

TC Document

I. Basic Information for TC

▪ Country/Region:	BELIZE
▪ TC Name:	Skills for the Future Project Development Grant
▪ TC Number:	BL-T1166
▪ Team Leader/Members:	Naslund-Hadley, Emma Ingrid (SCL/EDU) Team Leader; Alejandra Forero Perez (SCL/EDU); Bazan, Jorge Antonio (SCL/EDU); Blasco, Ivana (SCL/EDU); Casco, Mario A. (ITE/IPS); De Dobrzynski, Esteban (LEG/SGO); Duryea, Suzanne (SCL/GDI); Greta Olivares (SCL/EDU); Lunstedt Tapia, Christian (VPC/FMP); Michel Torino, Belen (SCL/EDU); Moreno, Michelle Leonor (ITE/IPS); Orchel Usher (CID/CBL); Watson, Brodrick Raylando (VPC/FMP) Lunstedt Tapia, Christian (VPC/FMP); Michel Torino, Belen (SCL/EDU); Moreno, Michelle Leonor (ITE/IPS); Orchel Usher (CID/CBL); Watson, Brodrick Raylando (VPC/FMP)
▪ Taxonomy:	Operational Support
▪ Operation Supported by the TC:	BL-L1044
▪ Date of TC Abstract authorization:	n/a
▪ Beneficiary:	Ministry of Education Culture Science and Technology (MoECST)
▪ Executing Agency and contact name:	Inter-American Development Bank
▪ Donors providing funding:	Global Partnership for Education Fund(GPE)
▪ IDB Funding Requested:	US\$200,000.00
▪ Local counterpart funding, if any:	US\$0
▪ Disbursement period (which includes Execution period):	36 months
▪ Required start date:	June 30, 2023
▪ Types of consultants:	Individual consultants
▪ Prepared by Unit:	SCL/EDU-Education
▪ Unit of Disbursement Responsibility:	SCL/EDU-Education
▪ TC included in Country Strategy (y/n):	Yes
▪ TC included in CPD (y/n):	No
▪ Alignment to the Update to the Institutional Strategy 2010-2020:	Diversity; Social inclusion and equality

II. Description of the Associated Loan/Guarantee

- 2.1 The Skills for the Future Program ([BL-L1044](#); [BL-G1008](#)) was approved by the Board on May 17, 2023. The development objective is to contribute to the closing of the skills gap to prepare tomorrow's workforce for the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4iR). The specific objectives of the proposed operation are to: (i) increase access to instruction that accelerates learning in foundational skills, including those of Students with Disabilities (SwD); (ii) increase access to instruction that promotes learning in 4iR

skills; and (iii) increase access to gender-specific education services to promote inclusive education.

- 2.2 The Skills for the Future Program is financed through an Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) investment loan of US\$15 million and a US\$5 million Multiplier Allocation grant from the Global Partnership for Education (GPE). The Multiplier Allocation enables countries to mobilize grant resources to strengthen their education systems. Eligible countries access the GPE Multiplier Allocation by mobilizing at least US\$3 in new and additional external financing for every US\$1 from the Multiplier Allocation.

III. Objectives and Justification of the TC

- 3.1 Despite substantive efforts made by the Government of Belize to provide distance learning, COVID-19 related school closures led to a decrease in the rate of learning. In line with international trends, large losses were recorded in foundational skills. The average mathematics score among 5th graders dropped by 36% between the 2018/19 and 2021/22 school years. In the 8th-grade (standard 6), the average mathematics score dropped by 41%. In English language, the average test score decreased by 26% among 5th graders and 15% among 8th graders ([Näslund-Hadley et al., 2023](#)). The link between foundational skill gaps and education attainment is well established. Belize already struggled with some of the region's lowest access rates pre-pandemic at the primary and secondary levels.¹ In line with international trends, during the COVID-19 pandemic student average repetition and dropout rates increased at the secondary level of education. Grade repetition increased from 6.2% to 10.4% between the 2018/19 and 2021/22 school years among 8th graders. In the same period, the dropout rate increased from 4.9% to 6.1% among 5th graders ([Näslund-Hadley et al., 2023](#)).
- 3.2 **Accelerated Instruction.** Already pre-pandemic, there was increasing evidence that teaching grade-level content to all students while identifying students needing special support can help learning of low-achieving students ([Lynch & Hill, 2020](#)). In the face of vast foundational skill learning gaps in the pandemic era, the training of teachers in this type of [individualized](#)² and [accelerated learning](#) methodologies has become the principal recommended instructional approach. Accelerated learning is not teaching the same curriculum at a faster speed. Accelerated learning allows students to learn grade-level content with just-in-time support. Accelerated learning that is individualized to each student has shown to be effective for struggling students also outside of the classroom through extracurricular activities, such as acceleration academies and high-dosage tutoring ([Schueler et al., 2017](#); [Kraft, 2015](#); [Zoido et al., 2022](#)). One drawback of individualized and accelerated instruction is that it requires advanced content and pedagogical skills of teachers, teaching at different levels in the same

¹ Gross school enrollment in Belize is 85.1% in primary education and 61.6% in secondary, compared to the regional average of 106.7% and 94.3%, respectively (CIMA). Net school enrollment in Belize is 76.8% at the primary level and 49.6% at secondary, compared to the regional average of 94.5% and 74.5%, respectively (CIMA).

² Individualized instruction allows each student to advance at his or her own pace.

classroom. High performing education systems often rely on adaptive instruction software to support teachers in meeting this challenge. Therefore, to close learning gaps, [BL-L1044/BL-G1008](#) will support teachers in the use of individualized and accelerated instruction practices, supported by an adaptive instruction software in foundational skills.

- 3.3 **Students with Special Education Needs.** To foster learning of foundational skills among students with Special Education Needs (SEN), the literature emphasizes well-designed learning progression goals in inclusive classrooms ([Woods, 2018](#); [Browder et al., 2007](#)). Most high-achieving education systems use some form of Individualized Education programs (IEP) that details the specialized instruction and related services for the SwD. To be effective, an IEP should be developed through a collaborative process that involves parents, teachers, school administrators and the students to come together and look closely at the child's needs and design a program that will help the students' progress ([U.S. Department of Education, 2000](#)). While the Ministry of Education Culture Science and Technology (MoECST) has IEP templates that include such a collaborative process, Belize's educators and school administrators have yet to be trained in how to apply them. Beyond the implementation of IEPs, students must also be screened for SEN. In Belize, only 1.3% of primary students have been identified to have SEN (physical and learning disabilities), suggesting vast under-detection.³ Substantive research shows stronger foundational skill gains for those SwD who receive early specialized interventions compared to those who benefit later ([Otaiba et al., 2014](#)). To foster foundational skills learning among SwD, [BL-L1044/BL-G1008](#) will train teachers and school administrators in screening of students and the development and implementation of IEPs through collaborative processes.
- 3.4 **Virtual Laboratory Technologies.** Resources from [BL-L1044](#) will finance the construction of science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics (STEAM) laboratories and maker studios in six large high school. In smaller schools where investments in physical science laboratories is less cost-effective, education systems increasingly use Virtual Laboratory (VL) technologies ([Alexiou et al., 2005](#)). Virtual Labs have shown to be a cost-effective for science learning ([Pope et al., 2017](#)), and increase students' confidence, motivation, and participation in higher level discussions ([Dyrberg et al., 2017](#)). In support of the second specific objective of increasing access to instruction that fosters 4iR skills, the program will support the use of VL technologies in 15 high school classrooms.
- 3.5 Against this background, the Government of Belize has requested the proposed TC to support the preparation for the implementation of the Skills for the Future ([BL-L1044/BL-G1008](#)) program in the areas of foundational skills, SEN, and VL Technologies.
- 3.6 **Objective.** The objective is to support the Government of Belize with the preparation for the implementation of the Skills for the Future Program. The specific objectives are: (i) mapping and validation of adaptive instruction software in foundational skills; (ii)

³ As a comparison, in Chile 17.6% of students in basic schooling (mainstream and segregated schools) have a disability or learning difficulty in 2021 ([Contreras et al., 2023](#)).

mapping and validation of screening tools for SEN; and (iii) mapping and validation of VL technologies.

- 3.7 **Strategic Alignment.** The TC is consistent with the Second Update to the Institutional Strategy (UIS) 2020-2023 ([AB-3190-2](#)) and is aligned with the development challenges of Social Inclusion and Equality by helping Belize transition to educational models that foster lifelong learning and inclusion. The TC is aligned with the cross-cutting issue of Gender Equality and Diversity by financing the mapping of disability screening tools. The TC is consistent with the Sector Framework Document for Skills Development (GN-3012-4) by ensuring that students develop the basic cognitive and socioemotional skills that will allow them to keep learning. It is aligned with the current IDB Group Country Strategy with Belize 2022-2025 (GN-3086), which prioritizes the building of skills for the post-COVID economy. The proposed operation is aligned with the national Belize Education Sector Plan ([BESPlan](#)), which seeks to close learning gaps that widened during the COVID-19 pandemic and foster digital and STEAM skills, and promotes education for students with SEN. The TC is also aligned with the priorities of the GPE, such as strengthening capacity, adapting, and learning to implement and drive results at scale. In 2022, the IDB became a Grant Agent (GA) of the GPE ([GN-3097](#)), a fiduciary fund administered by the World Bank, which for nearly two decades has supported solutions to build strong and resilient education systems.

IV. Description of activities/components and budget

- 4.1 To achieve its objectives, the TC has the following two components:
- 4.2 **Component 1. Review of School-based Screening Tools for SEN (US\$70,000).** The purpose of the Component is to identify and validate in the Belizean context assessment tools to screen students for physical, mental, and learning disabilities. Resources will finance the contracting of individual consultants for: (i) The identification of assessment instruments developed for application by schools to identify students with SEN. The review will encompass instruments to screen for physical, mental, and learning disabilities, distinguishing among instruments appropriate in low, middle, and high resourced settings. Preference should be given to open-source tools and those that are available in both English and Spanish; (ii) Presentation of the identified instruments to the MoECST, to select two top candidates for use in Belize; (iii) The validation of the two instruments in two Belizean schools, including one primary and one secondary school; and (iv) drafting of a summary report. The expected output for this component is a validated instrument for screening students with special education needs. This instrument would then be used in the Skills for the Future Program to screen students in activities related to Component 1 of BL-L1044.
- 4.3 **Component 2. Review of Differentiated Digital Learning Application in Foundational Skills (US\$65,000).** The purpose of the Component is to map and validate in the Belizean context a digital application for differentiated instruction in foundational skills. Resources will finance: (i) The identification of digital applications developed for students to aid them in their learning. The review will encompass digital differentiated learning applications. The review will include cost estimates for use in Belize; (ii) Presentation of the identified applications to the MoECST, to select two most promising applications for use in Belize; (iii) The validation of the two applications in two Belizean schools, including one primary and one secondary school; and

(iv) drafting of a summary report. The expected output for this component is a validated digital application for differentiated instruction. This digital application will be used for activities related to Component 1 of BL-L1044 to aid accelerated learning.

- 4.4 **Component 3. Review of Virtual Laboratory Digital Applications and Devices (US\$65,000).** The purpose of the Component is to map and validate in the Belizean context a virtual laboratory for science instruction in schools. Resources will finance: (i) The identification of virtual laboratory programs developed for application by students to improve their learning in contexts without access to physical science laboratories. The review will include cost estimates for use in Belize; (ii) Presentation of the identified programs to the MoECST, to select two most promising programs for use in Belize; (iii) The validation of the two programs in two Belizean schools, including one primary and one secondary school; and (iv) drafting of a summary report. The expected output for this component is a validated virtual laboratory application for science learning. This virtual laboratory will be used for activities related to Component 2 of BL-L1044 to aid in 4iR skills teaching.
- 4.5 **Budget.** The total cost of the TC is US\$200,000 and will be financed by the Program Development Grant (PDG) of the GPE to conduct studies related to SwD and the use of eLearning tools. Counter-part funding is not expected.

Indicative Budget (US\$)

Activity/Component	Description	GPE Funding	Total Funding
Component 1. Review of School-based Screening Tools for SEN		70,000	70,000
Mapping and validation of screening instruments	Individual senior consultant	35,000	35,000
Mapping and validation of screening instruments	Individual junior consultant	35,000	35,000
Component 2. Review of Differentiated Digital Learning Application in Foundational Skills		65,000	65,000
Mapping and validation of learning applications	Individual senior consultant	30,000	30,000
Mapping and validation of learning applications	Individual junior consultant	35,000	35,000
Component 3. Review of Virtual Laboratory Digital Applications and Devices		65,000	65,000
Mapping and validation of VL technologies	Individual senior consultant	30,000	30,000
Mapping and validation of VL technologies	Individual junior consultant	35,000	35,000
Total		200,000	200,000

- 4.6 **Monitoring.** The Project Team will be responsible for the review of all technical and financial reporting. The Team Leader will be responsible for monitoring activities in the field, and continuous progress meetings with the counterparts and consultants.

V. Executing agency and execution structure

- 5.1 The IDB through the Education Division (SCL/EDU) in collaboration with the Country Office in Belize (CID/CBL) will execute this TC. The Government has requested that the IDB execute the TC due to its long trajectory in education evaluations and history

with the program. This is consistent with Appendix 10 in the Operational Guidelines for Technical Cooperations (as modified Annex 2 of OP-619-4), which identifies the need of a strong institutional, operational, and technical capacity for the execution of the contemplated activities in technical cooperations.

- 5.2 **Execution and disbursement period.** The TC will be executed over a period of 36 months and disbursed over a period of 36 months as of the date of approval. The UDR is in SCL/EDU.
- 5.3 **Procurement.** The activities to be executed are included in the Procurement Plan (Annex) and the Bank will contract individual consultants, consulting firms and other services in accordance with current Bank procurement policies and procedures. The Bank will contract the services of individual consultants in accordance with Section AM-650 of the Administrative Manual “Complementary Workforce”; logistics and other related services in accordance with the IDB Corporate Procurement Policy (GN-2303-28); and consulting firms for services of intellectual nature in accordance with the Policy for the Selection and Contracting of Consulting Firms for Bank-Executed Operational Work ([GN-2765-1](#)) and its Operational Guidelines ([OP-1155-4](#)).
- 5.4 All deliverables and any other material prepared under this TC are the sole and exclusive property of the Bank, and as such, the Bank has title, rights (including copyrights) and exclusive interests in the ownership of said products.

VI. Major issues

- 6.1 The risks to project execution are reduced by being directly executed by the IDB. Although the validation of education tools in a context such as Belize always presents certain logistical challenges, the IDB has years of experience working with schools in remote areas, including service delivery in rural and urban marginalized schools.

VII. Exceptions to Bank policy

- 7.1 There are no exceptions to Bank policies.

VIII. Environmental and Social Strategy

- 8.2 This Technical Cooperation is not intended to finance pre-feasibility or feasibility studies of specific investment projects or environmental and social studies associated with them; therefore, this TC does not have applicable requirements of the Banks Environmental and Social Policy Framework (ESPF).

Required Annexes:

[Request from the Client - BL-T1166](#)

[Results Matrix - BL-T1166](#)

[Terms of Reference - BL-T1166](#)

[Procurement Plan - BL-T1166](#)