



**OUR CIRCLE**  
Making a Difference Together!

# **LGBT Community Needs Assessment Report Belize - 2016**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In September 2016, CoC Netherlands engaged Our Circle to conduct a needs assessment for the LGBT community in the Belize. The purpose of the LGBT Community Needs Assessment was to develop a comprehensive survey to explore the needs of the community, not specific only to Our Circle. Out of this, the data was used by Our Circle in refining of our five-year strategic plan.

Data was collected over a 5-week period from October to November 2016, where three main data collections were utilized: 1) online surveys, 2) focus group and 3) individual interviews. Data was collected from a pool of 58 Belizeans presenting a wide variety of sexual orientations, gender identities, ages, races, socioeconomic backgrounds and residential areas. The following report contains both qualitative and quantitative analyses of the data collected.

The results of the LGBT Community Needs Assessment are also being shared with other LGBT community organizations and resources, as well as with organizations that work with the LGBT community but are not specifically identified as LGBT organizations or services. Our Circle's strategic plan, incorporating the data from the community needs assessment and outlining Our Circle's plans to meet the identified needs, will be released on January 2017.

Our Circle would like to thank CoC Netherlands, MC Consultancy, and all the community organizations and members that participated in this comprehensive community needs assessment. We look forward to the continued growth and success of our community as a result.

Thank You.



## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the Needs Assessment was to gather data about the assets, needs and challenges of the LGBT community in Belize and to inform future funding decisions made by CoC Netherlands. In Belize, there is currently no data that reflects qualitative information about the LGBT needs as a collective body, however, there is information about subgroups, particularly the men who have sex with men (MSM) and transgender communities. The LGBT Community Needs Assessment was custom-made to provide a more comprehensive view of the entire community, one focused on demographics, strengths, and collective community member input related to areas of need. Further, the data is intended to provide information based on individuals' accounts of LGBT communities and their life experiences as part of those communities. As such, Our Circle maintained a commitment to diversity and access to participation by reducing as many barriers to the process as possible. This was achieved by attending to such considerations as ethnicity, and socioeconomic status, among others.

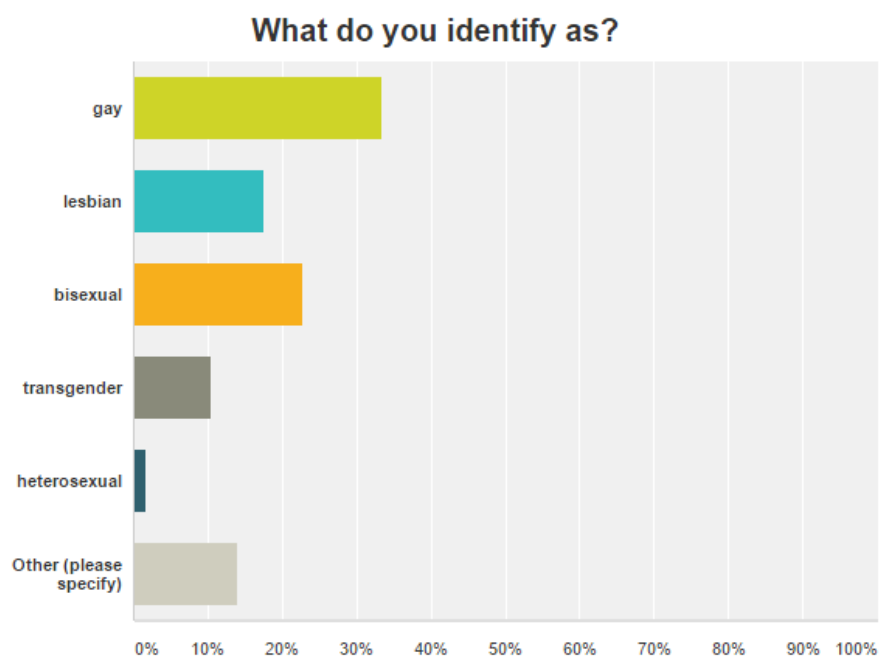
This report provides a first-level analysis of the data collected and is largely descriptive in nature. The data collected by the LGBT Community Needs Assessment provides a necessary background. It is also important to note that the data from the assessment allowed for evaluation of current programs and delivery of specific services.

## METHODOLOGY

The LGBT Community Needs Assessment used "snowball" sampling to learn about the experiences and needs of the Belizean LGBT community. Snowball sampling is a nonprobability sampling method used by researchers to identify a target population and engage them in involving others within their networks for the data collection process. All people who identified themselves as part of the community were invited to participate in at least one of the data instruments. Our Circle identified community partners and leaders who shared news of the assessment survey with their contacts, attended the focus group and provided suggestions for interviews. Their contacts, in turn, continued to share this information, which subsequently caused more contacts to share information about the LGBT Community Needs Assessment. Our Circle also used its active Facebook page to aid in participant recruitment. Community partners and leaders in different parts of Belize were identified to develop a strong, diverse sample. Through supportive relationships, Our Circle collected and analyzed data from 58 survey completers, 50 focus group participants and 50 interviewees, some of who were duplicated in several data instruments. Data collection was conducted for a 6-week period, beginning on October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2016 and ending on November 15<sup>th</sup>, 2016. A core project team of five people was responsible for the survey development, focus groups, and stakeholder interviews.

## DEMOGRAPHICS

A variety of factors resulted in different levels of demographic information collected across the three methods of data gathering. Because they supported relative anonymity, surveys collected the most detailed demographic data. Only broad, general information on gender, orientation and age range was asked of participants. Choosing to collect and report collective information for the focus groups and interviews was purposeful and reflected Our Circle's commitment to learn about the needs and experiences of LGBT people in a safe and respectful way. This section details demographic highlights from the surveys, focus group and interviews. All percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number.



Information collected from the needs assessment surveys reveal that respondents are quite diverse in multiple areas. Although the clear majority of the participants identified as gay (33%) or bisexual (23%), others identified as lesbian (18%), transgender (10%) and heterosexual (1%). Fourteen percent of participants selected "Other" with self-

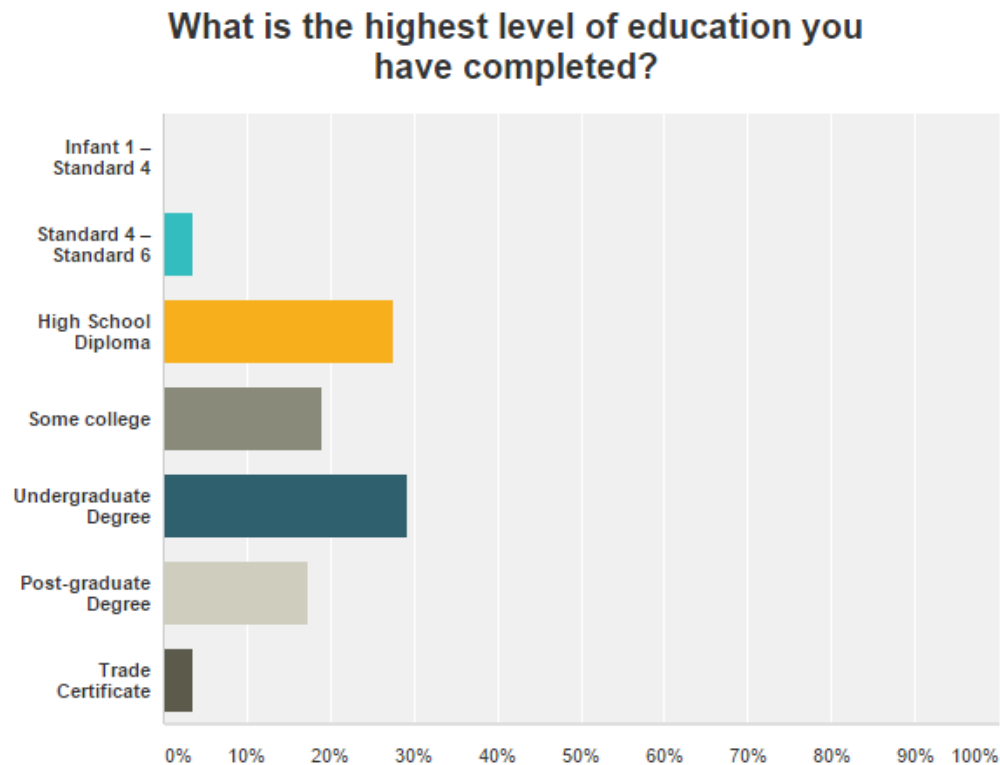
defined responses including: queer, stud, me, transsexual and unsure.

Racially, survey takers were diverse, stating that they are Creole (47%); Mestizo (26%); Garifuna (9%); Spanish (5%); Mayan (2%) and East Indian (2%). "Other" self-defined responses for the survey included: biracial and "prefer not to say."

Special efforts were made to reach out to as many sectors of the LGBT community as possible: youth, older adults, transgender and genderqueer. The age of needs assessment survey takers was effectively distributed between several groups including <18 year-olds (2%); 18- to 24 year-olds (17%), 25- to 34-year-olds (48%), 35- to 54-year-olds (31%) and adults 55 or older (2%). The median age of survey takers was between 33 and 34 years old—older than Belize age demographics that put the median age for Belize at 22 years old<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Belize Demographics Profile 2016 - [http://www.indexmundi.com/belize/demographics\\_profile.html](http://www.indexmundi.com/belize/demographics_profile.html)

Survey education fields were varied, further reflecting the diversity of the Belize LGBT community. In general, survey takers are highly educated, with 47% of all survey takers reporting that they completed college or graduate school. It is important to note that 4%, while not having a degree, have a trade certificate.



When sharing information on their household characteristics, a majority (23%) of survey takers report that their household consists of them and their partner, while another 13% report that their household includes not only them and their partners, but also children who belong to either partners. Most survey takers (about 70%) report that they are in committed relationships via common law – partnered living together (22%), serious dating (19%), monogamous relationship (10%), visiting relationship (9%), open -non-monogamous relationship (5%) and 3% reported being legally married to someone of a different sex. Another large group (31%) describe themselves as single.

**KEY IDENTIFIED NEEDS**

In the community concerns section, respondents were asked to identify three major areas of concern that affects them the most as Belizeans. The most frequently selected are identified below. Among survey respondents, homophobia was the largest area of concern (59%), followed by lack of LGBT social spaces (57%) and poverty (47%).

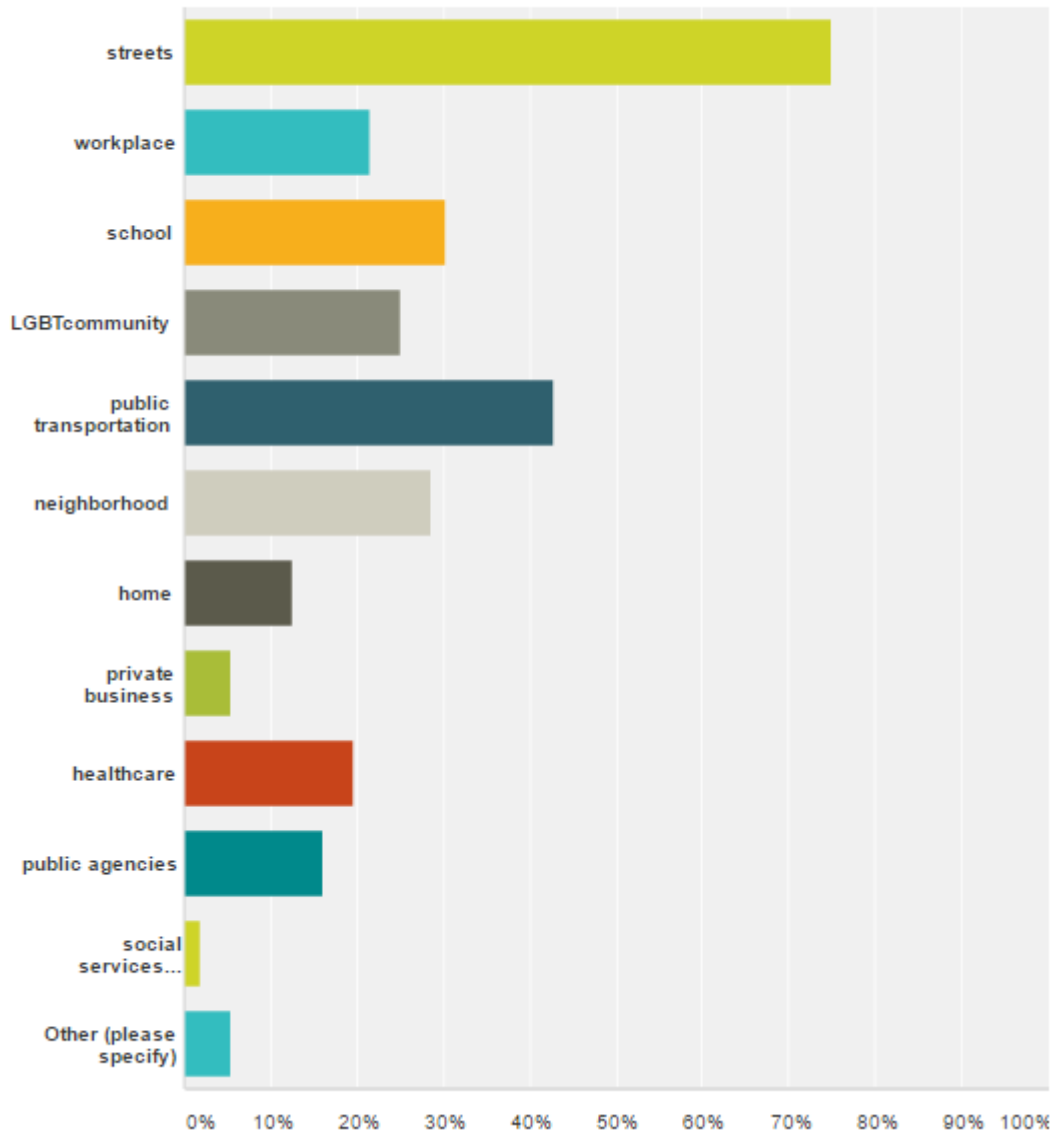
## What three issues concern you the most as a Belizean?

Answer Choices	Responses
ableism	3.45%
homophobia	58.62%
racism	18.97%
sexism	8.62%
transphobia	22.41%
workplace issues	17.24%
self-harm	5.17%
poverty	46.55%
polyamory	0.00%
parenting	10.34%
heterophobia	1.72%
global issues	10.34%
lack of LGBT social spaces	56.90%
gay positive education	37.93%
access to proper healthcare	34.48%
biphobia	5.17%
inclusion	18.97%

### Issue 1: Homophobia

As reflected in the responses, greater acknowledgment and responsiveness to community prejudices and discrimination is needed. Respondents reported experiencing discrimination across multiple settings within the LGBT community (25%) as well when interfacing in different social contexts where their safety felt compromised: public transportation (43%), school setting (30%) and neighborhood (29%). 75% of respondents, 83% of which identify as gay men, experience discrimination on the streets of Belize.

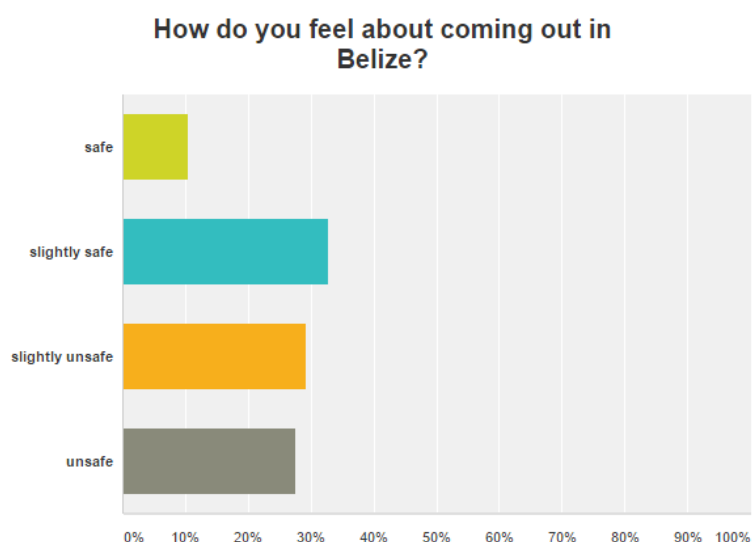
### What are the top three places you have experienced trans/homophobia the most?



#### Issue 2: Lack of LGBT social spaces

Most of the respondents slightly safe (33%) to come out in Belize; however, closely behind that response was feeling “slightly unsafe” (29%). The survey showed that lesbian women between the age of 25-34 years felt “safe” in coming out in Belize, while bisexual person between the age of 25-34 years felt “un-safe” in coming out in Belize. This in turn creates a connection on the basis that the participants mostly preferred to attend homes of friends and families to attend social events (36%). When asked what three recreational activities they would like to see available in Belize for the LGBT community, the top three activities are LGBT social group (51%), LGBT restaurant or coffee shop (49%) and outdoor LGBT activities (46%).





These data reflect some influence in relationship between the need for safe spaces to be themselves. One participant when asked about the LGBT community in Belize responded, *“Belizean society I still discriminatory against LGBT and some people might be hesitant to attend functions and be outed through association.”*

Although the population questioned was seeking safe spaces, they have identified safe

spaces within their community such as homes and friends of families (36%), house parties (29%) and some responded that they rarely go out (14%).

### **Issue 3: Poverty**

The results showed that the respondents between the ages of 35- 54 years were more concerned about poverty. The least concerned were the <18 years old (4%) and 55+ years old (4%), which parallels with the 2006 statistics of the least represented in the workforce.<sup>2</sup> It shows that mostly the gay single men (9%) were concerned about poverty, while the transgender community showed no concerns (0%).

## **OUR CIRCLE ENGAGEMENT**

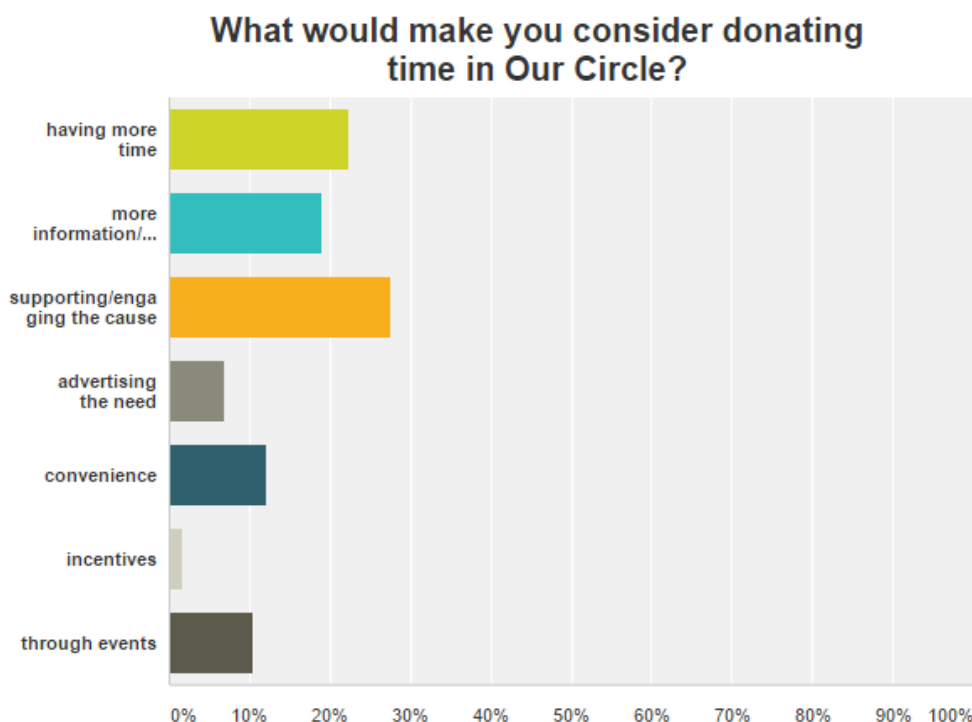
While most the participants had heard about Our Circle prior to the LGBT Community Needs Assessment (86%), Our Circle was rated differently in its ability to cater to different subgroups of the community. 74% of the gay respondents believed that Our Circle has not been able to successfully reach out to the gay population. 79% of the lesbian/bi women believe that Our Circle has been able to reach lesbian/bi women successfully. While the trans men didn’t believe that Our Circle has been able to reach them (83%), the trans women were split on Our Circle’s ability to reach trans women. Overall, 60% of the participants believed that Our Circle has been able to actively engage and empower the LGBT community. Out of the 40% who believes Our Circle isn’t meeting the needs of the LGBT community believed it was because of the lack of community connection.

52% of the participants have never attended an Our Circle event, however, 69% said that Our Circle hosts events that interest them. While 75% felt motivated to be a part of the work Our Circle does, 67% have never volunteered with Our Circle. When asked, what would make the

<sup>2</sup> Belize’s April 2016 Labour Force Survey - <http://www.sib.org.bz/statistics/labour-force>

participants consider attending Our Circle events, the results varied from: supporting or engaging the cause (28%) and having more time (22%). In respect to more time, majority preferred to engage in events on Saturday and Sunday (48%).

When asked what activities, they would engage in if offered by OC, participants top five answers were: social groups/activities (74%), career development (57%), health services (50%), community issues, concerns and politics (48%) and mental health counselling (23%).



## Conclusion

The data collected through Our Circle's LGBT Community Needs Assessment offers a uniquely comprehensive glimpse into the needs, assets and challenges of Belize's diverse LGBT communities. In some ways, these challenges are like those of other communities, with added complexities often related to an LGBT identity.

At this moment, significant numbers of individuals – both LGBT and otherwise – are experiencing concerns about many basic areas of daily life. LGBT people, like most individuals, are concerned about meeting their practical needs and accessing resources when needed. However, this study demonstrates that for individuals who identify as LGBT, sexual orientation and gender identity serve as compounding factors. The data collected through Our Circle's LGBT Community Needs Assessment offers a uniquely comprehensive glimpse into the needs, assets and challenges of Belize's diverse LGBT communities. Experiencing inequities because of discriminatory practices were reported as creating additional challenges and stressors, which were highlighted throughout community members' anecdotal experiences. Universal issues of well-being impact the LGBT community in ways that are like and different from other communities. Allocation of future funding should be aimed at strengthening existing services where possible and building capacity in underserved areas. The LGBT Community Needs Assessment provides a view to Belize's LGBT community and captures community feedback in an organized way to support more informed approaches to priority setting and decision making

regarding future funding. Further, the study acknowledges the varied assets and strengths of organizing strategies utilized by the many organizations, small and large, which support the diversity of individuals, neighborhoods, and organizing efforts that comprise Belize's LGBT Community. There are many existing services that specifically identify LGBT populations as their primary constituency. Many of these resources, although targeted, are limited in their outreach for various reasons, often resource related. 58 unduplicated LGBT Belizeans contributed their thoughts and experiences to increase awareness and knowledge, and to support the development of targeted responses to unmet community needs. The opportunity to build greater capacity across multiple communities now exists, which will help inform more comprehensive approaches to strengthening programs and supporting new and nontraditional organizing models. Such work has the potential to empower greater segments of the Belize LGBT community and Belize at large.

## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1:

#### General Questionnaire

##### **Demographics**

1. What is your highest level of education?
  - a. Infant 1 – Standard 4
  - b. Standard 4 – Standard 6
  - c. High School Diploma
  - d. Some college
  - e. Undergraduate Degree
  - f. Post-graduate Degree
  - g. Trade Certificate
2. Age:
  - a. <18
  - b. 18 – 24
  - c. 25 – 34
  - d. 35 – 54
  - e. 55+
3. Sexual Orientation:
  - a. Gay
  - b. Lesbian
  - c. Bisexual
  - d. Queer
  - e. Transgender
  - f. Heterosexual
4. Ethnicity:
  - a. Creole
  - b. Garifuna
  - c. East Indian
  - d. Mestizo
  - e. Mayan
  - f. Asian
  - g. Other

##### **Household:**

1. Which term best defines your relationship status?
  - a. Single
  - b. Dating
  - c. Visiting Relationship
  - d. Monogamous
  - e. Common-law
  - f. Open (non-Monogamous)

- g. Polyamorous
  - h. Married (different sex)
  - i. Widowed
2. Which of these are applicable in describing your household?
- a. Lives with pets
  - b. Lives with partner
  - c. Lives alone
  - d. Lives with roommate
  - e. Lives with children
  - f. Lives with own parents
  - g. Lives with friends
  - h. Lives with relatives
  - i. Lives with partners' parents

### **Community Concerns**

1. What three issues concern you the most as a Belizean?
- a. Ableism
  - b. Homophobia
  - c. Racism
  - d. Sexism
  - e. Trans phobia
  - f. Workplace issues
  - g. Self-harm
  - h. Poverty
  - i. Polyamory
  - j. Parenting
  - k. Hetero phobia
  - l. Global issues
  - m. Lack of LGBT social spaces
  - n. Gay positive education
  - o. Food security
  - p. Access to proper health care
  - q. Biphobia
  - r. Inclusion
2. Where are the top three places you have experienced trans/homophobia the most?
- a. Streets
  - b. Workplace
  - c. School
  - d. LGBT community
  - e. Public transportation
  - f. Neighborhood
  - g. Home
  - h. Private business
  - i. Healthcare
  - j. Public agencies
  - k. Social services agencies
  - l. Other
3. How do you feel about "coming out" in Belize?

- a. Safe
  - b. Slightly safe
  - c. Slightly unsafe
  - d. Unsafe
4. What three recreational activities would you like to see available in Belize?
- a. LGBT restaurant or coffee shop?
  - b. LGBT movie nights?
  - c. LGBT speakers?
  - d. LGBT higher ticket events?
  - e. Outdoor LGBT activities?
  - f. LGBT authors/reading?
  - g. LGBT book club
  - h. LGBT art displays
  - i. Community potlucks
  - j. Women's social group
  - k. Men's social group
  - l. LGBT sporting group
  - m. LGBT social group
  - n. Trans social group
  - o. Other
5. Where do you go for social events?
- a. Homes of friends and families
  - b. Restaurants/coffee shops
  - c. Movies
  - d. Internet
  - e. Parks/outdoor
  - f. Theatre
  - g. House parties
  - h. Gym
  - i. Bars
  - j. Museum
  - k. Sporting events
  - l. Rarely go out
  - m. Other

**Health Care:**

1. What is the most important factor in choosing a health and wellbeing provider?
- a. Respectful
  - b. Issue aware
  - c. Competence
  - d. Open communication
  - e. Accessible
  - f. Female
  - g. LGBT friendly
  - h. Affordable
  - i. Continuous care

**Our Circle Specific:**

1. Have you ever heard of Our Circle prior to this needs assessment?
2. Does the organization have:
  - a) Web Page
  - b) Facebook fan page
  - c) Blog
  - d) Twitter
  - e) Whatsapp group
  - f) Other social media \_\_\_\_\_
3. Do you know if Our Circle has a Strategic Plan?
4. From what you know, in what areas does Our Circle work?
  - a) Human Rights in general
  - b) Advocacy
  - c) Harm Reduction
  - d) Gender Based violence
  - e) HIV prevention
  - f) HIV care and treatment
  - g) Stigma and discrimination
  - h) Other \_\_\_\_\_
5. Do you think that OUR CIRCLE has so far been able to reach gay men successful?
6. Do you think that OUR CIRCLE has so far been able to reach lesbian/bi women successfully?
7. Do you think that OUR CIRCLE has so far been able to reach vulnerable communities through its proposed community service?
8. Do you think that OUR CIRCLE as so far been able to actively engage and empower the LGBT community? (If yes skip to question 10)
9. What makes you feel Our Circle isn't meeting the needs of the LGBT community?
  - a. Limited scope?
  - b. Don't know?
  - c. Need outweighs capacity?
  - d. Inaccessible?
  - e. Lack community connection?
  - f. Lack visibility?
  - g. Services don't cater to me?
10. Have you ever attended an Our Circle event?
11. Does Our Circle host events that cater to your interests
12. Have you ever volunteered with Our Circle?

13. Do you feel motivated to be a part of the work of OUR CIRCLE?

14. What would make you consider donating time to Our Circle

- a. Having more time?
- b. More information/accountability?
- c. Supporting/engaging the cause?
- d. Advertising the need?
- e. Convenience?
- f. Incentives?
- g. Through events?

15. When do you prefer to engage Our Circle events:

- a. Monday to Friday, 9am -5pm
- b. Monday to Thursday, 5pm – 7pm
- c. Monday to Thursday, 7pm – 9pm
- d. Saturday and Sunday, Day
- e. Friday to Sunday, 5pm – 9pm

#### **Future Programming Needs**

1. What do you think are some of OUR CIRCLE's strengths to be able to work with and for the LGBT community?
2. What do you think are some of the main barriers to working with the LGBT community in Belize?
3. Which five programs would you engage in if they were offered by Our Circle?
  - a. Social groups/activities
  - b. Community issues, concerns and politics
  - c. Health services
  - d. Sports
  - e. Career development
  - f. Mental health counseling
  - g. Youth programs
  - h. Spiritual events/groups
  - i. Family services
  - j. Other
6. What other services would you like to see Our Circle offer?
  - a. Community center
  - b. Mental health services
  - c. Public awareness/education
  - d. Diversity/equity
  - e. Rural outreach
  - f. Increase visibility
  - g. Other

## **Appendix 2:**



### “START, STOP, CONTINUE” RESPONSES

Start	Stop	Continue
Being a little more visible	Being afraid of the media	Working towards total inclusion of the LGBTQIA community
Being little more open minded about the type of work we do	Continue doing everything	Social activities
Community service	Meeting every 3 months	Meetings
Socials	You guys are doing a good job keep it up	Community service
Community service	Not sure	Socials
Fundraisers	So far so good	Conversations
Fieldtrips	Keeping the information to yourself: spread the news mien because awareness is important	Doing the good job they doing educating people
Having more socials	Nothing cause all activity include all LGBT	Building alliances with other partners
Build an LGBT hangout	I like all you do	Gatherings and group discussions
Develop a strategized plan to sensitize issues via media	I have no ideas, you guys are so good	Being dynamic
Doing peer-to-peer discussions or buddy/couple system. We learn from other's experiences	Involving only the LGBT community	Growing
More conversations on politics, relationships. Discrimination against LGBT persons in the workplace (legal protection against such discrimination)	None to my expectation	Reaching out to those who benefit your work
Awareness campaign on issues affecting the community	Keep on having fun events	Making a difference
Promote cultural events	Nothing! You guys are great	Conversation
Address family issues		Socials

Address workshop on legal system and leadership		To include activity that include allies
Include active participation of allies who are not afraid		Community outreach
Please do group activities: outdoors in nature, picnics, family, LGBT excursions		Doing events
HIV prevention from a fun perspective with MSM and Trans		Information share
Focus a bit more on HR issues		Play night
Start creating projects for the general community egg: make a mural, monument, paintings		Continue doing the fun activities you have been doing in the past months
Continuing the same activities that were done in the past years; continue the discussion night, open chat nights		Continue the get together
Meet and greets		More "talks"
Games night		Similar programs and activities but also if possible to include more persons for the LGBT community
Reaching out to others		Keep doing what you do
Having bigger socials to strengthen the LGBT community		Being an outlet for the LGBT community
		Having socials