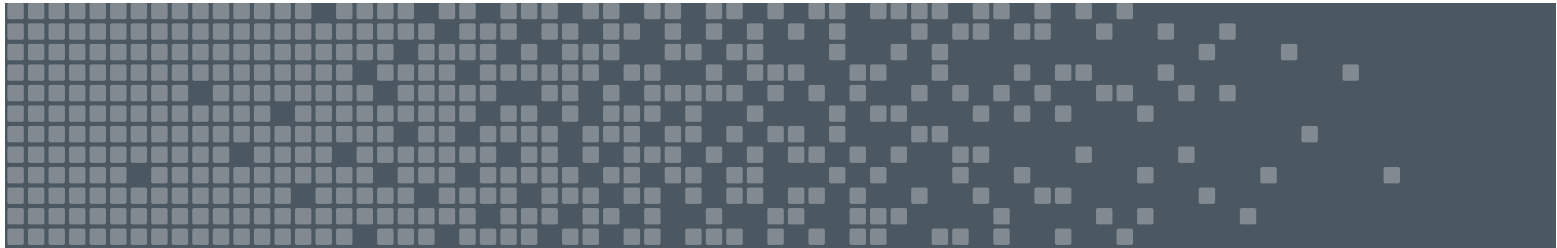


QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER



APRIL - JUNE
2024 - 2025

Vol. 4

Table of Contents



Editor's Note



Inclusive Cities



Innovative Cities



Productive Cities



Sustainable & Resilient Cities



Well-Governed Cities



Team News & Events

Editor's Note

Dear Stakeholder, Welcome to our Quarterly Newsletter



Nosipho Hlatshwayo
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“We are delighted to welcome two new members to the SACN team”

Welcome to the latest edition of our newsletter, an energising snapshot of how we are helping shape cities that are more inclusive, innovative, and resilient. It has been a fast-paced quarter, marked by progress, collaboration, and forward momentum, and we are excited to share some of the highlights with you.

The final quarter began with SACN contributing to the Presidential Johannesburg Working Group, a solutions-driven platform aimed at addressing the challenges facing the City of Johannesburg as Gauteng prepares to host the G20 Summit in November 2025.

Through our Inclusive Cities Programme, we partnered with the National Departments of Human Settlements and Cooperative Governance, and Traditional Affairs (CoGTA), as well as the South African Local Government Association (SALGA), to launch the All-of-Society Provincial Consultations for South Africa's New Urban Agenda Country Report, which is due to be submitted to UN-Habitat in August.

Our Innovative Cities Programme's Urban Data Manager participated in a webinar hosted by Urban Knowledge Exchange South Africa (UKESA) on Urban Data Science in Practice. In the Productive Cities space, we highlight the City of Johannesburg Economic Development Workshop a strategic engagement designed to strengthen coordination among national, provincial, and local economic development stakeholders.

Meanwhile, the Sustainable and Resilient Cities team hosted the Urban Energy Network Meeting in partnership with Sustainable Energy Africa (SEA) and the South African Local Government Association (SALGA), in collaboration with C40 Cities.

The Well-Governed Cities Programme highlights the PWJG Working Group, the Community of Practice in Urban Governance and Municipal Finance Webinar, and the Governance Oversight and Learning Network (GOAL-N).

We also put storytelling at the centre of our climate work through the Communications Action Lab and launched a social media call for local case studies to inform the upcoming NUA Country Report.

Looking ahead, we are excited to participate in the upcoming National Urban Forum in August, in partnership with the South African Local Government Association (SALGA), the National Departments of Human Settlements and Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, UN-Habitat, and eThekweni Municipality.

We hope this edition sparks new ideas, fuels your commitment, and reminds you that building better cities is a shared mission. We're glad to have you on this journey.

Best Regards,

Nosipho Hlatshwayo





New Urban Agenda (NUA) Provincial All-of-Society Consultations



The Department of Human Settlements (DHS), in collaboration with the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (CoGTA), the South African Local Government Association (SALGA), and the South African Cities Network (SACN), organised the New Urban Agenda All-of-Society Engagements across the country. These engagements aimed to gather input for South Africa's National Report, which is to be submitted to UN-Habitat regarding the progress of implementing the New Urban Agenda (NUA). This report is published every four years, with the most recent release occurring in 2022.

In-person engagements took place from June 26 to 27 in Gauteng, followed by events in the Eastern Cape on June 30 and July 1, in the Western Cape on July 3 and 4, in KwaZulu-Natal on July 7 and 8, and in the North West on July 10 and 11. Additionally, virtual engagements took place on July 14 for the Free State and Northern Cape, and on July 16 for Limpopo and Mpumalanga.

The purpose of the All-of-Society Engagement is to gather a diverse range of perspectives on the urbanisation process in South African cities and towns. Our country is currently preparing a report that reviews the implementation of government policy on integrated urban development over the past five years. This report aims to assess our current situation and outline recommendations for the next five-year period. This engagement provides an opportunity for various stakeholders to discuss and share their experiences in cities, towns, and villages, contributing to future planning.

Images from the in-person engagements:





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SACN participates in the Urban Knowledge Exchange Southern Africa (UKESA) Webinar

The Urban Knowledge Exchange Southern Africa (UKESA) hosted an engaging panel discussion on 18 June 2025 on the evolving landscape of urban data science, exploring three approaches to data-driven urban planning: open-access platforms of the South African Cities Network's Open Data Almanac (SCODA), proprietary models such as the CSIR's CityPlan, and hybrid systems from institutions like the Gauteng City-Region Observatory (GCRO).

The expert panellists debated the benefits, challenges, and real-world applications of each model, offering insights into how urban data is shaping smarter, more inclusive cities in South Africa. The panellists included our own Urban Data Manager, Majaha Dlamini, CSIR's Carike Karsten and GCRO's Laven Naidoo.

The webinar aimed to demonstrate how urban data science can support smarter city planning and address urban challenges, including traffic congestion, housing, energy use, and public services.

You are invited to join our next

UKESA WEBINAR

Urban Data Science in Practice
Exploring Open, Proprietary, and Hybrid Platforms
for Better City Planning

Date: Wednesday, 18 June 2025

Time: 3:00pm to 5:00pm





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COJ Economic Development Workshop

This quarter, the South African Cities Network (SACN) has continued to champion collaboration, knowledge sharing, learning and innovation in line with its strategy. Our participation in the City of Johannesburg (COJ) Economic Development Workshop on 30 June, hosted in partnership with the South African Local Government Association (SALGA) and the COJ Department of Economic Development, highlights our commitment to building high-performing cities that are productive, inclusive, sustainable and well-governed.

SACN was honoured to lead and facilitate sessions at the COJ Economic Development Workshop, a strategic engagement designed to strengthen coordination among national, provincial, and local economic development stakeholders. This engagement attracted stakeholders, including the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition (DTIC), Invest SA, Johannesburg Development Agency (JDA), and several entities responsible for trade and investment promotion, as well as economic policy planning and implementation. The workshop's primary goal was to enhance municipal capacity for investment attraction within the Gauteng City Region. But more importantly, to explore mechanisms needed to ensure that while attracting new investments, the city does not lose existing ones.

Among the key thematic areas explored was Infrastructure Packaging, where the best practices in preparing and presenting infrastructure projects to potential investors were discussed, focusing on their bankability, sustainability, and alignment with broader city development goals. More importantly, the workshop highlighted the importance of aftercare services in retaining investors and ensuring long-term economic benefits for communities.

In terms of outcomes, SACN's presence and facilitation enabled the extraction of practical insights and the development of collaborative action plans. Key outcomes included enhanced alignment among municipalities on investment promotion strategies, the identification of priority projects for joint advocacy and resource mobilisation, and a commitment to cohesive city branding and targeted communication, as well as ongoing peer learning and knowledge exchange. To this end, the SACN will support the implementation of action plans developed during the workshop and continue to convene stakeholders, documenting lessons learned to inform policy and practice across South Africa's cities.



Sustainable and Resilient Cities



Elijah Ramulifho
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An Urban Energy Network (UEN) Lens on Electricity Market and Distribution Reform

Sustainable Energy Africa (SEA), the South African Local Government Association (SALGA), and the South African Cities Network (SACN), in partnership with C40 Cities, hosted a dynamic two-day Urban Energy Network Meeting from 28–29 May 2025 at Irene Country Lodge, Gauteng. The meeting brought together municipal leaders, technical experts, and energy stakeholders to explore the evolving role of local government in South Africa's electricity sector.

Day 1 focused on renewable energy procurement models within the context of the emerging Wholesale Electricity Market and Electricity Distribution Industry (EDI) reforms. Key discussions included updates on the national electricity reform process, municipal readiness assessments, and case studies such as eThekweni's pioneering IPP procurement journey. Day 2 of the meeting shifted focus to municipal-owned renewable energy generation and socially inclusive energy models. Discussions emphasised the importance of enabling community energy partnerships and building municipal capacity for clean energy leadership.

Key takeaways from the meeting included the urgency of addressing infrastructure backlogs, rising municipal debt to Eskom, and the need for regulatory clarity as the electricity market prepares to take off in 2026. The event concluded with a strong call to action notwithstanding unfavourable conditions. Through steady cross-sector collaboration, municipalities can help modernise South Africa's electricity distribution sector and drive a just and inclusive energy transition.





Presidential Johannesburg Working Group (PJWG)

This year, the Gauteng Province, along with the City of Johannesburg and the City of Tshwane, will host the G20 summit. Following a meeting with the City of Johannesburg's senior political leadership in April to assess the city's readiness, the Presidency established the Presidential Johannesburg Working Group (PJWG) to improve service delivery and enhance business confidence in the city.

The scope of work over the next two years will accelerate Johannesburg's turnaround strategies, develop implementation plans for challenges not addressed in existing strategies, and facilitate partnerships and collaboration to drive progress.

On 17 April, the entire SACN Programmes Team met with the Presidency to discuss the organisation's participation in the PJWG. The meeting resolved that SACN's CEO would sit on the PJWG Secretariat, with Programme Managers participating in the various workstreams.

While the Presidency is driving the PJWG, implementation is the responsibility of the City of Joburg and all of society stakeholders organised in eight workstreams:

Governance and Financial Sustainability

Water

Electricity

Roads, Lighting and Waste Management

Safety and Security

Human Settlements and Social Development

Cultural Institutions and Heritage Sites

Inner City and Township Rejuvenation



Community of Practice in Urban Governance and Municipal Finance Webinar

On 26 June, the PM convened a Community of Practice in Urban Governance and Municipal Finance webinar on the Metro Trading Services Reforms that the President announced in the State of the Nation Address or SONA 2025.

The Panellists were:

- Rudi Dicks, Head of the Project Management Office in the Private Office of the President.
- Christopher Dyani, Divisional Head: Strategic and Operational Cluster Support, City of Tshwane.
- Tyrin Naidoo, Group Head: SPMO, Office of the Chief Operating Officer, City of Joburg.
- Simon Scruton, Deputy Head (Engineering and Data Services), eThekweni Water and Sanitation.
- Daniel Sullivan, Director: Grant Funding, City of Cape Town.
- Anthea Stephens, Climate and Sustainability Lead, Cities Support Programme, National Treasury.

Well-Governed Cities



Rudi Dicks



Christopher Dyani



Tyrin Naidoo



Simon Scruton



Daniel O'Sullivan



Anthea Stephens

The webinar was very well attended, reflecting the interest in a policy intended to have a positive effect on trading services, which are both a core part of municipal business and a crucial factor in the financial sustainability of municipalities.

Governance Oversight and Learning Network (GOAL-N)

On 27 June, in partnership with the South African Institute of Chartered Accountants (SAICA), the Programme Manager convened a webinar of the Governance Oversight and Learning Network (GOAL N), a SACN peer learning platform for researchers in metros providing support to oversight committees of the Council. Researchers attached to Municipal Public Accounts Committees in the City of Joburg, eThekweni, Ekurhuleni, Nelson Mandela Bay and Tshwane took part in the webinar, which covered the following topics:

- Understanding the root causes of UIFWE and how to address them.
- Leveraging on other stakeholders to strengthen oversight.
- Strategies for consequence management and accountability.
- Leveraging the GOAL N peer learning network for ongoing support and collaboration.

Team News & Events



CALL FOR ENTRIES

New Urban Agenda

Local Case Studies of Best Practice

Calling all Changemakers!

Do you have a local project or initiative making a difference in your community?

Whether you're improving access to housing, creating jobs, driving climate action, or building more inclusive cities, we want to hear from you!

South Africa is preparing its National Report on progress in implementing the New Urban Agenda (NUA) to UN-Habitat. This report showcases our country's achievements in promoting sustainable and inclusive urban development over the past four years, since the last submission in 2022. Your story could be featured as a best practice, highlighting how local actions are transforming South Africa's towns, cities, and communities.

Who can submit?

We welcome submissions from municipalities, NGOs, private companies, community organisations, academic institutions, and individual changemakers working on impactful local initiatives.

What are we looking for?

Projects or initiatives that contribute to sustainable urban development, particularly those addressing one or more of the following themes:

- Reducing Inequality & Promoting Social Inclusion
- Access to Adequate Housing
- Access to Basic Services (Water, Sanitation, Energy, etc.)
- Inclusive Urban Economy, Productivity, and Prosperity
- Resilient and Adaptive Urban Development
- Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation
- Biodiversity and Ecosystem Conservation
- Strengthening Urban Governance
- Spatial Planning and Land Use Management
- Financial Resource Mobilisation
- Capacity Development and Knowledge Sharing
- Technology and Innovation for Urban Transformation



Why submit?

From all submissions, **20 projects** will be selected for inclusion in **South Africa's NUA Country Report 2026**, gaining national and international visibility on a platform that celebrates local innovation and impact.

Deadline for submissions: 21 July 2025 at 17:00 - [SUBMIT HERE](#)

For more info, email: info@sacities.net

Team News & Events

City Communicators' Reference Group hosts the City Communication Action Lab.

The City Communicators' Reference Group hosted the Communication Action Lab on June 11, 2025, with Per Grankvist, Chief Storyteller from Viable Cities, a government-funded initiative aimed at making 23 Swedish cities climate-neutral by 2030. This virtual session aimed to explore the role of *Storytelling in Climate Communication*, featuring insights from Grankvist's extensive experience.

The objectives of this session were to:

- ✓ **Understanding the Impact of Storytelling:** Learn how narratives can simplify complex climate data, making it accessible and engaging for diverse audiences.
- ✓ **Strategies for Behavior Change:** Discover techniques to motivate individuals and communities to adopt sustainable practices through compelling stories
- ✓ **Practical Applications:** Discuss methods for integrating storytelling into existing communication strategies to enhance climate action initiatives

COMMUNICATION ACTION LAB

11 JUNE 2025 | 10:00-11:00
VIRTUAL - MS TEAMS

Per Grankvist
Chief Storyteller, Viable Cities, Sweden.

South African CitiesNetwork

WELCOME, WE WILL BEGIN SHORTLY

HARNESSING STORYTELLING TO DRIVE CLIMATE ACTION

WATCH NOW



As our loyal readers of our
Quarterly Newsletter, we would
love your feedback!
Please [click here](#).



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