowledge, sector priorities, and emerging ocean uses are effectively integrated into national marine planning efforts.

The main objectives of the workshop were to:

- Validate and refine the compatibility matrix based on sector-specific expertise and stakeholder input
- Identify and assess emerging ocean uses and their implications for future marine space allocation
- Support the development and evaluation of future planning scenarios to guide sustainable ocean use
- Strengthen cross-sector understanding of spatial interactions, trade-offs, and potential conflicts
- Reinforce stakeholder engagement and ownership in the ongoing BSOP process

WORKSHOP HIGHLIGHTS

A total of forty-six (46) participants attended the Future Planning Workshop across the three-day period. As shown in Figure 2, attendance reflected a fairly balanced gender composition, with female participants comprising approximately 56% of total attendees and male participants accounting for 44%.

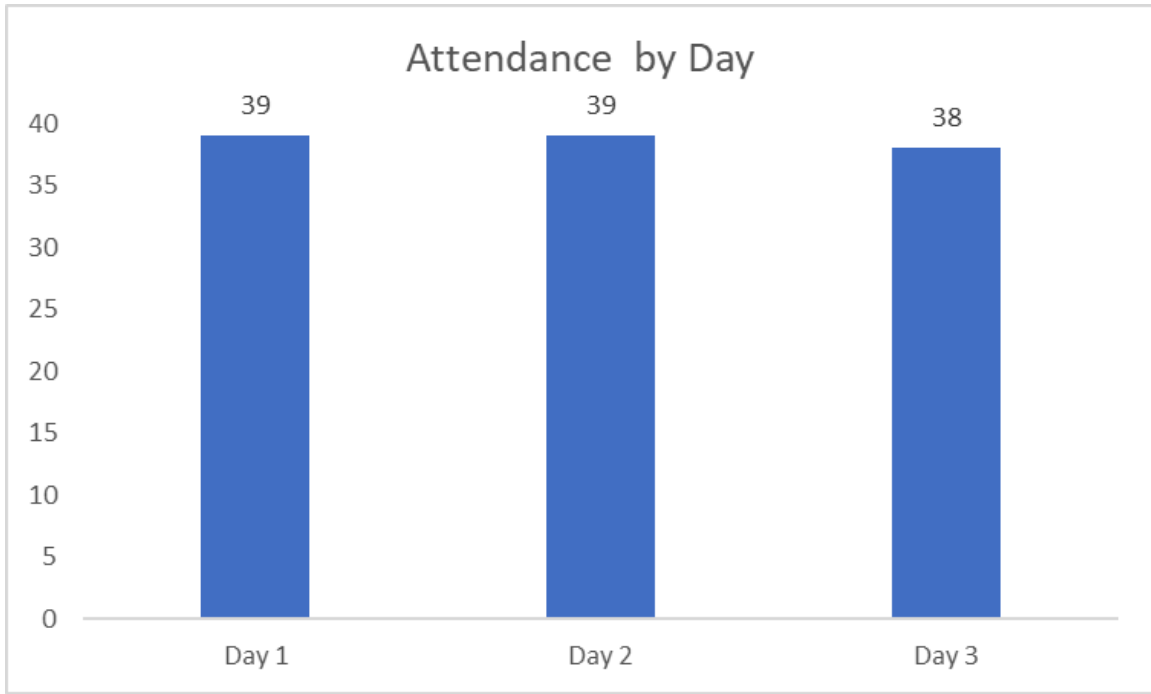


Figure 1: Workshop Participation by Day

Workshop Attendance: Attendance remained consistently high throughout the workshop, with 39 participants recorded on both Day 1 and Day 2, followed by a slight decrease to 38 participants on Day 3. This sustained level of participation reflects strong stakeholder engagement and continued commitment across the full duration of the workshop.

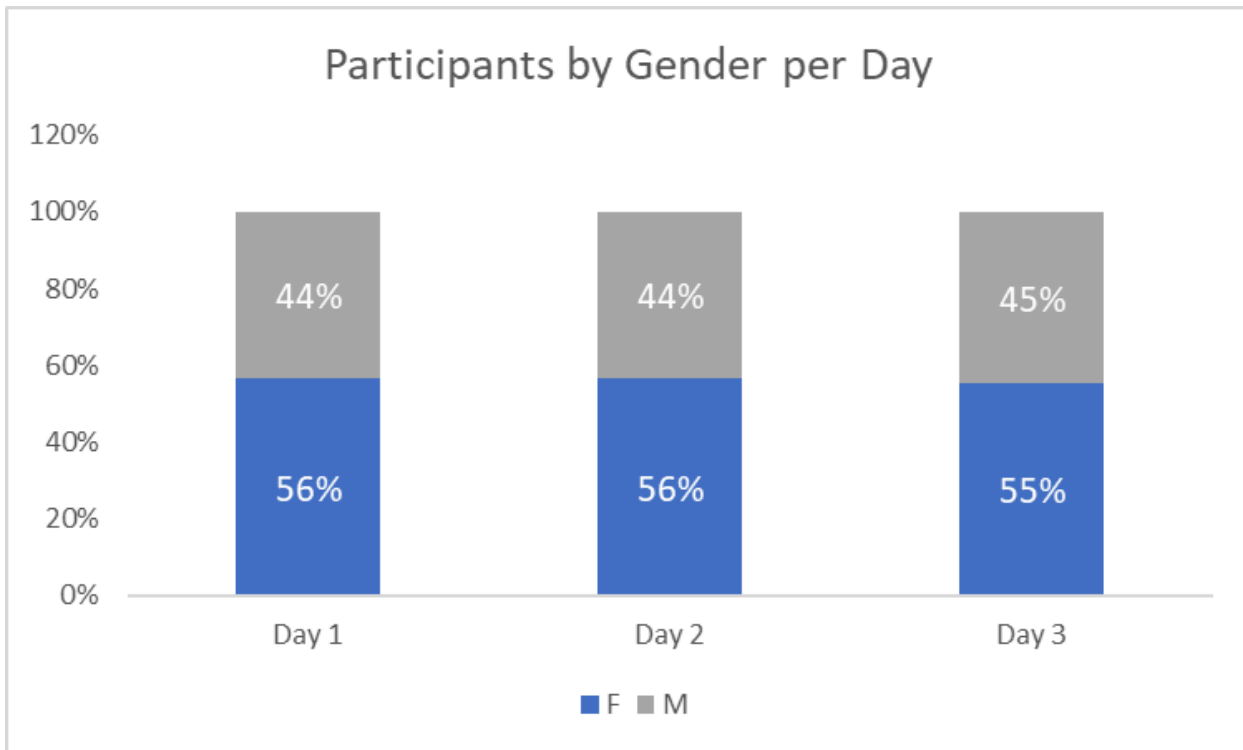


Figure 2:

Workshop Participation by Gender

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Gender Representation: The data reflects a consistently balanced composition throughout the three-day period, with female participation slightly higher each day, accounting for 56% on Day 1 and Day 2, and 55% on Day 3, while male participation represented 44%, 44%, and 45% respectively. This consistency highlights sustained and equitable engagement across genders during the workshop.

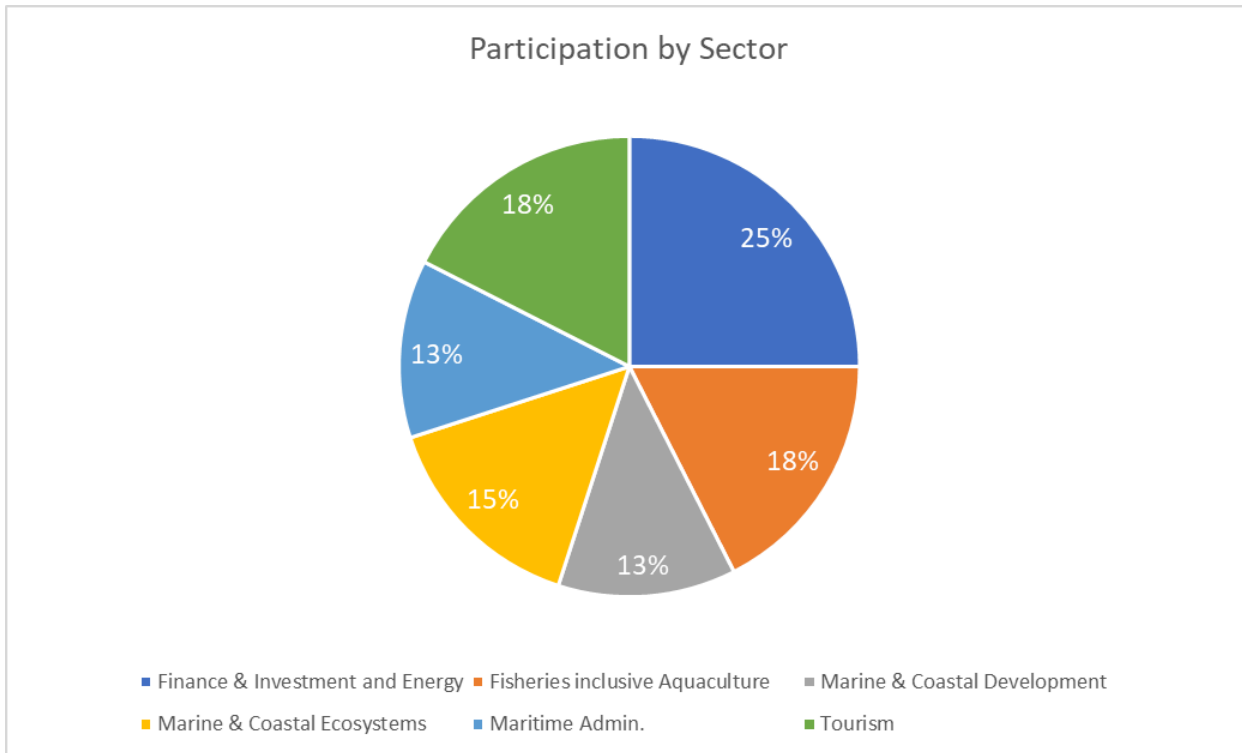


Figure 3:

Sector Representation Pie Chart

Workshop participation spanned **six (6) key sectors** under the Belize Sustainable Ocean Plan (BSOP), reflecting an inclusive approach that brought together a well-rounded mix of expertise and perspectives. This broad representation underscores the inclusive, collaborative, and multi-sectoral nature of Belize’s MSP process.

Sector Representation:

- Marine & Coastal Ecosystems (15%)
- Fisheries inclusive of Aquaculture (18%)
- Finance & Investment (25%)
- Marine & Coastal Development (13%)
- Maritime Administration (13%)
- Tourism (18%)

KEY ACTIVITIES & OUTCOMES

Participants engaged in a series of plenary discussions and structured breakout exercises designed to advance Belize's marine spatial planning process from current conditions toward future-oriented decision-making. The workshop combined technical presentations with interactive validation and scenario-based activities, generating critical inputs to inform the next phase of the BSOP.

The key activities and outcomes are summarized below:

1. BSOP Progress Update and Planning Context

Participants were updated on the progress of the BSOP, including advancements toward Milestone 6. Discussions highlighted improvements in spatial datasets, planning layers, and coordination mechanisms across agencies. Stakeholders emphasized the importance of continued data transparency and harmonization through established governance structures, including the Steering Committee (SC) and Technical Working Groups (TWGs).

2. Alignment of RBB Framework with BSOP

The workshop reinforced alignment between the Resilient Bold Belize (RBB) framework and the BSOP zoning approach. Participants reviewed how RBB protection categories correspond to BSOP's High and Medium Biodiversity Protection Zones and highlighted the need for a harmonized classification system across RBB, IUCN, and national planning frameworks to ensure clarity and consistency.

3. Zoning Framework Refinement

Through facilitated group exercises, participants provided input on simplifying and strengthening Belize's zoning framework. There was general agreement on maintaining two primary biodiversity protection classes—High and Medium Protection Zones—while also recommending the inclusion of clearly defined single-use zones (e.g., tourism-only areas, mariculture zones, archaeological sites, and military exclusion zones) to enhance spatial clarity and management effectiveness.

4. Review of Spatial Planning Tools and Outputs

Participants engaged in a hands-on review of preliminary spatial planning outputs, including multiple planning scenarios. These discussions explored ecological, social, and economic trade-offs associated with different zoning configurations. Key recommendations included refining cost layers, improving data weighting, incorporating reef health and economic valuation data, and clearly defining exclusion areas such as major shipping routes.

5. Identification of Next Steps in the BSOP Process

The workshop concluded with a shared understanding of the next steps required to advance the BSOP. These include continued refinement of planning scenarios, targeted community consultations, and national-level validation sessions. The overall timeline for completing the Draft Sustainable Ocean Plan and finalizing the BSOP was reaffirmed, reinforcing stakeholder commitment to the process.



Figure 4: Key Activities and Group Work

Examples of Local Knowledge in Action

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Local and traditional knowledge played a critical role in shaping the outputs of the MSP Future Planning Workshop. Participants contributed valuable, experience-based insights that complemented technical data and strengthened the relevance of planning discussions.

Stakeholders identified culturally and economically significant areas that should be carefully considered in future spatial planning and zoning decisions. Key examples include:

- The need to exclude high-use navigation routes (e.g., English Caye and Inner Channels) from full protection zones to maintain safe and efficient maritime access
- Recognition of traditional fishing grounds and mariculture sites as essential for sustaining livelihoods and supporting coastal economies
- Inclusion of culturally significant areas, such as Garifuna heritage sites and archaeological locations, as zones requiring special consideration, protection, or restricted use

These contributions highlight the importance of integrating local knowledge into marine spatial planning to ensure that decisions are context-specific, socially equitable, and grounded in real-world use patterns.

Importance of Workshop

The MSP Future Planning Workshop represents a key milestone in advancing Belize's Sustainable Ocean Plan (BSOP). By bringing together diverse stakeholders in a structured, participatory environment, the workshop strengthened alignment across sectors and reinforced a shared commitment to sustainable ocean governance.

The combination of technical tools, sector-based validation exercises, and collaborative dialogue enhanced the credibility and robustness of the planning process. Importantly, the workshop facilitated a transition toward forward-looking decision-making, equipping stakeholders to better understand future pressures, trade-offs, and opportunities within Belize's marine space.

Through the integration of stakeholder input, technical analysis, and scenario-based planning, Belize continues to move toward a more resilient, balanced, and inclusive marine spatial framework, one that supports biodiversity conservation while sustaining livelihoods and national development priorities.

EVALUATION FEEDBACK

A total of twenty-six (26) participants attended the workshop, with twelve (12) participants completing the post-workshop evaluation. The feedback reflects a high level of overall satisfaction, with participants highlighting the workshop's relevance, structure, and Analysis of participant responses revealed several consistent strengths:

- **Compatibility Matrix as a Core Value Driver:**
The compatibility matrix exercise was widely identified as the most valuable component of the workshop, enhancing participants' understanding of interactions across marine sectors.
- **Cross-Sector Engagement and Learning:**
Participants emphasized the importance of engaging with representatives from other sectors, which strengthened awareness of competing uses, shared challenges, and opportunities for collaboration.
- **Collaborative and Inclusive Environment:**
The workshop successfully created a space where sector voices were heard and considered, fostering open dialogue and mutual understanding.
- **Practical and Applied Learning:**
Interactive group exercises and discussions enabled participants to apply concepts in real-time, reinforcing learning and relevance to their professional roles.

Key Challenges Identified

While overall feedback was positive, several recurring challenges were noted:

- **Time Constraints:**
Participants consistently indicated that insufficient time was allocated to fully engage with key exercises, particularly the compatibility matrix and scenario development activities.
- **Complexity of Future Planning and Scenarios:**
Some participants found it challenging to interpret and apply future scenarios, particularly when balancing multiple variables and translating concepts into actionable outputs.
- **Lack of Standardized Definitions:**
Variations in the interpretation of sector activities and terminology affected consistency in scoring and decision-making during exercises.
- **Group Dynamics and Learning Environment:**
A few participants noted that noise levels and differences in sector knowledge created challenges for effective group engagement.

Recommendations for Improvement

Participants provided constructive recommendations to enhance future MSP workshops:

- Develop and share standardized definitions and reference materials for sector activities prior to exercises
- Allocate additional time for hands-on activities, particularly for matrix validation and scenario development
- Conduct pre-workshop consultations or briefings with sector representatives to ensure alignment and preparedness
- Improve facilitation of group dynamics, including room layout and noise management
- Maintain the current interactive and inclusive approach, which was widely valued

Participants' Voice

Key reflections from participants (paraphrased) include:

- “The compatibility matrix helped me better understand how activities interact across sectors.”
- “Engaging with other sectors gave valuable insight into their challenges and perspectives.”
- “The collaborative atmosphere ensured all sector voices were heard.”
- “The exercises made the process practical and relevant to real-world application.”

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on workshop discussions, sector outputs, and evaluation feedback, the following strategic recommendations are proposed to strengthen the ongoing development and implementation of the Belize Sustainable Ocean Plan (BSOP):

1. Strengthen the Compatibility Matrix as a Decision-Support Tool

- Incorporate sector-specific adjustments and validated scoring from the workshop into the compatibility matrix
- Standardize definitions for marine uses and activities to reduce ambiguity and improve consistency in interpretation
- Further disaggregate key sectors (e.g., fisheries gear types, tourism subcategories, infrastructure types) to improve analytical precision
- Retain reference to illegal or non-permitted activities within the broader planning framework for enforcement and monitoring considerations, while ensuring the matrix reflects legally recognized uses

2. Integrate Emerging Ocean Uses into Spatial Planning

- Systematically incorporate identified emerging uses (e.g., mariculture expansion, seaweed farming, renewable energy, evolving tourism models) into planning scenarios and spatial analysis
- Assess potential interactions, trade-offs, and spatial pressures associated with these uses
- Develop preliminary guidance to ensure that emerging sectors evolve in alignment with environmental sustainability and existing ocean uses

3. Enhance Scenario Development and Application

- Refine future planning scenarios to better reflect realistic development pathways, sector priorities, and environmental constraints
- Incorporate stakeholder feedback to strengthen the relevance and usability of scenarios as planning tools

- Expand guidance and support materials to improve participant understanding and application of scenario-based planning approaches

4. Strengthen Stakeholder Engagement and Cross-Sector Coordination

- Continue fostering inclusive, multi-sector engagement throughout the MSP process to ensure balanced representation of interests
- Facilitate structured opportunities for cross-sector dialogue to address conflicts, overlaps, and synergies in marine space use
- Consider pre-workshop briefings or targeted consultations to improve preparedness and alignment among participants

5. Improve Data Clarity, Accessibility, and Communication

- Enhance the clarity, accessibility, and visualization of spatial planning data and tools to support informed decision-making
- Integrate local and traditional knowledge alongside technical datasets to strengthen planning outcomes
- Ensure that datasets and planning assumptions are transparent and consistently communicated across sectors

6. Strengthen Workshop Design and Facilitation for Future Engagements

- Allocate additional time for hands-on exercises, particularly for compatibility matrix validation and scenario development
- Provide standardized reference materials (e.g., definitions, activity classifications) in advance of exercises
- Optimize workshop logistics, including room layout and facilitation approaches, to improve group interaction and minimize disruption



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