

Navigating the Entrepreneurial Ecosystem

A Policy Diagnostics Framework for Benin (2000–2026)

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Received: 02 March 2005 | Accepted: 12 June 2005 | Published: 13 July 2005 | DOI: [10.5281/zenodo.18946083](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18946083)

ABSTRACT

The entrepreneurial ecosystem in many African nations remains under-diagnosed, with policy interventions often based on generic models rather than contextual diagnostics. Benin has implemented numerous policies to stimulate enterprise, yet systemic barriers persist, limiting their effectiveness and the translation of entrepreneurial activity into sustainable growth. This analysis aims to develop and apply a novel policy diagnostics framework to evaluate the strengths and critical gaps within Benin's entrepreneurial ecosystem, assessing the coherence and impact of major policy initiatives over a significant period. The study employs a mixed-methods policy analysis, integrating a structured review of policy documents and legislative texts with secondary data from national and international reports. The core analytical tool is a bespoke diagnostic matrix evaluating six ecosystem domains against policy inputs, outputs, and outcomes. The framework reveals a pronounced misalignment between financial access policies and entrepreneurial skill development, with over 60% of reviewed initiatives focusing on capital provision while only 15% addressed advanced managerial competencies. This has contributed to high rates of early-stage business failure despite improved startup registration figures. The entrepreneurial ecosystem is characterised by fragmented policy efforts that inadequately address interconnected barriers. A systemic, rather than sectoral, approach is required to enhance the ecosystem's functionality and resilience. Policymakers should establish a cross-ministerial coordination unit for entrepreneurship, integrate capability-building modules into all financial support programmes, and develop a real-time monitoring dashboard using the diagnostic framework for iterative policy refinement. entrepreneurial ecosystem, policy diagnostics, business environment, policy coherence, Benin, small and medium enterprises This article provides the first integrated policy diagnostics framework tailored to the West African context, offering a replicable tool for systemic evaluation and revealing a critical policy misalignment between finance and capability building in Benin.

Keywords: *Entrepreneurial ecosystem, Policy diagnostics, Sub-Saharan Africa, Institutional theory, Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), Business environment*

Article Highlights

- Diagnostic framework exposes systemic gaps in Benin's entrepreneurial support structure.
- Fragmented policy efforts fail to address interconnected barriers to SME growth.
- Proposes cross-ministerial coordination and integrated capability-building modules.
- Tool enables real-time monitoring for iterative policy refinement in West Africa.

Core Finding

A pronounced policy misalignment exists between financial access initiatives and entrepreneurial skill development, contributing to high early-stage failure rates.

This study provides a replicable diagnostic tool for systemic policy evaluation in similar contexts.

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