

INDEPENDENT EVALUATION OF THE MUNICIPAL CAPABILITY & PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMME (MCP)



Independently prepared by: Public Affairs Research Institute (PARI)

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**INDEPENDENT
EVALUATION OF THE
MUNICIPAL CAPABILITY
& PARTNERSHIP
PROGRAMME (MCPPE)**

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ABBREVIATIONS

AR	Asset Register
BFI	Budget Facility for Infrastructure
BLM	Blouberg Local Municipality
CBD	Central Business District
CEF	Capital Expenditure Framework
CoGHSTA	Department of Cooperative Governance, Human Settlements and Traditional Affairs
COGTA	Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs
CSIR	Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (Implementing Partner)
DBSA	Development Bank of South Africa
DCoG	Department of Cooperative Governance
DDM	District Development Model
DLRRD	Department of Land Reform and Rural Development
DRM	Disaster Risk Management
DWS	Department of Water and Sanitation
ECSA	Engineering Council of South Africa
eTPS	Electronic Town Planning System
GIAMA	Government Immovable Asset Management Act
GIS	Geographic Information System
GLM	Gamagara Local Municipality
GRAP	Generally Recognised Accounting Practice
GTAC	Government Technical Advisory Centre
IAR	Immovable Asset Register
IDC	Industrial Development Corporation
IDMS	Infrastructure Delivery Management System
IDP	Integrated Development Plant
ISA	Infrastructure South Africa
KIP	Kathu Industrial Park
LED	Local Economic Development
LUS	Land-Use Scheme
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MCPP	Municipal Capability and Partnership Programme

MIG	Municipal Infrastructure Grant
MISA	Municipal Infrastructure Support Agency
MOA	Memorandum of Agreement
MSDF	Municipal Spatial Development Framework
MuLM	Musina Local Municipality
NC	Northern Cape Province
NCEDA	Northern Cape Economic Development Agency
NRW	Non-Revenue Water
O&M	Operations and Maintenance
OtP	Office of the Premier
PARI	Public Affairs Research Institute
PMU	Project Management Unit
PSC	Project Steering Committee
SACPCMP	South African Council for the Project and Construction Management Professions
SALGA	South African Local Government Association
SANS 241	South African National Standard for Drinking Water Quality
SDF	Spatial Development Framework
SED	Socio-Economic Development
SEZ	Special Economic Zone
SG	Surveyor General
SIOC CDT	Sishen Iron Ore Company Community Development Trust
SLP	Social and Labour Plan
SMMEs	Small, Medium, and Micro-Sized Enterprises
SOPs	Standard Operating Procedures
SPLUMA	Spatial Planning and Land Use Management Act
TLM	Tsantsabane Local Municipality
W2RAP	Wastewater Risk Abatement Plan
WSA	Water Services Authority
WSP	Water Safety Plan
WWTW	Wastewater Treatment Plan

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Municipal Capability & Partnership Programme (MCP) is a structured, long-term partnership between Anglo American, Kumba Iron Ore, De Beers, the Department of Cooperative Governance (DCoG) and the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), implemented across four local municipalities: Bloubaerg and Musina (Limpopo) and Gamagara and Tsantsabane (Northern Cape) between 2019 and the present. Its defining approach is working *alongside* municipalities rather than *for* them, using a problem-driven methodology to build lasting institutional capability ahead of mine closure and economic transition.

What Has Been Achieved

The programme's most consistent impact is relational before it is technical. Improved interdepartmental collaboration is the foundation on which all other gains rest, reported by 92 per cent of SenseMaker respondents. Concrete outputs now in active use include updated and adopted Spatial Development Frameworks, Treasury-compliant asset registers (with Bloubaerg moving from qualified to unqualified audit opinions), a functional GIS system in Musina, moving towards Blue Drop compliance in Gamagara and substantial improvement in compliance reporting for water quality in Tsantsabane, and borehole management savings of up to R210,000 per month in Tsantsabane.

Most significantly, the Gamagara-Tsantsabane Regional Development Compact has created a multi-stakeholder architecture for post-mining transition that is the programme's most ambitious institutional achievement. Both Northern Cape municipalities have shifted their institutional identity; they are now planning beyond the mine's lifespan.

Key Findings

Seven cross-cutting findings apply across all four municipalities. Evidence illustrates the value of multi-year investment at a scale that enabled addressing problems across value chains and over time, in delivering stronger outcomes. The programme's impact is evident in both relational and technical dimensions. Individual capability has been strengthened. While there is a perception that gains may be tied to specific individuals, there is evidence that capacity is increasingly being embedded within teams and municipal practices. Consistent (including financial) in-programme engagement appears to influence the depth and durability of outcomes. Financial sustainability remains one of the most critical unresolved risks, with revenue management challenges evident across municipalities.

The programme has produced a replicable model, but the extent to which public institutions participated differed. Some participated consistently, others less so. The extent to which the lessons of the programme have been adopted within those institutions is uncertain.



What Remains at Risk

Capability, while strengthened, is still perceived to be concentrated in key individuals, with institutional embedding uneven despite progress in team-based approaches. Several critical planning instruments (SDFs, LUMS, LED strategies) are still in process of being formally adopted. In Limpopo, digital systems depend on programme-funded licenses without secured municipal budgets.

In the Northern Cape, the Regional Development Compact remains reliant on external facilitation and leadership changes in the short-term may impact continuity.

Financial sustainability remains a cross-cutting risk, with ongoing reliance on external and mine-derived revenue.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The programme has worked. The question is whether six years of investment will be protected by completing what remains. Moving forward, priorities for the MCPP in Gamagara and Tsantsabane include revenue enhancement, succession planning, development implementation, project management, institutionalisation of service delivery improvements, and alignment and adoption of relevant plans and instruments. *Recommendations are provided in Section 8 of the report.*

INTRODUCTION



1.1 Purpose and Commissioning Context

This report presents the findings, analysis and recommendations of the external evaluation of the Municipal Capability & Partnership Programme (MCP). The evaluation was commissioned by the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) on behalf of Anglo American South Africa, Kumba Iron Ore, De Beers and the Department of Cooperative Governance (DCoG), and was conducted by PARI (Public Affairs Research Institute) as an independent external evaluation team during April 2026.

The commissioning of this evaluation reflects three interconnected purposes. Firstly, to generate an independent, evidence-based account of what the programme has achieved since its conceptualisation in 2019. Secondly, to understand what worked, what did not and why, for the purposes of generating lessons for future programming in mining-affected municipalities. Thirdly, to assess the sustainability of the achievements of the programme: whether institutional improvements are genuinely embedded or remain dependent on continued external support.

This evaluation is shaped by the imperative of the post-mining transition; several participating mines face closure within the next five to fifteen years.¹

¹ van Huisstee, E., E. Petzer and M. Oranje (2025) 'Post-Mining Diversification: Reflections from the Anglo-American Municipal Capability and Partnership Programme'. Presentation to National LED Forum, Pretoria, 10 September 2025.

1.2 Evaluation Objectives

The MCPP is designed to contribute to context-specific and pressing problems in mining towns and regions, and to support the capability development of key partners for catalytic impact in the medium term for investment. The overall objectives for the programme are to:

- Support municipal partners to mitigate mine closure impacts related to service delivery.
- Collaborate with municipal partners to improve service delivery.
- Strengthen collaboration between partners to tackle current and future development challenges.

Specifically, the MCPP objectives are to:

- Strengthen the capability of municipal partners to improve the provision of basic services.
- Address critical constraints (root causes) in the service value chain.
- Introduce innovative and alternative approaches.
- Support municipal and industry partners to collaborate in preparing for a post-mining future (diversification and systemic change in the ecosystem).
- Through synergies of processes, projects, and investments across the development value chain.

Consequently, the evaluation was designed to assess the MCPP against five programme outcomes, as defined in the programme's Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Framework:²

- **Outcome 1:** Strengthened partnering capability to mitigate closure impacts. This outcome is most directly visible in Gamagara and Tsantsabane, where the programme actively collaborates with municipalities and mines to timeously mitigate the implications of expected mine closure in the region.
- **Outcome 2:** Strengthened capability for infrastructure management. This outcome is the primary focus in Musina and Blouberg (Infrastructure asset management, finance-technical collaboration) and cross-cutting in Gamagara and Tsantsabane one of two focus areas in Blouberg (PMU coaching, roads asset valuation, community valuation of assets).
- **Outcome 3:** Strengthened capability for water management. This outcome is the primary focus in Gamagara and Tsantsabane, where the MCPP has invested in water quality, non-revenue water reduction, groundwater management, Water Safety Plans and long-term water security planning.
- **Outcome 4:** Strengthened capability for facilitation of sustainable development. This outcome is pursued through development planning in all four municipalities, though the specific instruments differ: SDF development in Gamagara and Tsantsabane (including the Capital Expenditure Framework in Gamagara); SDF, land development modelling and electronic land-use management in Blouberg; and SDF, land-use scheme development and GIS-enabled spatial evidence in Musina.
- **Outcome 5:** Institutional enabling environment improved. This outcome is cross-cutting and presents the intention of the programme to contribute to the policy and enabling environment.

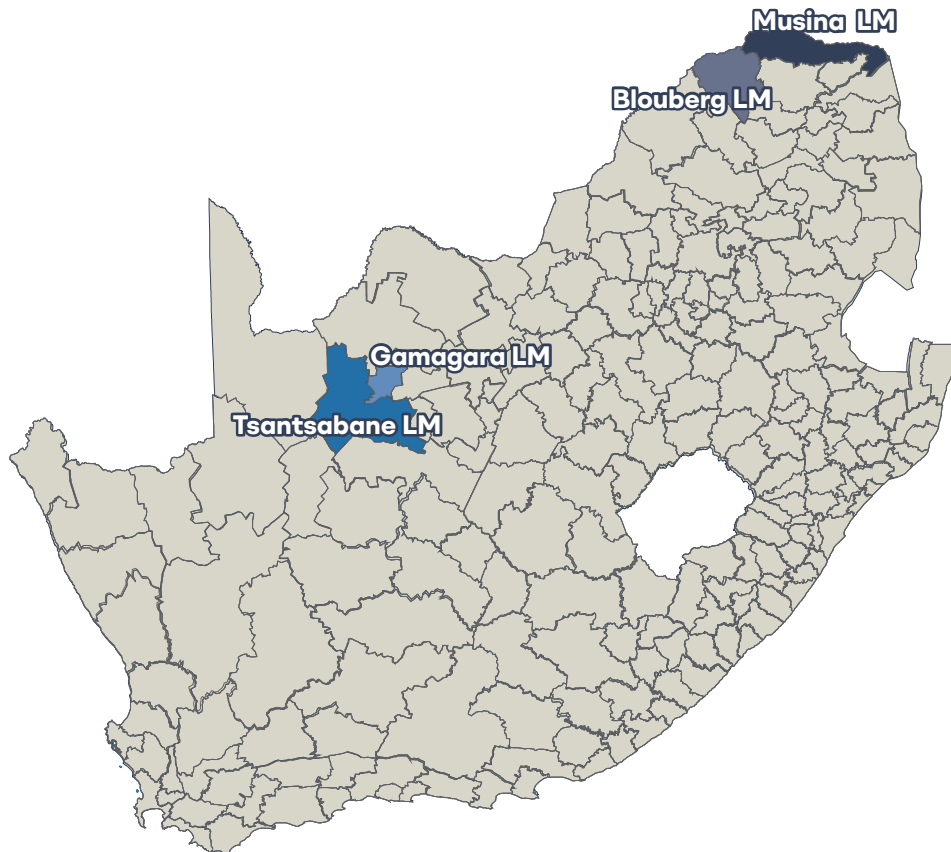
Across all five outcomes, the evaluation applies a sustainability lens: not merely whether there is improvement, but whether the improvement will be sustained once programme support ends.

² CSIR (2026) 'Consolidated Programme Approach Framework'. Internal programme document. Pretoria: Council for Scientific and Industrial Research – Section 12.1: The Monitoring and Evaluation Framework, p16. The MEL framework has been developed progressively since 2022 and is updated annually.

1.3 Scope

1.3.1 GEOGRAPHIC SCOPE

The evaluation covers the four municipalities currently active in the MCPP. In Limpopo Province, it covers the Blouberg Local Municipality and Musina Local Municipality (both supported by the De Beers/Venetia mine). In the Northern Cape province, it covers Gamagara (supported by Kumba Iron Ore/Sishen and Kolomela mines) and Tsantsabane Local Municipality (also supported by Kumba Iron Ore/Kolomela mine). Where relevant, the evaluation also considered district municipalities, provincial government, and national and mining partners.



1.3.2 TEMPORAL SCOPE

The evaluation covers the full programme period from conceptualisation (2019) through implementation from 2020 to the current period (April 2026).

1.3.3 THEMATIC SCOPE

The MCPP is a context-driven, systems-based approach, focusing on co-designing interventions with municipalities, leveraging existing strengths and fostering psychological safety within teams to enable innovation and learning. It emphasises both hard assets (infrastructure, tools) and soft assets (skills, processes, systems, institutional arrangements). The evaluation assesses this distinctive approach and methodology, the sustainability of capability gains, equity considerations in service delivery and the governance of the partnership itself (this refers to the roles and the functioning of the relationship between Anglo American, Kumba, De Beers, DCoG, CSIR and the participating municipalities).

1.4 Structure of this report

The report is structured as follows:

- **Section 2** provides the background and overview of the programme, particularly in municipalities that have experienced net in-migration linked to mining employment and whose fiscal and spatial forms have been shaped by the sector. In this context, the evaluation applies a mine closure preparedness lens, asking whether planning, infrastructure investment and institutional systems are being reoriented toward a post-mining future.
- **Section 3** describes the methodology.
- **Section 4** presents the SenseMaker evidence-based data, particularly in municipalities that have experienced net in-migration linked to mining employment and whose fiscal and spatial forms have been shaped by the sector. In this context, the evaluation applies a mine closure preparedness lens, asking whether planning, infrastructure investment and institutional systems are being reoriented toward a post-mining future.
- **Section 5** covers the Limpopo region, and findings for Blouberg and Musina. Similarly,
- **Section 6** covers the Northern Cape region and findings for Gamagara and Tsantsabane.
- **Section 7** presents cross-cutting findings.
- **Sections 8-9** provide the conclusion and recommendations.



BACKGROUND AND PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

2.1 Origins and Problem Statement

South Africa's mining-dependent municipalities frequently rank among the country's most inadequately governed and under-served local authorities, despite their proximity to significant mineral wealth.

The MCPP was established to overcome the institutional and developmental limitations faced by the selected municipalities within the broader South African municipal context, including:

- Service delivery failures and infrastructure deterioration.
- Weak institutional capability and fragmented organisational practices.
- Financial non-viability, high levels of consumer debt, and a complex regulatory environment.
- The increase in the number of indigents requiring free basic services.
- High levels of debt and rising socioeconomic vulnerability.
- Intergovernmental coordination challenges.
- Vandalism and theft impacting service delivery.

Specifically, the MCPP was designed to strengthen the capability of municipalities and mine partners to deliver critical service functions; to strengthen collaboration for industry investment impact to mitigate risks and build resilience in areas of operation, including for a post-mining future; and to decrease dependency on industry partners to reduce risks to service delivery emanating from transitions in the local economy. The MCPP was designed to build the capability of partners so that investments have catalytic impacts over the medium term, specifically to address root causes of critical constraints in the service value chain and to support municipal and industry partners to collaborate in preparing for a post-mining future through diversification and systemic change.

2.2 The Predecessor Programme

Anglo American ran an earlier Municipal Capacity Development Programme (MCP) from 2014 to 2018, implemented by the Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA). The programme provided extensive technical support to municipalities in mining areas but did not address the underlying municipal capacity or the structural dependency of municipalities on mines.³ When the programme ended, its gains proved difficult to sustain. This outcome directly shaped the design of the current programme.

3 CSIR (2026) – Section 2.1: The Predecessor Programme, p3. The programme is described as having provided 'extensive technical support but did not address municipal capacity or large-scale dependency of municipalities on mines'.

2.3 Municipal Capability & Partnership Programme (MCPPE)

Conceptualised in late 2019 and in implementation from 2020, the programme was initially launched as the Municipal Capacity Development Programme (MCDP). In 2022, it was renamed MCPPE to reflect an evolving understanding of the problem it sought to address.⁴ This shift recognised that capacity development was needed not only within municipalities but also among industry partners,⁵ and that capacity alone was insufficient. The focus therefore moved to capability, the ability to convert capacity into concrete, measurable outcomes. The MCPPE was therefore designed as a structured long-term partnership rather than a once-off philanthropic intervention to address the systemic challenges the earlier programme left unresolved.⁶ It has operated across Blouberg, Musina, Gamagara and Tsantsabane municipalities in partnership with De Beers (Venetia mine) and Kumba Iron Ore (Kolomela and Sishen mines). The programme also operated in Mogalakwena, Moses Kotane, Fetakgomo Tubatse and Thabazimbi (2020–2024) through Anglo American Platinum (now Valterra) and Emalahleni and Steve Tshwete through Anglo Coal (now Thungela) before structural splits or ‘demergers’ resulted in the new businesses and municipalities exiting the programme (2020–2022).

2.4 Systemic Challenge the MCPPE Was Designed to Address

During the earlier phase of the programme, there was recognition that the core problem faced by the mining municipalities cannot be addressed solely through technical support, but rather through systemic and interconnected challenges. This involved numerous engagements with municipal teams, mine stakeholder relations staff, government officials and social investment practitioners (and using the Problem-Driven Iterative Adaptation (PDIA) approach).^{7,8} The problem was progressively reframed from ‘municipalities need technical support’ to a systemic, interlinked challenge with five structural dimensions:

- **Rapid, unplanned growth:** mining operations attract significant in-migration and informal settlement expansion, often with multiple mines investing simultaneously in overlapping communities without coordinated municipal planning.
- **Mines displacing local government:** under Social and Labour Plan (SLP) obligations, mines build infrastructure and run community processes often without municipal input on operations, maintenance or revenue implications. Over time, this creates dependency and undermines municipal functionality, especially if the infrastructure is not maintained.
- **Structural impossibility:** municipalities carry the constitutional mandate to provide services but operate with limited own-revenue, limited grant discretion and an excessive reporting burden imposed by national departments.
- **Governance challenges:** political instability, leadership turnover and high staff-vacancy rates in many mining municipalities undermine continuity and institutional memory.
- **Trauma and low morale:** officials, particularly in rural and mining areas, operate under severe institutional strain, personal safety concerns and exposure to corruption, compounding or worsening capability deficits.

4 CSIR (2026) – Programme Identity Table, p2. The tagline adopted upon renaming is: ‘From Capacity to Impact: Facilitating Public-Industry Collaboration in Mining Regions/Towns’.

5 In this context, ‘industry partners’ primarily refers to the mining companies participating in or linked to the MCPPE, together with a small set of actors connected to the mining value chain.

6 CSIR (2026) – Programme Identity Table, p2.

7 Mughogho, D. (2025) ‘Piloting Problem Driven Iterative Adaptation in the City of Joburg’. Webpost. South African Cities Network: ‘[Problem Driven Iterative Adaptation \(PDIA\)](#) is an innovative approach to solving seemingly intractable public problems. It was developed in the Building State Capability Programme at Harvard University’s Kennedy School of Government.’

8 CSIR (2026) – Section 2.2: The Systemic Problem, p3.

2.5 Programme Partners

This section outlines the role of each partner: Anglo American, Kumba, De Beers, DCoG, CSIR and participating municipalities. The partnership of this programme is formally framed through a national Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between Anglo American South Africa and DCoG in 2017, updated in 2023 and local MoUs between participating local municipalities, Anglo American, and the CSIR.⁹

The table below outlines their respective roles:

Partner	Role in the MCPP
Anglo American	Provided strategic direction, programme governance and resourcing.
Kumba Iron Ore	Serves as mine partner for Gamagara (Sishen mine) and Tsantsabane (Kolomela mine). Primary funder for MCPP in this region.
De Beers (Venetia mine)	Served as mine partner for Musina and Blouberg municipalities (2020-2026). Primary funder for MCPP in this region.
DCoG	National government partner since the 2017 MoU.
Participating municipalities	MCPP positions municipalities as active collaboration partners, not recipients. Blouberg, Musina, Gamagara and Tsantsabane committed institutional resources and ensured implementation with partner support.
CSIR	Serves as the co-designer or creator and implementation partner; trusted intermediary between municipalities and industry; manage programme governance, monitoring and evaluation, and knowledge products.

2.6 Programme Purpose and Focus Areas

The purpose of the programme is to strengthen municipal capability to: improve sustained service delivery (not once-off delivery, but ongoing functionality), decrease dependency on mines and most importantly, improve sustainable development and post-mining diversification.¹⁰ Three capability areas were selected during 2020 as shared critical challenges across mines, municipalities and communities:¹¹

- **Water:** Improving water service coverage, reliability, loss reduction, and billing, with particular focus on the disruption caused by mines, when they began providing emergency water access at scale (during the covid-19 period and beyond) without joint planning, municipal oversight or billing systems.
- **Infrastructure sustainability:** avoiding potential white elephant investments, Social Labour Plan (SLP) delivery failures and severely limited municipal operations and maintenance planning.
- **Development planning:** strengthening municipal strategic planning, particularly the IDPs and the SDF, and regional planning for growth management and post-mining transition.

⁹ CSIR (2026) – Section 2.3: Institutional Context, p5.

¹⁰ CSIR (2026) – Section 3.1: Purpose, p6.

¹¹ CSIR (2026) – Section 4: Focus Areas, p7.

2.7 Programme Phases and Timeline

The MCPP operates through a four-phase model. These phases overlap across municipal contexts, with different municipalities and municipal functions progressing at different rates depending on context, resourcing and engagement level.¹² The current operational focus is on phase 3 (institutionalisation).

Phase	Period	Focus and key activities
Phase 1: Establishment/Entry	2019- 2021	Create buy-in and commitment for co-creation. Facilitate self-assessments and medium-term capability objectives. Kick-start technical support to mitigate critical risks. Build relationships and trust through demonstrated value.
Phase 2: Foundation for Stabilisation	2021-2023	Address regulatory compliance for critical service delivery functions. Strengthen team functionality and reduce psychological stress. Establish standard operating procedures, systems and monitoring instruments. Improve interdepartmental prioritisation and collaboration.
Phase 3: Institutionalisation	2023-2028	Embed established systems, processes and evidence-informed plans. Implement land development plans through updated IDPs. Improve financial viability and expand the municipal revenue base. Strengthening and embedding collaboration across partners.
Phase 4: Integration & Collaboration for Regeneration	2028 onwards	Conclude developmental compacts. Execute mine closure action plans. Implement viable operation and maintenance mechanisms. In regions where mines will be closing, support settlement transition and infrastructure rightsizing.

¹² CSIR (2026) – Section 9: Programme Phasing Model, p13.

2.8 The Mine Closure and Economic Transition Context

The MCPP is not operating in a stable environment where gradual improvement is sufficient or even possible. It is working against multiple, differentiated transition pressures across regions. The evaluation must therefore assess not just whether things have improved, but whether municipalities are becoming institutionally resilient in the face of the specific economic transitions they will encounter.

In the Northern Cape component, this transition is most directly shaped by future mine closures. The Gamagara/Kathu area faces the closure of iron-ore and manganese mining within approximately 15 years, a transition modelled to affect more than 30,000 jobs regionally and 80,000 nationally.¹³ This represents one of the most significant economic disruptions facing any South African community in the coming years, particularly in municipalities that have experienced net in-migration linked to mining employment and whose fiscal and spatial forms have been shaped by the sector. In this context, the evaluation applies a mine closure preparedness lens, asking whether planning, infrastructure investment and institutional systems are being reoriented toward a post-mining future.

However, mine closure is not the defining condition across all municipalities in the programme. In Limpopo, the transition challenge is better understood through an economic diversification lens. While mining remains part of the economic landscape and while operations such as De Beers' Venetia mine are moving through an underground transition with a medium-term closure horizon, the core issue in Musina and Blouberg is not the immediate risk of settlement collapse due to mine closure. Rather, it is the need to broaden and stabilise their economic base and to build institutional systems capable of supporting multiple, non-mining growth directions, in other words, generating other sources of revenue beyond the mining industry.

Accordingly, this evaluation uses the mine closure preparedness (for Northern Cape) and economic diversification (for Limpopo) as an analytical lens throughout, examining at each stage the changes that have occurred and how these developments are shaping municipalities' readiness through and beyond mine closure, or toward a more diversified and self-sustaining economic base.

13 CSIR (2026) – Section 2.2.6, p5. These are modelled projections. The programme also notes that negotiations with Assamang for Gamagara and Tsantsabane did not materialise due to iron-ore price decline and expected closure.

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Approach

The evaluation uses a qualitative approach, structured around three primary data collection methods: document review, key informant interviews and focus groups. These methods are supplemented by analysis of SenseMaker micro-narrative data collected by the MCPP's implementing team to support the programme's Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) framework.

The qualitative approach was chosen deliberately. The MCPP's perspective is that capability is relational and contextual; it cannot be adequately assessed through quantitative indicators alone. What the approach seeks to assess is not only whether a system exists but whether it is used, not only if a plan is written but whether the plan shapes decisions. These questions require in-depth engagement with the individuals involved and the available evidence.

The evaluation draws on a range of data sources, including programme documentation, municipal records and the views of officials and partners. It triangulates across these sources to reach its findings. The evaluation team brings no prior involvement in the design or implementation of the MCPP.

3.2 Document review

The evaluation team reviewed a comprehensive set of programmes and municipal documents to inform the assessment. The review includes several categories of documents: media reports (newspaper articles, social media posts and other forms of content), programme reflection pieces and programme narrative evaluation, notably the SenseMaker collector reports covering three data collection rounds.

The primary reference document reviewed is the MCPP Consolidated Programme Approach framework, which provides a single account of the MCPPs logic, approach and evolution for the full period of 2020 to 2026. In addition, documents providing an overview of the programme, programme-level annual and official progress reports, and documents relating to intermunicipal engagement were reviewed.

3.3 Key informant interviews

Interviews were conducted with 30 stakeholders across all four municipalities and programme partners during April 2026. The interviewee list consists of municipal management (municipal managers and senior managers), technical staff across the three focus areas of water services and infrastructure management, asset management and maintenance, and development planning officials. The mining sector interviewees included partners from Anglo American, Kumba Iron Ore and De Beers. National and provincial government interviewees included DCoG, CoGHSTA Limpopo and the Northern Cape Office of the Premier. Sector partners included SALGA, Infrastructure South Africa, district municipalities (John Taolo Gaetsetwe DM and ZF Mgcawu DM) and other collaborators such as the Minerals Council of South Africa, V3 Consulting, the University of Pretoria, Kagiso Trust and the MCPP Implementation Team.

With the exception of Municipal Managers from the partner municipalities, most interviewees spoke primarily to their own area for involvement in the programme such as water services, asset management or development planning, rather than offering an all-round or oversight view across all outcome areas.

Interviews were structured around an interview guide developed by the evaluation team and submitted to MCPP for review before interviews commenced. The guide followed a consistent structure across all interviews: opening questions established the respondent's relationship to the programme, cross-cutting questions on the programme's approach and their experience of capability development and tailored thematic questions reflecting each interviewee's specific role and focus area.

Each interview was conducted via MS Teams and recorded with the interviewee's consent. Automated transcripts were generated and later reviewed and refined for accuracy. Once transcripts were finalised, the interviewer completed a structured evidence-capture sheet, drawing on the refined transcripts to record key evidence and significant direct quotations.

3.4 Focus Groups

Thematic focus groups were conducted with frontline teams in each municipality, structured around the five outcome areas. Focus groups provided a different quality of evidence from one-on-one interviews; they facilitated peer-to-peer comparisons, revealed team dynamics and boosted confidence amongst the group. Most importantly, it allowed the evaluation to observe whether an individual's account of capability gains and experiences was shared and corroborated by colleagues or remained more isolated.

The focus groups were also facilitated via MS Teams and followed the same process as the one-on-one interviews.

3.5 MCPP MEL Framework and SenseMaker Data

3.5.1. MCPP MEL FRAMEWORK

Understanding how the MCPP measures its own progress is important for interpreting the evidence presented in this report; it clarifies what the programme sets out to track, how it distinguishes between different types of change and where SenseMaker fits within that broader picture.

The MCPP's Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) framework is the system the programme uses to assess whether it is making a difference, understand why or why not, and adjust accordingly. It is outcomes-based and draws on a range of evidence sources. It is designed around five interconnected capacity levers: (1) tangible problem-solving and service improvement; (2) institutional capacity, including systems, plans, regulatory compliance, and standard operating procedures; (3) individual and team functionality; (4) collaboration and partnering between departments, municipalities and mines; and (5) the enabling environment, including sector tools, frameworks and advocacy (see diagram below). Each lever has its own indicators and progress markers and the framework is designed to support real-time adaptive management rather than retrospective reporting alone.

Generative Capability Development AND Capability Monitoring Evaluation Learning Approach



MEL Outcomes

Evidence: Shift in Key Capacity Results

Are capacity results achieved and sustained in functional value chains?

PROGRAMME OUTCOMES	MUTUALLY INCLUSIVE CAPACITY LEVERS	Indicators, targets, tools/instruments
	A Service Results & Functionality - Tangible results due to strengthened capacity	How are we making progress to address the problem we want to solve together – reflection of change in service/on the ground/finances?
	B Institutional Capacity - Maturity Indexes (improved regulatory compliance + ability performance of functions)	What are the shifts in regulatory compliance? Monitoring? Institutional systems, processes, instruments, staff etc. Is there progress i.e., institutional maturity?
	C Functionality – Team and Individual capacity to perform function - Self Assessment of change in capacity	What are participants' perceptions about their personal capacities, and the functionality of their team to address shared problem / deliver their functions?
	D Meaningful Collaboration - Progress markers of internal (across value chain) and external (especially between municipality, mines, industry) collaboration	Is there any indication of, and improvement in relevant areas of collaboration What would we expect to see (minimum), what would we like to see, what would we love to see? (Progress markers)
	E Enabling Environment & Community of Practice - Progress markers, Results, Shifts	What are participants' perceptions about their personal capacities, and the functionality of their team to address shared problem / deliver their functions?

However, this evaluation does not engage with the entire MEL Framework; it focuses specifically on SenseMaker as a data source within that framework. The reason for this is that SenseMaker is the MEL tool best suited to capturing what is hardest to see in conventional monitoring: shifts in how people experience their work, including changes in confidence, agency, psychological safety and the quality of collaboration within teams. These dimensions are central to the MCPP's theory of change, which holds that sustainable institutional improvement depends not only on the presence of systems and plans but on whether people feel capable and motivated enough to use them. SenseMaker gives those experiences a form that can be tracked and compared over time. It is used here as a complementary source of evidence, providing depth and participant-level interpretation that triangulates with the interview and documentary evidence presented throughout the report.

3.5.2. SENSEMAKER DATA

Throughout the programme period, the MCPP's MEL team collected evidence, particularly micro-narratives from municipal officials, mine representatives and programme team members, reflecting participants' experiences. Deploying two instruments—the Significant Change Collector and the Capability Reflection Collector, the MEL Team generated over 230 micro-narratives.

The significant change collector, which was deployed in three versions between 2023 and 2025, sought to capture what participants experienced as their most significant change because of, or since, their involvement in the MCPP. It produced 216 responses, with 89 per cent reflecting meaningful change, 92 per cent reporting improvements in collaboration and partnering, and dominant themes of role clarity, trust, technical empowerment, improved morale and skills development running across all three versions.

The capability reflection collector, deployed between September 2024 and October 2025, assessed perceived shifts in individual and team capability across six dimensions: technical knowledge, skills, attitude and psychological safety, collaboration, performance and competence, and trust and role clarity. This collector generated 87 responses. 92 per cent of respondents reported positive sentiment, 43 per cent identified improved interdepartmental (cross-unit) collaboration as the primary impact area, 37 per cent cited technical knowledge gains and 98 per cent described the effects as sustained rather than once-off. Collectively, the two instruments present a coherent picture of a programme that has shifted how municipal teams work and through that relational shift, has begun to produce measurable gains in individual capability and technical performance.

SenseMaker data is self-reported. It captures what officials believe has changed; it does not independently verify whether those changes are durable or institutionally embedded. For these reasons, this evaluation treats SenseMaker as a useful and purposeful starting point rather than a conclusive measure.

The evaluation uses this data as a supplementary source, contextualising and corroborating—rather than substituting for—the independent interview evidence gathered by the evaluation team. What the evaluation seeks to assess is whether the patterns emerging from the SenseMaker data are corroborated or complemented by independent interview evidence from municipal officials, mine partners, and government stakeholders and collaborators. Where the two sources align, confidence in the finding is strengthened. Where they diverge, the divergence is treated as a meaningful insight rather than an inconsistency. The SenseMaker is presented here as the programme's own evidence base (and discussed further in section 4) and is then triangulated against our interview findings throughout. It is a corroborating source, not a primary finding.

3.6 Analytical Approach: Four-step interview analysis

The analysis of the interviews follows the following steps:

- **Step 1** - Cluster interviews by voice type: municipal interviews are analysed first (as sources of primary capability evidence). Mine partner interviews follow (as the primary commissioning audience). Government, sector and collaborator interviews are analysed after serving as the external validators of the evidence).
- **Step 2** - Recording three things from each interview: (a) the before and after claim (what specific change does the interviewee describe, accompanied by concrete evidence or examples), (b) what would hold if support ended tomorrow (probing for an embedded change), (c) what could be lost if support ended tomorrow (what is at risk).
- **Step 3** - Triangulation: a finding is written as one only if at least two of three sources support it. We look at evidence from municipal officials, corroborate with mine partner or government and sector/collaborator interviews, and documentary evidence.
- **Step 4** - SenseMaker Triangulation: after drafting interview-based findings for each regional (and municipal) section, the SenseMaker data is applied as a check; whether it aligns, confidence increases. Where it diverges, the divergence is assessed and explained.

3.7 The Evaluation Framework: From A to D

The evaluation team adopted a four-point progression model for assessing municipal progress or advancement. It complements the MCPP's own institutional capability staging framework¹⁴ and theory of change. This model is not a rigid classification; municipalities may be at different stages across different outcome areas. It provides a consistent analytical instrument that is used across the findings' sections.

Point	State	What it looks like
A	Status quo at programme entry	No asset registers; unknown infrastructure; outdated IDPs; water not reaching all residents; poor financial management; weak maintenance systems; dependency culture.
B	Improved delivery	Asset registers in place; measurable improvements in water and service functions; better billing and cost recovery; IDPs updated; technical staff trained.
C	Institutional readiness	Accountability embedded; diversification (and post-mine) investment plans credible and funded; self-directed operation feasible.
D	Post-mine sustainability	Community develops through and beyond mine closure; economic diversification active.

The central evaluative question is not whether a municipality has reached point C, but the results achieved in moving from point A and whether the trajectory is credible enough to reach Point D before or shortly after mine closure.

¹⁴ CSIR (2026) – Section 9.1: Institutional Capability Staging, p14. The four stages are: Stage A (Emergent/Crisis Stabilisation), Stage B (Foundational), Stage C (Embedded Processes), and Stage D (Sustained, Self-Directed).

3.8 Use of AI as a Research Tool

Claude AI and Codex AI were used as support tools during the analysis and initial writing process, assisting with arranging interview summaries, improving clarity of language and identifying common themes. These tools did not produce findings or replace the evaluation process. They were applied only to the large number of documents to inform the structuring of questionnaires and to summarise the interview notes. Any AI-supported outputs were carefully reviewed and verified by the evaluation team before inclusion.

3.9 Ethical Considerations and Limitations

The evaluation was conducted in accordance with ethical standards appropriate to independent programme evaluation. All interviews and focus groups were conducted with informed consent. Where requested, individual responses are kept confidential and attributed only at an anonymised level. No participant was compelled to participate. At the end of each interview, interviewees were allowed to raise any factor that they believed was important but had not been addressed during the interview and were also requested to provide any additional comments via email should they wish to.

The evaluation team has no financial interest in the evaluation's outcomes and was not involved in the design or implementation of the MCP. The team reports findings as the evidence supports them.

The evaluation acknowledges several limitations. The qualitative approach does not yield statistically generalisable findings; conclusions about individual municipalities should not automatically be assumed to apply to other mining municipalities. Interview evidence is based on participants' recollections and may be influenced by recall bias as well as their roles and extent of participation in the programme. So, the evaluation team is aware that positive framing may be more common among interviewees who have benefited from the programme and would prefer to see it continue.

A related limitation concerns the scope of individual interviewee knowledge. Because most respondents were interviewed and reported on primarily in relation to their own functional area, no single interview provides a full picture of programme performance at municipal level. This limitation was also compounded in some cases by scheduled interviews that did not take place, either because a participant was unavailable or did not attend as arranged, meaning that certain functional areas may be represented by a narrower base of evidence than others in this report.

Despite these limitations, the evaluation team has confidence in the robustness of its core findings, which are based on triangulated evidence across multiple sources and interviewee types.

SENSEMAKER DATA: EVIDENCE

This section of the report seeks to present the SenseMaker data as the programme's own evidence base, drawing on what participants reported about their own experience, and to offer the evaluation team's independent assessment of what that evidence confirms, which is then set against the interview findings in Sections 5 and 6 of this report.

4.1 The SenseMaker Evidence: what programme participants reported

As outlined in Section 3.5, SenseMaker is one component within the MCPP's broader MEL framework. It was selected for focused treatment in this evaluation because of its strength in capturing participant-level experience, the kinds of shifts in confidence, ownership and team dynamics that show up in how people describe their work, not only in what outputs their teams have produced. Rather than asking people to fill in a survey or score a questionnaire, SenseMaker asked them to share a story about their experience and then reflect on what had changed. This approach is deliberately different from standard tick-box assessments: it surfaces how people experience their work and what they believe has shifted, in their own words. This data is the programme's own evidence base. It reflects what participants reported about their own experience and is not an independent assessment.

Across both instruments and all collection rounds, the SenseMaker data generated over 230 micro-narratives that point consistently toward the same core finding: the programme's most significant and broadly experienced impact has been relational and collaborative before it has been technical.

4.2 How the Two Instruments (Collectors) Were Used

As mentioned earlier, the MCPP MEL team deployed two distinct SenseMaker instruments over the life of the programme, each designed to capture a different dimension of participant experience.¹⁵

4.2.1 INSTRUMENT 1: THE SIGNIFICANT CHANGE COLLECTOR

The Significant Change Collector was the first instrument, conceptualised in early 2023 with support from the Cynefin Company's Fast Launch methodology. It is grounded in the Most Significant Change (MSC) technique developed by Davies and Dart (2005), a form of participatory monitoring that invites participants to share stories of meaningful change rather than respond to predetermined indicators.

The collector went through three versions. Version 1 ran from May to September 2023 and asked participants to reflect on any change they had observed or experienced since joining the programme. This version generated 42 responses (32 from municipal officials, 1 mine representative, 15 from the MCPP team). Most of the responses reflected changes to institutional capacity, followed by personal and individual changes, and then external collaboration and functioning as a team. Participants cited working with others, access to information and knowledge and the primary drivers of change.

15 Rozani, S. (2025) 'Narrative-Based Evaluation for Municipal Capability Development: Insights from MCPP's Use of SenseMaker'. Internal MEL report. Municipal Capability and Partnership Programme.

Version 2 was conducted from October 2024 and ran through to May 2025. In this version, the MEL Team reframed the prompt they used prior to ask participants what story or experience they would share with a friend to encourage (or discourage) them from joining or collaborating with the MCP-programme. This version generated 156 responses (54 from municipal officials, 72 from the MCPP Team, three from government and three from mine representatives):

- **89 per cent** of stories reflected meaningful change,
- **44 per cent** of respondents felt confident and **35 per cent** felt hopeful or optimistic about the changes described.

Dominant themes that were reflected in these stories included role clarity, trust, collaboration and technical empowerment. Most importantly, these narratives indicated strong psychological safety and a sense of individual and team empowerment.

Version 3 was used at the May 2025 Peer-Learning Event, again using the prompt (framing) involving a 'friend' but this time, participants were asked to describe their experience of working with the MCPP. This version generated 18 municipal official responses:

- **72 per cent** of respondents felt very positive about the changes described, while the remainder were neutral.
- **All 18** individuals reported experiencing shifts within their organisation or team.
- **92 per cent** reflected a perceived shift in service delivery outcomes.
- **92 per cent** reported improvements in collaboration and partnering.

Dominant themes reflected in the responses included improved morale and ownership, enhanced teamwork, effective planning and execution, skills development and increased community benefit.

Across all three versions, the collector generated a total of 216 responses, of which 104 came from municipal officials across the eight participating municipalities referred to in section 2.3.

4.2.2 INSTRUMENT 2: CAPABILITY REFLECTION COLLECTOR

The Capability Reflection Collector was later introduced as a more structured instrument after two versions of the Significant Change Collector and was designed to specifically evaluate perceived shifts in individual and team capability. The collector was first deployed at the MCPP Infrastructure Asset Management training, which was attended by five municipalities and CSIR officials, between September 2024 and October 2025. Its central prompt asked participants to share a story of something their team did that made a difference and then to self-assess the story against a framework of six capability dimensions: technical knowledge, skills, attitude and psychological safety, collaboration, performance and competence, and trust and role clarity.

This collector generated 89 total responses (87 from municipal officials, two from CSIR representatives):

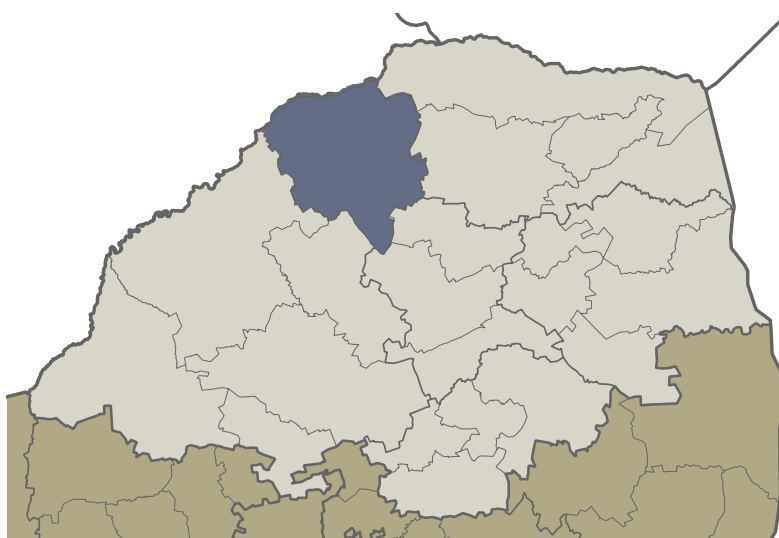
- **92 per cent positive sentiment:** 76 of 83 respondents reported feeling highly positive or positive about the experience shared.
- **38 per cent** reported technical knowledge gains as the primary dimension of their capability shift.
- **44 per cent** noted improved interdepartmental collaboration as the primary impact area.
- **98 per cent** described a sustained impact: responses on average indicated effects that are 'lasting and we still feel them,' rather than a once-off thing.

The dominant themes that emerged from the narratives included problem-solving through teamwork, strengthened stakeholder partnerships and increased ownership of work. Together, the two collectors offered the MEL team a layered perspective: the Significant Change Collector captured the *experience* of change in participants' own narratives, while the Capability Reflection Collector probed *what kind* of change had occurred and whether it was likely to be sustained.

4.3 SenseMaker Evidence: Limpopo and Northern Cape

4.3.1 WHAT PARTICIPANTS FROM LIMPOPO REPORTED

4.3.1.1 Blouberg Local Municipality



Significant change collector

Blouberg Local Municipality was among the smaller contributors to the dataset, with only two responses recorded under the Significant Change Collector during the 2023-2024 period.¹⁶ Despite limited response, both of their contributions are worth noting. The first response noted that:

There have been improvements in communication, storage of information, collaboration with other departments on service delivery matters and most importantly, a defined [understanding] of our functions and roles.

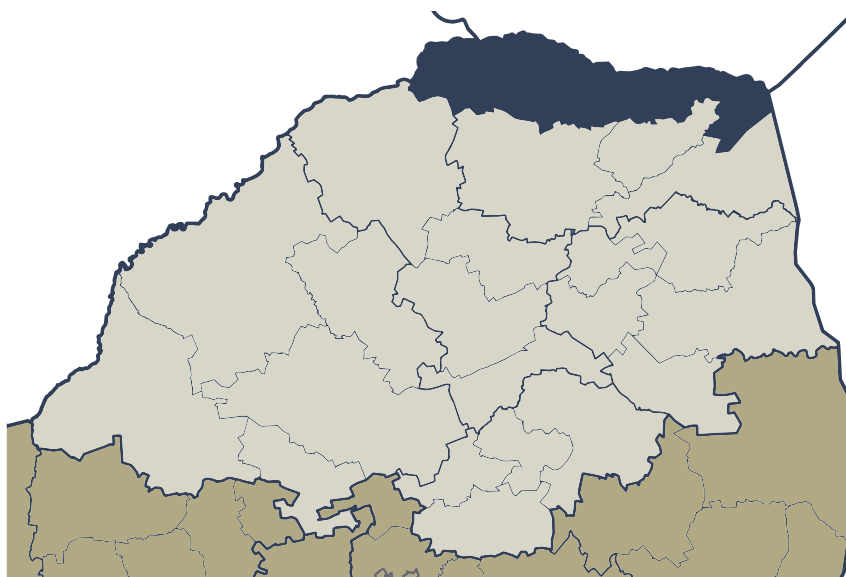
This contribution speaks to the perceived improvements and the value of having clearly defined roles.

The second response noted that they had seen 'a lot of changes, especially to my workplace and myself as a person' and that the MCPP supports municipalities and improves service delivery. Their identified priority for sustaining this change or impact was calling for continued communication.

When asked what had mattered most, the participants pointed to the ability to carry out internal collaboration between departments as being primary but they also mentioned the access to data and knowledge, among other things.

¹⁶ MCPP MEL Team (2025) 'SenseMaker Significant Change & Capability Reflection Collector Reports'. Internal presentation, Slides 110–11.

4.3.1.2 Musina Local Municipality



Significant change collector

Musina Local Municipality presents a different situation. Under the Significant Change Collector (Version 2), covering the period October 2023 to September 2024, Musina recorded zero responses from municipal officials.¹⁷ Although not explicitly written in the reports, a representative from the CSIR indicated that this absence was due to low attendance on the part of the Musina municipality and that there was only one respondent, and asked for their contribution to be omitted from the dataset.

However, their responses were recorded in the other two rounds. In Version 3 of the Significant Change Collector, there were three submitted responses made during the May 2025 peer-learning event. One described the programme as an 'eye-opener into planning instruments' and noted improved interdepartmental communication and collaboration. A second reported that the programme had 'greatly improved the understanding of what collaborative partnership means in improving service delivery' and that management was now in full support of the programme, having seen improvements to key municipal planning documents. A third participant captured a more personal dimension of growth:

MCPP has helped me develop confidence in my work and believing that I can make an impact. Has changed my perceptions about land-use management and its implications on the community. Developed my interpersonal skills and building relationships with colleagues from other municipalities.

This respondent also highlighted the programme's role in fostering intergovernmental integration and establishing interconnectedness between municipalities.

¹⁷ MCPP MEL Team (2025) 'SenseMaker Reports', Slides 251–52.

Capability Reflection Collector

Musina's richest SenseMaker data comes from the Capability Reflection Collector, collected during a dedicated planning team Learning and Reflection Session in November 2024. Five responses were received, all from the Development Planning and Asset Management units. These narratives centred on the experience of participating in the review of Musina's Spatial Development Framework (SDF) and Land Use Management Scheme (LUMS) – work that MCPP undertook collaboratively with the municipality.

Participants described the experience in terms that went beyond technical learning: they spoke of being given chapters of the SDF to review, of round-table engagements where everyone was invited to share their understanding and identify shortcomings and of a process that, for some, was the first time they had been involved in such an undertaking as young graduates.

One participant summarised: 'Teamwork, analytical thinking, ability to align and interpret information' were what they could now do differently because of the MCPP. Another described the GIS data generated through the programme as 'invaluable' and noted the municipality's new ability to produce a range of maps from the same dataset previously impossible. Across these five narratives, 60 per cent emphasised improved ability to work with other departments, 80 per cent described the impact as lasting and 80 per cent attributed the difference specifically to MCPP support and interventions.¹⁸

4.3.2 WHAT PARTICIPANTS FROM NORTHERN CAPE REPORTED

Gamagara and Tsantsabane generate the largest body of SenseMaker evidence in the database. Engagement took place through a specifically dedicated Development Leadership Programme, with collection rounds in October 2025 and March 2026, alongside Capability Reflection sessions in February and September 2025 with Development Planning and Technical Services teams.

Significant Change Collector

Deployed in October 2025, the significant change Collector, 23 of 27 participants responded. Development planning dominated (70 per cent), followed by asset management (17 per cent) and water services (13 per cent). Most participants (61 per cent) felt very positive, with 62 per cent reporting organisational or team-level shifts. A key theme was improved understanding of strategic planning frameworks, particularly the Spatial Development Framework (SDF).

One councillor noted, 'We didn't understand the Spatial Development Framework, but now we shift to a clear picture.' Others highlighted increased team confidence: 'The town planning unit is more confident now and show eagerness to learn.'

Seventy per cent perceived improvements in service delivery, including resolved drainage issues in Gamagara. Where changes had not yet materialised, participants cited management commitment, implementation gaps and political alignment. Collaboration between municipalities was described as new and evolving: 'There was no communication... but that has changed.' This was coupled with a growing sense of urgency: 'We have to take hands and ... build our economy.'

By March 2026, 26 of 32 participants responded, with development planning again dominating the narratives (77 per cent). Positivity increased to 69 per cent and themes became more specific. Participants described reduced reliance on consultants and stronger internal ownership: 'Taking ownership and building internal expertise can be a game-changer.' Improved community responsiveness and a clearer grasp of planning instruments were noted. Collaboration deepened, with an emerging regional identity: 'We are talking

¹⁸ MCPP MEL Team (2025) 'SenseMaker Reports', Slide 253.

as a region.' The long-term challenge of mining closure further reinforced the need for collaboration.

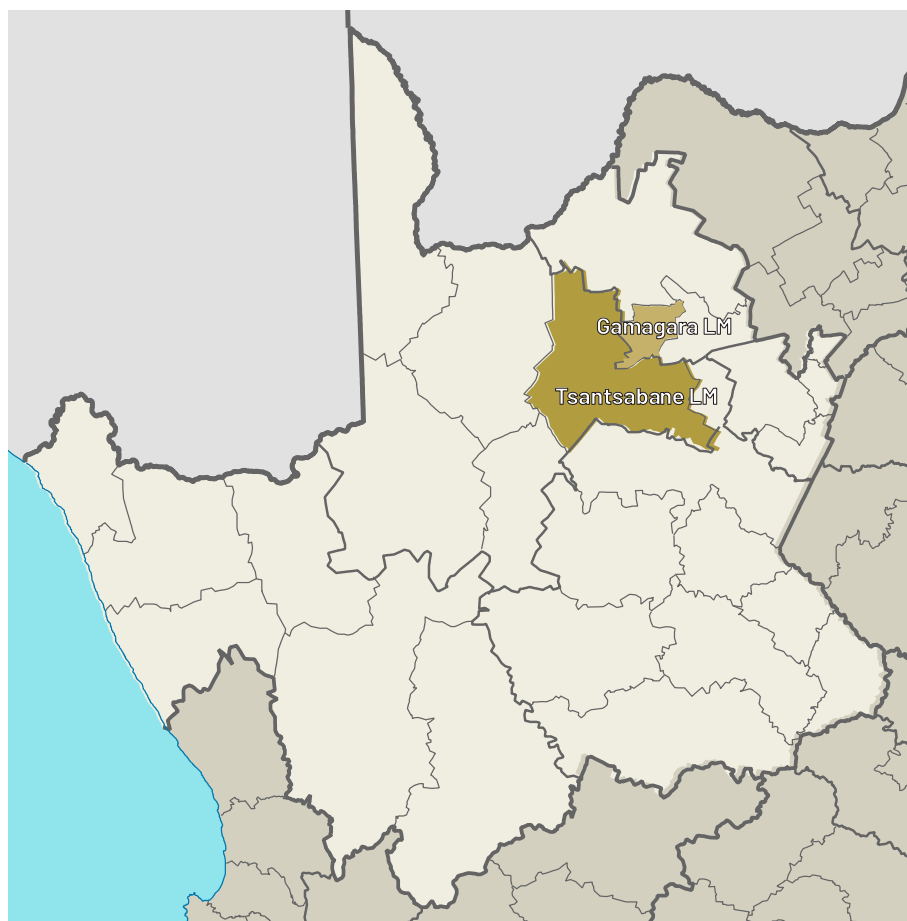
Capacity Reflection Collector

Capability Reflection data from February 2025 (during the learning and reflection session with the planning team), highlighted participatory planning processes, with officials actively engaged in SDF and land-use scheme reviews. Participants valued the integration of expertise and learning, while noting the need for improved planning, budgeting and political buy-in.

Tsantsabane narratives (2023–2024) emphasised operational learning in water services. Staff described moving from limited understanding to confidently monitoring boreholes, testing water quality and responding to breakdowns. Confidence (83 per cent) and collaborative problem-solving were dominant themes.

At the May 2025 Peer-Learning Event, this trajectory continued. Participants reported improved water services and stronger team morale, with greater ownership and more effective implementation, noting that 'colleagues can take ownership as they know what to do'.

The SenseMaker findings outlined above establish the programme's own evidence base, grounded in participants' reported experience and the evaluation team's interpretation of that evidence. Sections 5 and 6 build on this foundation by introducing interview data, enabling triangulation across methods and a more nuanced assessment of where different forms of evidence align, diverge or add depth.





EVALUATION FINDINGS: LIMPOPO

5.1 De Beers/Venetia: Investment, Context and the Limpopo Region

De Beers' investment in the Municipal Capability and Partnership Programme (MCP) in Limpopo Province is anchored in its role as the owner and operator of the Venetia Mine and its long-term responsibility to the surrounding municipal region, specifically Bloubaai Local Municipality and Musina Local Municipality. Venetia is transitioning from open-pit to underground operations and faces a medium-term closure horizon, making the strengthening of municipal capability increasingly relevant to both community resilience and the mine's social license to operate.

At the same time, the Limpopo context is not best understood primarily through a mine closure lens. Rather, it reflects a broader economic transition in which mining is only one component. Musina and Bloubaai are not structurally mining-dependent towns, and their long-term development depends less on managing the immediate consequences of mine closure and more on building a diversified and sustainable economic base. This distinction shapes both the nature of De Beers' investment and the way the evaluation interprets the programme outcomes.

5.2 Investment Rationale and Focus Areas

De Beers' participation in the MCP reflects a deliberate shift away from short-term, project-based social investment towards systemic capability development within local government. The core rationale for this investment can be understood through three interrelated purposes.

The first purpose is to reduce operational and reputational risk associated with weak municipal governance and service delivery failures in host communities. The second purpose is ensuring the sustainability of past and future Social and Labour Plan (SLP) investments, particularly infrastructure handed over to municipalities that lack the systems to operate and maintain them. The third purpose is supporting preparedness for economic transition, including, but not limited to, mine transition and eventual closure, by strengthening municipal planning, infrastructure management and institutional collaboration.

Within this context, De Beers agreed with municipal and provincial partners to focus its MCP investment primarily in areas that would support the sustainability of infrastructure and service delivery, municipal viability and livelihoods. Given municipal capacity assessments, key areas identified to address the challenges experienced were strategic development planning, which includes Spatial Development Frameworks (SDF), Integrated Development Plans (IDP) and Land Use Management Systems (LUMS); infrastructure asset management and project execution capability; as well as foundational institutional systems that enable municipalities to manage growth, service demand and investment alignment more effectively.

These focus areas reflect the underlying service delivery and economic diversification challenges facing both municipalities.

5.3 Municipal Context: Blouberg and Musina

Blouberg Local Municipality is predominantly rural, characterised by dispersed settlements, high levels of indigence, limited own-revenue generation, and weak technical and project management capacity. The municipality struggles to maintain basic infrastructure and historically lacked a functional Project Management Unit and asset register. MCPP investment rationale, as agreed between partners, in Blouberg was centred on building foundational municipal systems to support infrastructure delivery and maintenance, and to enable Blouberg to leverage future development opportunities beyond mining.

Musina Local Municipality is a strategic border town experiencing rapid population growth, expanding informal settlements and significant development pressure linked to cross-border trade and logistics. Institutional weaknesses in spatial planning, land-use management and asset management have historically limited the municipality's ability to guide and regulate this growth. MCPP investment in Musina, as agreed between partners, focused on strengthening infrastructure asset management practices and instruments, as well as planning instruments, spatial data systems, enabling the municipality to manage infrastructure and growth credibly and reduce dependence on ad hoc mine-led interventions.

Overall, De Beers' MCPP investment in Limpopo represents a strategic attempt to stabilise and strengthen municipal systems that form the foundation for service delivery, rather than a compliance-driven social investment. The sustainability of these gains, however, remains closely tied to continuity and take-up, through the remaining period of the programme.



5.4 Blouberg Local Municipality

5.4.1 BASELINE: WHAT THE PROGRAMME FOUND

At the start of the programme, Blouberg Local Municipality presented a structural capability deficit that was both technical and institutional in nature. The baseline was characterised not simply by resource constraints but by weak internal systems, fragmented organisational practices and limited ability to convert existing assets into development outcomes. To understand what the programme achieved, it is necessary first to understand what it encountered.

Across the municipal interviews, three interrelated constraints consistently emerged. The first was the absence of a functional asset and land management system. The second was entrenched departmental silos and weak internal alignment. The third was limited planning and local economic development (LED) capability. These constraints produced a municipality that struggled to define, manage, and leverage its own assets and development opportunities, with direct implications for service delivery, audit outcomes and external partnerships.

5.4.1.1 Municipal Perspective of the Baseline

The Absence of a Functional Asset Management System

The most fundamental constraint at baseline was the absence of a credible asset management system, underpinned by ineffective record-keeping and the lack of a land audit. This was not a minor administrative gap; it was a systemic failure that touched almost every function the municipality was expected to perform.

From a planning and LED perspective, the LED Manager emphasised that the municipality had never conducted a land audit prior to the programme. This meant that officials could not reliably determine what land the municipality owned, how it could be used or whether it could be legally released for development. The consequences were both practical and legal, creating planning uncertainty and exposing the municipality to risk, particularly regarding land disposal and development decisions.

From a technical services perspective, the Roads and Stormwater Manager confirmed that this weakness extended to infrastructure assets. At baseline, there was no structured record of municipal infrastructure, no systematic handover process from project completion to asset registration and no lifecycle tracking of assets once built. The result was a severe breakdown in institutional memory, captured in the following account:

That one was a nightmare. I knew we had roads, but there was no structured record to say, this is our road, it was built by us, it belongs to us, and this is its condition.

This was not simply a matter of incomplete data. It reflected the functional absence of an asset management system. Infrastructure existed physically, but not institutionally, without documented ownership, valuation, maintenance planning, or integration into financial systems. The consequences were significant. The municipality was unable to demonstrate asset ownership and condition to auditors, make informed maintenance and investment decisions, or leverage its asset base for planning, revenue generation or partnerships.

This systemic weakness was directly linked to repeated qualified audit outcomes, particularly on asset management and to broader issues of financial governance. More fundamentally, the baseline problem was informational rather than financial: the municipality lacked the data, systems and processes required to exercise control over its own asset base.

Departmental Silos and the Absence of Common Purpose

A second baseline constraint was the presence of strong organisational silos, which limited coordination across departments and undermined integrated service delivery. Both municipal respondents emphasised that prior to the programme, departments operated largely independently, with limited information sharing or joint planning.

The Roads and Stormwater Manager described a pattern in which departments worked independently, making it difficult to ensure services could be delivered effectively to communities. This siloed approach was reinforced by a tendency to personalise projects within individual departments, limiting transparency and cross-departmental ownership.

The LED Manager similarly described the operational implications of this fragmentation. Information required for planning and programme coordination was dispersed across departments and often difficult to access. Extracting basic data such as asset registers, contract management information and service delivery priorities required active effort that should not have been necessary.

The absence of internal alignment had systemic effects because key municipal functions, including asset management, finance, infrastructure delivery and planning, are inherently interdependent. Without shared information flows and coordinated processes, the municipality was unable to link infrastructure delivery to asset registration and financial reporting, align spatial planning with service delivery investments or develop coherent institution-wide development priorities.



Development Planning and LED Capability Gaps

A third dimension of the baseline was the municipality's limited capability in development planning and local economic development. The most clearly identified gap was the absence of a credible and up-to-date LED strategy. The LED Manager noted that the municipality's existing strategy was outdated, dating back approximately a decade, and had not been effectively aligned with provincial or national frameworks.

In addition, the municipality lacked access to relevant economic and statistical data, the technical expertise required for economic analysis and planning, and the institutional instruments needed to convert planning outputs into implementable projects. This gap was closely linked to the absence of a land audit and the weakness of asset management systems. Without clear information on land availability, infrastructure capacity and demographic trends, the municipality was unable to translate its spatial planning and asset base into a credible pipeline of economic projects.

The result was a form of compromise planning or perhaps planning paralysis. Although opportunities existed in land, infrastructure and partnerships, the municipality lacked the capability to structure and programme these into viable development initiatives.

5.4.1.2 The Mine Partner Perspective of the Baseline

From the perspective of the De Beers and Venetia mine partners (the SED Manager and Social Performance Representative), the baseline was understood as a host-municipality capacity constraint with direct operational implications for the mine. Mine representatives emphasised that weak municipal systems, particularly in infrastructure management, planning and service delivery, created downstream pressures on the mine to compensate for municipal shortcomings. In some cases, communities redirected service delivery demands toward the mine due to perceived or actual failures on the part of the municipality.

More broadly, the municipality was seen as lacking the institutional capability to fulfil its mandated functions. Concerns centred on limited financial management and accountability, deteriorating infrastructure linked to limited technical capacity and insufficient operational capability to manage service delivery systems. A senior mine representative further highlighted the extent of institutional weakness observed, noting:

I was actually shocked to see how a municipality could be functioning without any frameworks in place.

From this perspective, the key baseline issue was not only municipal underperformance but the misalignment between municipal capability and the expectations placed on it by surrounding communities and economic actors. Importantly, mine partners also recognised that directly substituting for municipal functions was neither sustainable nor appropriate. Instead, they emphasised the need to build municipal capability rather than replace it, noting that the correct approach is to work with people, not for people.

This framing positioned the programme as a mechanism to reduce long-term dependency on the mine, enable municipalities to access funding and implement projects independently, and stabilise the broader operating environment for both communities and the mining operation. At the same time, mine partners identified staff retention and institutionalisation of skills as key risks at baseline, noting that investments in individual capacity could be undermined by high turnover rates within local government.

5.4.1.3 Government, Sector and Collaborator Perspectives of the Baseline

From the perspective of provincial government and programme collaborators (primarily from the Director: Municipal Capacity Building (CoGHSTA Limpopo), Co-ordinator: Municipal Institutional Capacity Building (CoGHSTA Limpopo) and the MCPP Implementation Team, the baseline in Blouberg was understood as part of a broader pattern of systemic institutional weakness across municipalities, characterised by fragmented capacity-building efforts, weak coordination and uneven institutional capability.

A fundamental issue identified by provincial stakeholders, in addition to inappropriate and inadequate municipal systems, included the lack of coordination between the multiple actors attempting to support municipalities. Prior to the programme, different partners including national departments, development finance institutions and private-sector actors, were often working in parallel, resulting in duplication and limited cumulative impact. The CoGHSTA Director for Municipal Capacity Building noted that 'government would invest billions in capacity building but never really see the impact, because the efforts were so disjointed'.

Within this fragmented environment, asset management emerged as a particularly critical baseline weakness. Provincial officials reported that asset management deficiencies were widespread and already identified through Auditor-General findings and internal diagnostic tools, reinforcing the municipal evidence that this was a systemic constraint rather than a localised issue.

Government stakeholders also highlighted that municipalities such as Blouberg operate within a complex context, where responsibilities for key services such as water are split between the local and district municipalities. This created structural constraints that limited the effectiveness of support interventions, even where technical gaps were clearly identified.

Provincial stakeholders further emphasised that, at baseline, many municipalities lacked the institutional depth required to sustain improvements without external support. Even where training or systems were introduced, there was uncertainty about whether these capabilities were embedded or dependent on specific individuals. This concern is captured in the question: even if the municipality has the documentation, can the people who were trained still apply what they learned?

Collaborators from CoGHSTA also highlighted the resource constraints facing the provincial government itself. Departments responsible for municipal support were operating under significant fiscal and human resource limitations while supporting many municipalities simultaneously. This meant that provinces were unable to provide the depth of hands-on, sustained technical support required to close municipal capability gaps, increasing the importance of (and reliance on) externally funded programmes such as the MCPP.

The MCPP implementation team's own account of the Blouberg baseline adds important context to what the CoGHSTA Limpopo representatives observed from a distance. From their first engagements, the team encountered a municipality where the most basic administrative foundations were absent: the near absence of a functional system of project tracking, record-keeping, and contract management.

According to the programme lead, the programme's entry into Blouberg was the Project Management Unit (PMU), which illustrated the depth of the baseline deficit in the municipality. The municipality lacked a functional PMU; the lead mentioned that 'the reason we focused on PMU was that there was a serious infrastructure problem: roads deteriorating, mine vehicles damaging them further, communities without services, money spent but projects not completed'.

This was further compounded by the lack of record-keeping. The latter was a serious constraint, because as the lead explained, 'You cannot build a contract management system if there is no record-keeping...' and that '[t]his turned out to be serious' because 'the municipality had no record of contractor deviations and was in legal disputes as a result'.

This account reinforces a point that external stakeholders could only partially observe: the baseline problem in Blouberg was not merely weak institutional systems but the near-total absence of the preconditions for systems to function. What the provincial government identified as fragmented capacity-building and poor coordination was, at ground level, a municipality lacking the physical and administrative infrastructure necessary to convert any form of support into improvement.

Both perspectives point to a critical baseline insight: the problem was not only one of municipal weakness but of system-wide capability failure across the local governance support ecosystem. Municipalities lacked internal capacity; support programmes were fragmented; and provincial oversight structures were constrained. In this context, Blouberg's baseline should be understood not as an isolated case, but as part of a wider institutional landscape in which capacity, coordination and continuity were all structurally limited prior to the programme's intervention.



5.4.2 WHAT WAS BUILT

5.4.2.1 Municipal Perspective

In Blouberg, the most significant achievements of the programme were not limited to discrete technical outputs. Rather, the programme contributed to the construction of practical institutional capability, establishing routines, systems and shared practices that enabled the municipality to plan, document, coordinate and respond more effectively. These gains reflect a transition from fragmented, reactive administration to more systematised and evidence-based municipal functioning across four interlinked areas: land and planning information, development planning systems, asset management and interdepartmental coordination.

Land Audit and Planning

The land audit represents a foundational shift in the municipality's planning capability. Prior to the programme, Blouberg had never conducted a land audit, which meant officials were unable to reliably determine what land the municipality owned, how it could be used or on what legal basis development decisions could be made. This was not merely an administrative inconvenience; it was a structural planning deficit that exposed the municipality to legal and reputational risk with every land-related decision it took.

Through the programme, the municipality developed a comprehensive and operational land audit, which now functions as a core planning instrument. The LED Manager emphasised that it has simplified decision making considerably, allowing the municipality to identify municipal land with confidence and avoid the costly errors or disputes that had been possible under the previous system. Critically, the audit has become institutionally embedded. It is no longer a consultant-prepared product that sits on a shelf; it is a working tool used internally and has been shared with other municipalities facing similar challenges. This shift from external dependency and uncertainty to internalised planning capability marks one of the programme's most durable achievements in Blouberg.

Development Planning Systems: SDF, CitySolve and the Land Development Finance Module

The MCPP's development planning support addressed one of the most significant baseline constraints in Blouberg: the absence of credible, data-informed spatial planning systems. This support was anchored in three complementary outputs: an updated Spatial Development Framework (SDF), the CitySolve electronic land-use management system, and a land development finance module. Collectively, these outputs enabled a transition from informal, manual and fragmented planning processes to a more integrated and evidence-driven planning system.

The Spatial Development Framework

Although Blouberg had an SDF prior to the programme, it was outdated and effectively unusable as a tool, limiting its role in guiding planning decisions. The programme-supported SDF is now current, adopted by the council, and actively used by the administration. It provides a credible spatial framework that enables the municipality to evaluate land development applications systematically, rather than relying on *ad hoc* judgements.

The LED Manager's sustainability assessment of this achievement reflects meaningful progress, noting that within three to four years, if the municipality remains serious about the work, they could review the SDF on their own. This statement signals a transition towards institutional independence while honestly acknowledging that full self-sufficiency requires sustained effort, technical capacity, and organisational commitment. It is the kind of measured confidence that suggests genuine capability development rather than rehearsed optimism.

CitySolve: Digitising Land-Use Management

Prior to the programme, land-use applications in Blouberg were managed through manual, paper-based processes. This came with several issues: delays, lost documentation, poor coordination between departments and a general inability to process applications at the speed and with the accountability that good governance requires. The LED Manager described the inefficiency of this system vividly, noting that the town planner was crossing the road to visit other departments in person to get decisions made.

The introduction of CitySolve has transformed this process. Applications are now submitted electronically, circulated simultaneously to relevant departments, and consolidated efficiently for decision-making by the Municipal Planning Tribunal. This represents a shift from administrative fragmentation to integrated digital workflow, improving both efficiency and accountability. However, this achievement is accompanied by a clear and specific sustainability risk: the municipality does not yet hold its own software license, with current access funded through the programme. Without a budget allocation to secure this license, the system's continuation after programme exit is not guaranteed.

The Land Development Finance Module

A less visible but highly practical output of the programme is the land development finance module, which links planning to financial and investment decision-making. The tool maps municipal land parcels, estimates township establishment costs, and models population growth and development priorities. Its practical value lies in enabling officials to engage external partners using evidence-based planning inputs.

The LED Manager described how it allowed the municipality to present costed infrastructure proposals in Social and Labour Plan (SLP) engagements with the mine, shifting discussions from aspirational requests to defensible investment cases. This illustrates a broader institutional gain: municipal officials are increasingly able to translate planning information into actionable, fundable projects, improving their credibility in intergovernmental and public-private engagements. The module represents a form of institutional translation capability, a capacity to speak the language of investment and development planning in ways that command attention and generate real engagement.

Infrastructure Asset Management

Asset management remains the most consistently evidenced area of institutional strengthening in Blouberg. The programme introduced systematic practices for project documentation, record-keeping and asset registration, including quality control files that track projects across their lifecycle. This has enabled improved audit readiness, stronger contractual and legal accountability, and more effective engagement with oversight structures.

As the Roads and Stormwater Manager emphasised, the discipline of filing and documenting everything project-related is what allows continuity. If a key official is unavailable, other people can pick up the work and defend it. This insight captures something important about what institutional embedding means in practice: it is the difference between knowledge that lives in people and knowledge that lives in systems.

These improvements are reflected in a transition from qualified to unqualified audit outcomes, a change directly linked to strengthened asset management practices. Importantly, these capabilities also enhanced the municipality's ability to mobilise external resources, including the successful securing of approximately R80 million in disaster grant funding.

Interdepartmental Coordination

The programme also contributed to a shift in organisational culture, moving the municipality from a pattern of departments operating in isolation to more collaborative and integrated working practices. The Roads and Stormwater Manager described this change as a move towards a unified institutional identity, captured in the recognition that all departments are one team working towards a common goal.

This cultural shift is significant because it underpins and sustains other gains. Asset management, planning, and financial governance all depend on coordinated action across departments, and the programme helped establish the foundations for such coordination. While the LED Manager noted that full alignment is still evolving, the evidence suggests that collaboration has moved from being externally driven to internally valued, increasing the likelihood that these gains will persist.

5.4.2.2 The Mine Partner Perspective: What was built

The mine partners identified a few standout changes in Blouberg from their perspective. First, the SED Manager noted that the Programme Management Unit (PMU) is now structured, with budgets, cash flows, and project completion as committed, enabling the municipality to access Treasury grants that it could not access before. He also describes reviewing the latest IDP and finding it 'much better' than previous versions. He further mentioned the audit improvement as being of significance, with the Social Performance Representative describing it as something the programme 'essentially drove.'

The SED Manager also raised an important and critical self-reflection. He mentioned that the programme was introduced from the Anglo American group level and DeBeers with pre-set KPIs, without adequate codesign with the Venetia site. He noted that:

The initiation process was not ideal. It was not necessarily developed collaboratively with the site to understand what our needs were or where the focus areas should be. So, it came in as a top-down approach, and we had to make it work as best we could and then reshape it to ensure it fit our needs.



However, it is important to note that it was framed as a structural criticism of the programme's design, not of what has been achieved, but it is relevant to understanding the mine partner engagement in Limpopo.

Sustainability risk

Another reflection from the SED Manager is on the sustainability of the gains made in the municipality. He notes that 'systems have been established, but a system is only as good as the people who use it. The biggest risk when we exit is that no one will have their finger on the pulse'.

But this is not a dismissal of the gains that the programme has made, because later he states that

If anything were to happen to the mine tomorrow, we can sleep at night from a Blouberg perspective, because the foundation has been laid.

His confidence lies in the systems in place, but he is wary of the capabilities of the people to maintain them.

The Social Performance Representative, on the other hand, is somewhat more optimistic, noting that because the programme trained officials already in the institution (rather than external consultants), frameworks can be sustained through staff transitions if induction is managed properly. Therefore, the De Beers and Venetia stakeholders emphasised the *work-with, not work-for* approach, in which municipal officials actively participated in and retained ownership of programme outputs. This approach contrasts with more traditional models of private-sector intervention and contributes to long-term institutional resilience rather than short-term service substitution.

5.4.2.3 Government, Sector and Collaborator Perspectives: What Was Built

The provincial perspective from the CoGHSTA official points to several improvements. They both commended the MCPP's distinguishing feature of engaging with the CoGHSTA Head of Department before approaching municipalities and thereafter co-introducing the programme in municipalities with provincial endorsement. This is unusual among local government support programmes. The Co-ordinator describes it as follows:

Most of the time we find we have programmes that come from the national, but when people come in the province, they don't engage the department. They will go directly to municipalities where it's become a challenge... [but]..., they came to the department to introduce it through our HOD... We were with them all the way. So, it was very easy for municipalities to support the programme.

The programme's engagement with CoGHSTA at the outset ensured that interventions were coordinated with existing provincial initiatives, reducing duplication and strengthening complementarity.

The Director named several externally visible changes that she attributes to the programme. The most concrete changes were the audit outcome improvement. She noted that:

With Blouberg, the municipality had regressed audit outcomes, and then, following the asset management training, I think it was in 2024 or 2025, there was a visible improvement in their audit outcome.

The Director also describes visible development and infrastructure improvement as a further observable change during the programme period. She does not attribute this entirely to the MCPP, but she places it in the context of what the programme built: a

more structured PMU, a more credible IDP and a cleaner asset management function that enabled the municipality to access Treasury grants it previously could not, similar to what the mine partner representatives noted.

Her broader assessment of what the programme changed in Blouberg's planning culture is that it shifted the municipality from planning for immediate problems toward planning for a longer-term future.

It draws the municipality towards doing futuristic, long-term plans rather than just planning for today and dealing with the consequences of inadequate planning tomorrow.

The MCPP team's perspective on what was built in Blouberg speaks to what the drivers were behind the gains that provincial government stakeholders observed. For the implementation team, the PMU support in Blouberg was one of the most hands-on capability interventions in the full programme. This involved the establishment of fillings and supporting contact tracking. The introduction of the latter helped track projects from inception through completion, meaning that, for the first time, a file could be picked up by any official and the full history of a project could be reconstructed.

The team also provided near-weekly on-site support and contractor engagement and progressively reduced involvement as municipal capacity grew. This reduced involvement was a designed handover process. The intensive work concluded in 2024, with only reduced engagement remaining thereafter.

5.4.3 SENSEMAKER TRIANGULATION: BLOUBERG

Although the SenseMaker dataset for Blouberg is small, the patterns that emerge are strongly corroborated by the interview evidence. SenseMaker narratives emphasise improved communication, clearer roles and stronger collaboration across departments, alongside growing individual confidence and access to information. These themes align closely with what officials describe in interviews: a shift from fragmented, siloed working to more coordinated institutional functioning supported by structured systems such as the asset register, quality control processes and digital planning tools. The consistency between these sources suggests that the relational and organisational improvements captured in SenseMaker reflect real, practice-level changes rather than perception alone.

Where the two sources diverge, they do so in analytically useful ways. SenseMaker responses present a largely optimistic picture of progress, while interview evidence surfaces the underlying institutional risks that remain, including dependence on key individuals, gaps in LED strategy, and specific sustainability risks such as the CitySolve licence. This divergence indicates that SenseMaker is capturing lived experience and confidence, whereas interviews provide a more critical view of institutional durability and risk exposure. Collectively, the triangulated evidence confirms that capability and collaboration gains in Blouberg are real and embedded at the individual and operational level, but that their long-term sustainability depends on addressing identifiable structural vulnerabilities.

5.4.4 BLOUBERG SUSTAINABILITY ASSESSMENT

The sustainability assessment for Blouberg Local Municipality reflects a mixed but clearly improving institutional position, in which significant gains have been made in system development and individual capability, but where critical risks remain in institutionalisation, succession and financial continuity. The assessment distinguishes between what can be considered credibly embedded institutional capability and what remains fragile or at risk, drawing on converging evidence from municipal officials, mine partners and provincial stakeholders.

5.4.4.1 What Is Credibly Embedded

Evidence across interviews indicates that several core systems and practices developed through the programme have moved beyond pilot or externally driven status and are now operational and embedded within municipal practice.

The Spatial Development Framework is updated, formally adopted and actively used as a reference framework for land-use decision-making and IDP alignment, replacing the outdated and ineffective planning instrument that existed at baseline. The CitySolve electronic land-use management system is operational and in daily use, enabling electronic submission, circulation and consolidation of land-use applications, significantly reducing administrative delays and improving interdepartmental coordination.

The asset register is now Treasury-compliant, with documented improvements in audit outcomes, including a shift from three consecutive qualified audit opinions to unqualified opinions. The introduction of a quality control management file, maintained in both hard and electronic formats, has embedded systematic documentation practices within technical operations, ensuring continuity, accountability and audit readiness. Roads and stormwater management processes have improved, with stronger integration between project implementation and asset registration, and strengthened working relationships with external institutions.

The land development finance module, while less visible, represents a high-value capability, enabling the municipality to model development costs, project population growth and prepare evidence-based submissions for SLP engagements. Across multiple officials, there is clear evidence of enhanced technical competence, confidence and institutional navigation ability. Officials demonstrated improved capacity to work across departments, engage external partners and present funding proposals effectively.

Collectively, these elements indicate that Blouberg has achieved substantive progress in building functional systems and operational practices, particularly in planning, asset management and internal coordination.

5.4.4.2 What Remains at Risk

Despite these gains, the sustainability of outcomes is constrained by a set of interrelated institutional and structural risks, which, if unaddressed, could undermine progress over time.

Programme coordination and institutional knowledge remain heavily concentrated in the LED Manager. While this individual has played a central role in aligning departments and sustaining the programme internally, no formal succession or knowledge-transfer mechanism exists. The LED Manager himself highlighted the risk of losing institutional memory if key individuals exit.

Although the CitySolve system is fully embedded in daily operations, the software license is currently funded through the programme, with no confirmed allocation from the municipal budget. This creates a clear risk of system discontinuity once the programme exits.

The municipality's LED strategy also remains outdated, dating back to 2011/2012, and programme support has not directly addressed this area. As a result, economic diversification planning remains underdeveloped and largely aspirational,

The overall sustainability assessment for Blouberg is partially embedded. At the level of individual capability, gains are strong, credible and likely to endure. Officials demonstrate improved competence, confidence and ability to operate across institutional boundaries.

At the level of systems and practices, there has been meaningful institutionalisation, particularly in asset management and development planning, where tools such as the SDF, CitySolve and documentation systems are actively used and integrated into daily operations. However, institutional embedding remains uneven. Certain components, most notably the LED strategy and digital system sustainability, are not yet fully secured within municipal structures.

The most critical risks relate to key-person dependency and succession planning. The centrality of the LED Manager (also considered the Programme Anchor), combined with the recent departure of key technical staff, highlights the fragility of institutional memory and coordination. Reaching a fully sustainable state will require deliberate succession planning and knowledge transfer mechanisms, securing budget allocations for critical systems such as CitySolve, strengthening LED planning and economic diversification capability and maintaining partner engagement during the transition period, particularly in the context of mining-sector changes. In summary, Blouberg has established a credible foundation for institutional capability, but the transition to full sustainability depends on addressing identified structural and organisational risks within the current programme phase.

The reason for cautious confidence about Blouberg's trajectory is the quality of the internal champions that the programme has developed. The officials who have been most involved in the programme are not passive recipients of externally delivered solutions; they have developed genuine ownership of the work. They can explain why systems matter, not only how to use them. They have navigated difficult institutional terrain and emerged more capable. The question is whether the systems and practices they have developed are sufficiently embedded across the organisation to survive their potential departure.

5.4.5 BLOUBERG ASSESSMENT: PROGRESS WITH INSTITUTIONALISATION - EVALUATION FRAMEWORK (A-D)

As set out in Section 3.7, the four-point progression model (A-D) is not a rigid classification, municipalities may sit at different points across different outcome areas. The letters are shorthand for the following stages: A= status quo at programme entry, B= improved delivery, C= institutional readiness, D= post-mine sustainability.

Blouberg's overall progression reflects movement from Point A (status quo) towards Point B (improved delivery), with specific gains in development planning and infrastructure documentation beginning to approach institutional readiness (Point C). The strongest progress is visible across several interconnected areas: the SDF is in active use, the electronic land-use system is operational, the asset register is now Treasury-compliant, audit outcomes have improved, and roads and stormwater management have been systematised. These are meaningful gains. However, there is a set of challenges. The departure of the PMU Technician in April 2026 represents an immediate and concrete loss of technical capacity, while the LED manager remains one of the few institutional memory points with no formal succession arrangement in place. Beyond staffing, the LED strategy gap leaves economic diversification planning underdeveloped; the CitySolve licence remains dependent on programme funding rather than a secured municipal budget line, ECSA registration is only being actively pursued by one official currently (independently from MCPP direct support in this regard), and the prospect of political transition adds further uncertainty to an institutional environment that has not yet fully embedded the gains made.

The shift from a qualified to an unqualified audit opinion is a concrete, independently verified gain. The SDF being adopted and actively used is meaningful. The land audit being conducted for the first time in the municipality's history is a foundational achievement. And the officials themselves describe growing confidence and improved working relationships in ways that are consistent and credible across multiple sources.

The LED Manager, Town Planners, PMU manager, Technical Director being limited points of institutional memory, the CitySolve licence not secured, the LED strategy requiring additional work and the PMU Technician's departure can be cited as challenges that need to be resolved.



5.5 Musina Local Municipality

5.5.1 BASELINE: WHAT THE PROGRAMME FOUND

At programme entry, Musina Local Municipality presented a complex and constrained institutional baseline, characterised by a development growth trajectory that was not matched by the municipality's internal capability to plan, regulate and manage that growth effectively.

Unlike municipalities where the primary constraint is a lack of economic activity, Musina's challenge was the opposite: it was experiencing increasing development pressure linked to mining, agriculture, cross-border trade and its designation as a Special Economic Zone (SEZ), but lacked the institutional systems required to convert this potential into orderly, revenue-generating and sustainable development.

Across interview evidence from spatial planning, GIS and senior management functions, the baseline can be summarised as comprising six interrelated constraints: outdated and misaligned planning instruments; severe financial limitations; the near absence of GIS capability; an outdated and restrictive land-use management system; the absence of a credible LED strategy; and incomplete asset management systems. These constraints combined to produce a municipality that operated in a largely reactive mode, with limited ability to guide development, enforce regulations or support economic transformation.

5.5.1.1 Municipal Perspective of the Baseline

Outdated and Misaligned Planning Instruments

The most fundamental constraint at baseline was the outdated and misaligned core planning instruments, particularly the Spatial Development Framework (SDF) and the Land Use Management Scheme (LUMS). The LUMS dated from approximately 2010 to 2011 and had not been updated within the required planning cycle. By the time of programme entry, officials were working with what the Manager for Spatial Planning and Land Use Management described as 'a document that is not in touch with reality'. Especially not reflecting the increase in the number of people, settlements and development dynamics in the town and rural region.

This misalignment had direct operational consequences. Common land uses emerging in Musina such as car washes, backyard accommodation units and informal rental developments, had no formal recognition in the scheme. As the Zoning Inspector explained, 'when an applicant would come to propose a certain development, officials often did not know how to categorise it'. Similarly, the SDF did not reflect the municipality's designation as a Special Economic Zone, a critical omission in a municipality expected to accommodate industrial development and associated spatial restructuring. The result was a significant disconnect between development realities, policy frameworks and implementation mechanisms, weakening the municipality's ability to guide or regulate growth effectively.

Financial Constraints

The planning gaps mentioned above were closely linked to severe financial constraints, which limited the municipality's ability to update its own systems. At baseline, Musina was facing substantial financial pressure, including approximately R150 million owed to Eskom, while lacking dedicated budget allocations for planning work. The cost of reviewing key planning instruments was beyond the municipality's reach.

As the Manager for Spatial Planning and Land Use Management stated,

If the MCPP did not come into the picture, the municipality would not have been able to appoint a service provider on its own.

This highlights that Musina's constraint was not only technical but also resource-based: the municipality lacked the financial capacity to produce and maintain its own planning tools, rendering it dependent on external support.

Near-Absence of GIS Capability

The baseline position of the Geographic Information System (GIS) function was described as effectively non-existent. Spatial data was fragmented, poorly organised and largely undigitised. Zoning information was maintained in manual records and there was no centralised geodatabase integrating planning, asset or infrastructure data. The GIS Officer described this condition as requiring 'a lifeline', reflecting both the technical gap and the urgent need for intervention.

GIS is not a single-department function. As the same official noted, GIS data is relevant to other departments as well as for planning. Its absence therefore limited not only spatial planning but also asset management, infrastructure planning and interdepartmental coordination, resulting in largely uninformed decision making across the municipality.

The Outdated Land-Use System

The outdated land-use scheme also reflected a broader institutional failure to engage with local economic practices. Musina's economy includes a significant informal and household-based component, particularly in the form of backyard rentals and small-scale enterprises. However, these realities were not recognised within the regulatory framework. As a result, the municipality faced a dual challenge: it could not regulate these activities effectively and it could not support or formalise them as part of a broader economic strategy. The baseline condition was therefore one in which real economic activity existed outside formal planning systems, undermining both governance and development outcomes.

Absence of a Credible LED Strategy

The municipality also lacked an effective Local Economic Development strategy that reflected the complexity of its local economy. The General Manager for Economic Development and Planning noted that the municipality did not have a local economic development strategy outlining how it would like to see LED develop in the area. This gap is particularly significant in Musina, where economic activity is shaped by mining, agriculture, logistics and cross-border trade. Without a coherent strategy, the municipality lacked the ability to position itself for investment, coordinate stakeholders or guide economic diversification. The LED gap thus reflects not only a missing document but a weak institutional interface with the local economy.

Incomplete Asset Management Systems

Asset management systems at baseline were similarly underdeveloped. The available evidence indicates that the asset register was incomplete, with inconsistencies between land and building records. Officials described situations where land existed without corresponding building records, or buildings existed without the associated land records in the system. There were also indications that GRAP and GIAMA compliance had not been achieved and that previous initiatives had not resulted in a fully functional system. These weaknesses were closely linked to the absence of GIS capability, as spatial integration is critical for producing a complete and reliable asset register.

5.5.1.2 The Mine Partner's Perspective of the Baseline

From the perspective of the De Beers and Venetia mine partners (the SED Manager and Social Performance Representative), the baseline in Musina was understood as a host-municipality capacity constraint with direct implications for the mine's operating environment. Mine representatives highlighted broader issues of weak municipal capability in planning, infrastructure management, and service delivery, which created pressure on the mine to intervene in areas that fall within municipal mandates.

The SED Manager described a municipality that was not sufficiently enabled to access and implement development opportunities, largely due to weak or absent planning and implementation frameworks. While resources and funding streams existed, the challenge lay in the institutional ability to translate these into delivery. He notes that from a private sector perspective 'we set up a framework and apply for money', but in the municipal context 'there is a certain amount of red tape that makes implementation more difficult'. This reflects a baseline condition where capacity constraints were systemic rather than purely resource driven.

A second identified feature of the baseline was the way in which service delivery gaps created pressure on the mine. Where the municipality was unable to meet community needs, these needs were often redirected toward Venetia. This created both operational and reputational risk and blurred the boundary between municipal responsibility and private sector involvement. The Social Performance Representative reflected critically on this dynamic, noting:

We ... tend to think we can step into the space of local government and take over what they are supposed to do.

This observation captures the underlying condition at baseline: a system in which weak municipal capability drew the mine into functions beyond its mandate, even where this was not a sustainable or appropriate role.

A further constraint identified at baseline was the absence of key functional systems, particularly in areas such as disaster and emergency management. From the mine's perspective, this represented a critical gap not only in municipal performance, but in the overall reliability of the operating environment. As the Social Performance Representative noted in relation to emergency readiness:

If the surrounding municipality does not have a disaster management plan, the likelihood is that ... there may not be any institution capable of responding.

Finally, the relationship between the mine and the municipality at baseline was not structured as a coordinated partnership. Engagement was largely shaped through individual, project-based interactions linked to Social and Labour Plan commitments, rather than through an integrated approach to institutional strengthening. This reinforced a reactive pattern, in which the mine responded to immediate pressures rather than working within a shared framework to build long-term municipal capability.

5.5.1.3 Government, Sector and Collaborator Perspectives of the Baseline

From the perspective of the provincial government and programme collaborators, particularly the Director: Municipal Capacity Building and the Co-ordinator: Municipal Institutional Capacity Building at CoGHSTA Limpopo, the baseline in Musina was understood as part of a broader pattern of systemic institutional weakness across municipalities. This was characterised not only by internal municipal constraints but also by fragmented capacity-building efforts, weak coordination between support actors and uneven institutional capability across the system.

The Director described the absence of coordination across the multiple actors providing support to municipalities as a central feature of the baseline. She mentioned that different programmes, including national, provincial and external partners, were operating in the same space without alignment, resulting in duplication and limited overall impact.

We then had to put a structure in place to avoid duplication and ensure we were not spinning in the same space.

At the municipal level, Musina's baseline challenges were consistent with this broader pattern. The Co-ordinator highlighted outdated planning frameworks and weak asset management capacity as key issues, noting that municipalities were working with planning instruments that were either not current or not operationalised. These gaps limited the municipality's ability to plan, prioritise and manage infrastructure effectively.

Asset management emerged as a particularly important baseline constraint, identified across both provincial interviews as a systemic weakness requiring intervention. The Director described it as a 'core problem in municipalities', underscoring that while the issue was widely recognised, there was no clarity on which actor was responsible for addressing it prior to the programme's intervention.

A further layer of complexity in Musina's baseline related to institutional fragmentation in service delivery responsibilities. The Co-ordinator pointed out that Musina is not a water services authority, with this function residing at district level (Vhembe District), which limited the effectiveness of local-level interventions in certain service areas.

5.5.2 WHAT WAS BUILT

5.5.2.1 Municipal Perspective: What was Built

In Musina, the programme's most significant contribution was not limited to the production of technical planning documents. Rather, it supported the reconstruction of a functional development planning system, combining policy, data infrastructure and institutional practice. At baseline, the municipality lacked credible planning tools, integrated spatial data and the financial capacity to produce either. At the time of this evaluation, the programme had contributed to the emergence of a partially coherent planning system, anchored in updated policy frameworks, an operational GIS foundation and improved interdepartmental coordination.

Among what was built, the development of the municipal asset register stands out as the first major achievement of the programme's GIS and data work and remains central to the sustained technical assistance provided in these areas over time. However, it is important to note that this evaluation did not include the perspective (interviews) with the finance and technical teams directly responsible for compiling and maintaining the asset register. Therefore, the findings presented here reflect the broader municipal perspective on the programme's contribution to planning and data systems. Rather than a first-hand technical account from those who built and manage the asset register itself. This is a limitation that should be considered when interpreting the extent and quality of progress made in this specific area. But overall, these changes represent a shift from policy absence and institutional fragmentation towards early-stage system integration, though not yet full institutional maturity. The honest framing of where Musina now sits is important: meaningful progress has been made, but the municipality is still in the early phases of a longer institutional development journey.

Spatial Development Framework

One of the most significant achievements has been the development and adoption of a new Spatial Development Framework, addressing a critical baseline constraint. The SDF, adopted by the council in December 2025, is now aligned with Musina's actual development context, including its designation as a Special Economic Zone. This represents a substantive shift from the previous situation, where the municipality's primary spatial planning instrument omitted its most important economic driver.

The SDF is beginning to inform practical decision-making. Evidence from the Spatial Planning function indicates that it is already being used to identify and prevent development in flood-prone areas, guide agricultural land protection, and structure engagement with traditional authorities on land allocation. One example illustrates this shift clearly:

The SDF has revealed encroachment into flooding areas and has stopped some illegal allocations by traditional leaders.

This demonstrates movement from a purely formal planning document to a functional regulatory and risk-management tool.

At the same time, sustainability is emerging but not yet fully secured. The Manager for Spatial Planning indicated that the municipality now has the capability to undertake future reviews internally, suggesting that the SDF is not only a product, but a vehicle for institutional learning and capability development. The difference between owning a document and understanding how to produce and revise it is significant, and the evidence suggests that Musina is beginning to make that transition.

Land-Use Management Scheme

The development of a new land-use management scheme represents a second major output, directly addressing the baseline disconnect between regulatory frameworks and economic reality. The revised scheme introduces new categories and regulatory mechanisms that reflect actual land-use practices in Musina, particularly in relation to informal and household economic activity.

A key innovation is the introduction of a simplified mechanism to regulate backyard dwellings, allowing households to formalise rental accommodation through an administrative approval process rather than complex rezoning procedures. This shift reflects a broader change in institutional approach: from a restrictive, compliance-oriented system to one that recognises land use as a component of livelihood strategies and local economic survival. The new approach allows households to generate income while remaining within a regulated framework, rather than operating outside it entirely. This is a significant institutional shift: land-use management is no longer only about control, but also about enabling economic activity in a structured way. However, the scheme remains in transition, with formal adoption processes still pending, which introduces a degree of short-term uncertainty regarding its full implementation.

Asset and Land Data Infrastructure

The development of GIS capability is one of the most transformative programme outcomes in Musina, addressing a baseline condition of near-total absence. Through the programme, the municipality has established asset verification, condition assessments, a centralised geodatabase, integrating multiple datasets including cadastral information, building footprints, zoning layers and planning intervention areas.

This has enabled a shift from fragmented, manual data systems to a shared spatial platform that supports planning, asset management and interdepartmental coordination. The GIS Officer described the trajectory of this change in clear terms, noting that the municipality had gone from zero GIS capability to approximately 80 per cent functionality.

GIS Functionality

In this context, *functionality* refers to the operational capacity of the system, the existence of a working geodatabase, the availability of core datasets and the municipality's ability to use GIS to support planning and decision making. The system is now used to determine mapping constraints such as flood lines and land suitability when evaluating development proposals. Importantly, GIS is recognised internally as a cross-cutting institutional capability rather than a technical tool confined to one unit.

At the same time, this level of functionality does not imply complete coverage of the municipality. The Spatial Planning Manager's assessment is that GIS functionality currently extends to approximately 30 per cent of the municipal area.

GIS Coverage

Here, *coverage* refers to the extent to which the municipal territory has been captured, digitised and incorporated into the system. This distinction is important: while the GIS platform itself is largely operational, the system is not yet fully institutionalised, coverage remains incomplete, particularly in rural and traditional authority areas where mapping and integration across departments are still in progress.

Interdepartmental Coordination and Institutional Integration

A further area of progress is the strengthening of interdepartmental coordination, particularly between Spatial Planning, Finance, Technical Services and Asset Management. The programme has contributed to the development of new working relationships and information flows, enabling communication between planning and finance on property valuation, coordination with technical services on infrastructure capacity and integration between GIS and asset management systems. For example, building plan approvals are now communicated to Finance to update property values, improving revenue collection. This reflects a shift from isolated departmental functioning to more integrated and interdependent operations, although officials emphasise that this process is still evolving.

Institutional Capability and Learning

One of the most consistent findings across interview evidence is the extent of individual and team-level capability development in Musina. The programme adopted a participatory approach, in which municipal officials were directly involved in producing planning outputs, rather than acting as passive recipients. This allowed staff, particularly younger professionals, to develop both technical skills and institutional understanding.

The Zoning Inspector described this as a critical shift, noting that the programme went beyond just producing documents and instead built a structured environment in which to learn. The GIS function highlighted the practical learning derived from working directly with data systems, which enabled officials to develop near-professional competence over the programme period. This capability development is reinforced by the fact that officials now demonstrate improved confidence in decision making, increased ability to work across departments and a stronger understanding of how municipal systems interconnect.

5.5.2.2 The Mine Partner Perspective: What was built

The mine partners' reflections on Musina are more measured than in Blouberg, but they do identify a set of specific, tangible shifts from their vantage point. The most consistently noted change relates to improvements in spatial planning and land-use visibility. The SED Manager highlighted that the municipality is now able to respond to basic queries related to land in a way that was not previously possible.

If I ask whether there is land available to build a factory, they can now tell me, they know where it is and whether it is serviced.

This represents a practical and significant shift, from a position where information was fragmented or unavailable, to one where the municipality can engage with economic opportunities in a more structured and credible way. However, this improvement is framed as foundational rather than transformative. The SED Manager was explicit that, beyond this, the overall impact in Musina has been uneven, noting that:

I don't think [Musina] was that impactful... I understand a lot of groundwork was done, LED strategies were developed, but I don't see that being implemented.

This introduces a key distinction in the Musina case between planning outputs and implementation, with the latter remaining a challenge from the perspective of the SED manager.

At the same time, the programme did generate value for the mine through improved visibility of municipal system gaps, particularly in functional areas such as emergency and disaster management. The Social Performance Representative emphasised that the programme enabled the mine to better understand institutional readiness in its operating environment, noting:

Because of this programme, we now know where the specific gaps lie... it helps us assess the institution's readiness.

This reflects a more indirect but still important outcome: while municipal performance improvements may be partial, the programme has strengthened the mine's ability to engage with and plan around municipal constraints. In this respect, even where outcomes in Musina are partial, the programme is seen to have influenced how the mine engages with municipalities, moving toward a more clearly defined, collaborative model that supports institutional development rather than reinforcing dependency.

5.5.2.3 Government, Sector and Collaborator Perspectives: What Was Built

From the provincial and collaborator perspective, the Musina case presents a more detailed and layered picture of what was built, reflecting both direct visibility into specific outputs and the municipality's strategic importance within the provincial economy.

Individual Capability Development

The most consistently highlighted outcome is the development of a junior official into a functioning town-planning professional (the current Zoning Inspector of the municipality) capable of operating in a complex governance environment. The Director frames this not as a conventional training output, but as a coaching and mentorship achievement with direct institutional implications. What makes this outcome significant from the provincial vantage point is not simply the individual development but its observable effect in practice.

The Director further notes that Musina officials are now able to engage meaningfully in the Musina-Makhado Special Economic Zone (SEZ) forum, a space characterised by technical planning discussions, regulatory complexity and high-stakes investment negotiation.

This reflects an observable shift in institutional capability, from limited participation to informed engagement that would not be captured in standard output metrics. The Director reinforces this by explicitly, when referring to the development of the junior official,

encouraging further knowledge transfer, asking that the official 'pass on' these skills to other interns, embedding continuity within the institution.

Managing the Eskom Debt

A second standout outcome identified at the provincial level is the establishment of a structured mechanism for managing and settling Musina's Eskom debt before it reached a critical point. This outcome is not prominently reflected in programme reporting but is noted by the Director as a significant achievement.

This intervention is attributed to technical support provided through the programme on billing review and electricity management, linking infrastructure asset management work directly to improved financial governance. From the provincial perspective, this is a concrete, verifiable outcome with immediate fiscal and service delivery implications. It represents a shift from reactive crisis management to proactive financial control.

Identified risks:

Alongside these gains, provincial stakeholders identify a clear and immediate gap linked to Musina's designation as a Special Economic Zone. The Director notes:

With Musina now functioning as a designated SEZ, I might not have the capacity to fill the gap if the programme withdraws.

This reflects a mismatch between the scale of institutional demand associated with the SEZ and the current capacity of both the municipality and the provincial support system. The risk is not that capability is absent, but that it is not yet sufficient to meet the increasing complexity and volume of demands.

Additional structural gaps are also identified, including the absence of an infrastructure master plan and an incomplete disaster recovery framework, both of which become more critical as economic activity expands.

A further risk highlighted by both provincial stakeholders is the stability of senior management. While technical capacity within Musina has improved, the durability of these gains depends on consistent leadership and institutional oversight. This aligns with the sector-level observation that sustainability depends not only on what has been built, but on whether institutions can continue to function independently once programme support is withdrawn. This is captured by the Minerals Council representative who stated that:

The test is whether municipalities that have received MCPP support continue doing the work independently and begin to apply the change management experience they gained to address the next set of challenges on their own.

Finally, the sector perspective introduces a broader structural consideration: the continuity of the programme itself. The limitations to programme expansion linked to De Beers' financial position are identified as a key constraint, with implications for the depth and continuity of support in Musina. The Minerals Council official explains it as such:

When De Beers has been making significant losses, any business would pull back on programmes that are not operational requirements. The MCPP is also not a social and labour Plan programme... it is not a legal obligation attached to a mining right. So, when cuts need to be made, it becomes a target. If you are making losses year after year, you cannot fund add-on programmes. That is the reality.

This positions the Musina outcomes within a larger systemic context, where sustainability depends not only on municipal capability, but on whether the approach itself is institutionalised beyond its current funding model.

Collectively, these perspectives show that what has been built in Musina includes tangible institutional gains, in planning capability, financial governance, and coordination, as well

as less visible but equally important shifts in how municipalities engage with complex development processes. At the same time, these gains remain contingent on leadership stability, system completion, and the ability to sustain both capability and support within an increasingly demanding economic environment.

5.5.3 SENSEMAKER TRIANGULATION: MUSINA

Musina's SenseMaker data presents a more complex but equally informative triangulation picture. While noting the absence of responses in the 2023-2024 round, in the later rounds where participation resumed, SenseMaker narratives emphasised collaboration, teamwork, and technical learning themes that are corroborated by interview evidence describing the 'working alongside' approach to developing the SDF, LUMS and GIS systems, as well as measurable growth in technical capability and confidence among officials.

At the same time, triangulation highlights important gaps that SenseMaker alone does not fully capture. While participant narratives emphasise capability gains and positive collaboration, interview evidence shows that institutionalisation remains uneven: GIS coverage is partial, key systems are not fully implemented and planning capacity rests on a small number of individuals. This indicates that SenseMaker accurately captured the depth of change where it occurred, particularly at the level of individual capability and team functioning but cannot capture the scale of this change.

Overall, the triangulated evidence confirms that Musina has achieved substantial capability gains in development planning and GIS, but that these gains remain unevenly embedded and still dependent, in part, on programme support and facilitation.



5.5.4 MUSINA SUSTAINABILITY ASSESSMENT

The Musina Local Municipality has made notable progress in embedding sustainable planning and governance principles, particularly in spatial development. Understanding the sustainability picture requires distinguishing between what has been genuinely embedded, what remains fragile and what structural risks could unravel progress if not addressed.

What Has Been Embedded

A key achievement is the updating and improvement of the Asset Register, the adoption of the Spatial Development Framework by council in December 2025, which is already in active use. Its application has led to improved regulation of land allocation through flood-prone area mapping that prevents unlawful developments. Engagement with traditional leaders has resulted in direct planning referrals, strengthening institutional coordination. For the first time, the SDF also provides spatial guidance for the Special Economic Zone, marking a significant step in integrated development planning.

Complementing the SDF, the establishment of a centralised geodatabase stands out as a durable and concrete institutional asset. This system consolidates critical datasets, including SDF layers, Land Use Management Scheme information, road networks, cadastral data, building records and traditional authority boundaries. Particularly significant is the mapping of traditional leadership boundaries at an unprecedented level of quality, which extends its value beyond planning into community-level conflict resolution and governance.

The municipality has also completed a new Land Use Management Scheme that is tailored to local realities, incorporating practical innovations such as a written consent mechanism for backyard accommodation, zoning categories for informal economic activities such as car washes and provisions aligned with SEZ development. However, the scheme is not yet formally enforceable pending council adoption.

Alongside these structural improvements, there has been demonstrable investment in human capacity. Three officials show clear professional development progress. The GIS Officer is performing at near-professional level with South African Council for Geomatics (SACG) accreditation, the Spatial Planning Manager has gained competence in capital expenditure frameworks and cross-departmental coordination, and the Zoning Inspector is independently managing application processes. Economic development planning has also advanced at a strategic level, with an LED strategy developed, identifying agriculture as the primary economic driver beyond the anticipated closure of Venetia Mine. In addition, a shift in budget priorities has seen approximately R8 million in new commitments directed towards spatial planning, reflecting a change in management focus.

What Remains at Risk

Despite these gains, several risks remain that could undermine sustainability if not addressed. The most immediate constraint is the pending adoption of the LUMS. Until it is approved by council, the municipality lacks the authority to enforce new zoning categories, including those that regulate backyard accommodation and other emerging land uses. The GIS system, while operational, with an estimate of 80 per cent usage, currently covers only about 30 per cent of the municipal area, with significant portions of rural and peri-urban settlements remaining unmapped.

A critical infrastructure gap is the absence of a server to support GIS functionality. Successful institutional implementation is directly impacted by the current lack of a municipal server to enable the GIS functionality to be accessible cross-departmentally. The co-developed electronic land-use management system (as part of the CitySolve) is hosted on an external server, as a temporary arrangement. Despite the co-development of the electronic system and indications of the relevant requirements for optimal use continuously, funds have not been secured for the annual license fee. These constraints impact the efficiency of development application processing, with current practice relying on manual processes.

Institutional capacity remains fragile. The spatial planning unit relies heavily on a single qualified town planner in the form of the Zoning Inspector, creating a structural vulnerability. While LED planning has been completed, implementation remains weak due to the absence of a dedicated budget. Progress on key initiatives such as the agricultural hub has stalled, partly because of the lack of an intermediary role previously played by the MCPP in facilitating private sector engagement.

Intermunicipal collaboration is also not as functional as it should be. Despite sharing a mining partner and a common future challenge in mine closure, Musina and Blouberg municipalities have not engaged in dialogue around SLP implementation.

Financial sustainability is further weakened by the absence of a development charge policy, leaving the municipality to bear infrastructure costs without mechanisms for cost recovery.

Uncertainty surrounding the future of De Beers, due to Anglo American's divestment, also introduces risk into the continuity of programme funding and external support.

Overall, the sustainability of Musina's recent progress is partially embedded. The strongest gains are evident in development planning, particularly through the institutionalisation of the SDF and the geodatabase. However, weaknesses persist in LED implementation and the operational completeness of the GIS system. These gaps are especially significant considering the looming closure of the Venetia Mine, which heightens the urgency of economic transition and spatial planning readiness. The intermediary role played by the MCPP in engaging the private sector emerges as a critical programme value that cannot be fully replicated through internal capacity building alone. Ensuring its continuation or formal transfer is therefore essential. While there is some continuity in planning staff, the current structure remains thin, and additional appointments before the programme concludes will be necessary to secure long-term sustainability.

5.5.5 MUSINA LM ASSESSMENT: EVALUATION FRAMEWORK (A-D)

As with Blouberg, this section uses the four-point progress model defined in Section 3.7, the letters indicate stage, not a rigid or final classification.

Musina's overall progression reflects movement from Point A (status quo) towards Point B (improved delivery), with specific gains in development planning and GIS, representing genuine and measurable progress from baseline. The SDF adoption and geodatabase are durable institutional gains. The LED gap and incomplete LUMS adoption mean that Musina has not yet reached the institutional readiness that Point C would require.

5.6 Overview of the Limpopo Region

The Limpopo component of the MCPP covered two local municipalities: Blouberg Local Municipality and Musina Local Municipality, and both are supported through a partnership with De Beers' Venetia mine.

At programme entry, both municipalities presented structural capability deficits that were simultaneously technical and institutional. Neither had functional asset registers, operational project management units, active spatial development frameworks, or cultures of interdepartmental collaboration. The MCPP's task in Limpopo has not been to deliver services on behalf of the municipalities, but to work alongside their teams to develop the capability to do so independently. The evidence gathered through this evaluation confirms that meaningful progress has been made in both municipalities, though it is unevenly embedded and carries sustainability risks that are specific to the Limpopo context.

Programme limitations

The Limpopo roll out of the MCPP was designed in relation to the limited funding that was available. According to the sector perspective, De Beers has been facing reduced income for a sustained period. As the MCPP is not a Social and Labour Plan obligation and is not legally attached to the mining right, it sits outside the core compliance expenditure of the mine but continued to support the programme. One of the evaluation's most important findings is that the depth and breadth of programme impact are directly shaped by the continuity and scale of investment from industry partners over time. The Limpopo component demonstrates this finding from the inside: meaningful and important gains have been achieved in Musina and Blouberg despite more constrained resources and periods of funding contraction. These gains, which include a treasury-compliant asset register, an adopted SDF, a functioning GIS platform and growing individual capability across planning and technical functions, are real and corroborated. They reflect the value of the programme approach even under difficult funding conditions. At the same time, they are more selective and less systemically integrated than what sustained, multi-strand investment could enable. The evidence from both municipalities, highlights the value of consistent, long-term investment, not as a criticism of any partner's contribution, but as a positive finding about what the programme can deliver when conditions allow or industry investment can be 'pooled'.

Evaluation implication

It is important to state clearly what the evidence from Musina and Blouberg also demonstrates: meaningful and important gains have been achieved, despite operating under more constrained resources conditions. SDF adoption in Musina, audit improvements in Blouberg, GIS establishment across Limpopo, are real achievements reflecting the genuine value of the MCPP approach in different funding environments.

5.6.1 WHAT THE PROGRAMME HAS PRODUCED IN LIMPOPO: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The following summary draws out the Limpopo-level picture that emerges when both municipalities are considered together.

What Has Been Built

Spatial planning tools in active use. Both municipalities now have Spatial Development Frameworks that are current, formally adopted and used in practice. In Musina, the SDF is already guiding decisions on flood-line management, agricultural land protection and Special Economic Zone development. In Blouberg, it has simplified land-use decision-making and been shared with other municipalities as a reference document. This is a meaningful departure from the baseline, where both municipalities were working with outdated instruments they could not apply.

Asset registers and improved audit outcomes. Both municipalities have made measurable progress on infrastructure asset management. Blouberg's asset register is now Treasury-compliant; the municipality has moved from three consecutive qualified audit opinions to unqualified opinions, a directly traceable consequence of improved documentation practice. In Musina, the asset register has been strengthened, with GIS integration providing the spatial foundation previously absent.

GIS and land-use management systems. Musina's GIS system, described at baseline as effectively non-existent, now covers approximately 80 per cent of the municipal area and is in daily operational use. The electronic land-use management system has replaced a purely paper-based process, transforming the speed and traceability of land-use applications. These gains are directly attributable to the programme's coproduction methodology.

Interdepartmental collaboration. The most consistent cross-cutting finding in Limpopo is a shift in how municipal teams work together. Both municipalities describe a movement from siloed departmental functioning to more coordinated, shared-information practice. This relational shift is the foundation on which all technical gains rest: a land audit that sits in one department, or an SDF produced by a consultant and handed over does not generate the same institutional outcomes as tools built through genuine collaboration and internalised through shared practice.

Individual capability development. Multiple officials across both municipalities demonstrate the ability to explain, defend and apply the systems they have built, not merely to operate them. The GIS Officer in Musina is performing at a near-professional level with accreditation pending. Officials in Blouberg's technical services function can articulate why asset documentation matters and how it connects to audit outcomes. This depth of individual understanding is a precondition for institutional durability.

What Remains at Risk

The LED gap. Only Musina has an operational Local Economic Development strategy, even though both have plans that are aspirational rather than funded and implemented. This is the most significant strategic gap in the Limpopo component: with Venetia's closure horizon approaching, economic diversification planning is not a future priority but an urgent present need.

Individual concentration within the system, while there is clear evidence of institutionalisation, the day-to-day operation of these systems remains concentrated in a small number of individuals. In Blouberg and Musina, key functions are still closely associated with specific officials who carry institutional memory and operational knowledge. This means that the risk is not the absence of systems, but their limited diffusion: where such individuals exit, as in the case of the Blouberg PMU technician, the continuity and effective use of these systems is not yet fully assured.

Digital system sustainability. Blouberg's CitySolve electronic land-use management system is in daily operational use but is funded through the programme rather than secured through a municipal budget allocation. Without a budget line, system continuity after programme exit is not guaranteed.

Funding continuity. The most significant structural risk for the Limpopo component is the limited scope of the current De Beers funding relative to what sustained systemic change requires. Without a formal multi-year commitment, the gains made so far remain depended on continued commercial decisions, rather than being secured through a long-term funding arrangement.

Limpopo: Evaluative Summary

Both Blouberg and Musina have moved meaningfully from their baseline positions. The gains are real, corroborated across multiple evidence sources and in several instances, the Musina SDF adoption, the Blouberg audit improvement and the GIS system represent firsts in the municipalities' institutional history. The trajectory is credible but fragile. The collaborative regional and town economic development gap is the most consequential unresolved strategic risk. Reliance on an individual is the most immediate operational risk and the De Beers funding limitations are the most significant risk to the extension of the programme impact.



EVALUATION FINDINGS: NORTHERN CAPE

6.1 Kumba Iron Ore: Investment Rationale and the Regional Context

Kumba Iron Ore's investment in the MCPP in the Northern Cape is anchored in its role as the owner and operator of the Sishen and Kolomela mines, and its long-term responsibility to the surrounding municipal region, specifically Gamagara Local Municipality and Tsantsabane Local Municipality. These municipalities are deeply shaped by mining activity and face a defined closure horizon within approximately fifteen years, making the strengthening of municipal capability directly relevant to both community resilience and Kumba's long-term risk management.

At the same time, the Northern Cape context is best understood through a mine closure preparedness framing. The transition challenge is not abstract or long-term but structurally embedded in the current economic and spatial form of these municipalities. Gamagara and Tsantsabane are highly dependent on mining, both fiscally and economically, and their viability is closely tied to what happens as mining activity declines.

6.1.1 THE MINE CLOSURE PREPAREDNESS LENS

The municipalities in the Northern Cape component are best understood through a mine closure preparedness lens. Both Gamagara and Tsantsabane derive a substantial proportion of their revenues and economic activity from mining and both face a defined closure trajectory. This represents one of the most significant and immediate economic transition risks facing municipalities in the programme.

The character of these municipalities reflects this dependence. Settlements such as Kathu and Postmasburg are, to a meaningful degree, shaped by mining as the anchor of economic and social life. Population growth, infrastructure development and fiscal capacity are closely tied to mining activity. This creates a high level of structural exposure to closure.

Within this context, the core challenge of the MCPP is not only to improve municipal systems but to shift the orientation of those systems toward a post-mining future. This involves embedding mine closure scenarios into planning instruments and building an institutional system that recognises the temporary nature of mining-led growth.

6.2 Investment Rationale and Focus Areas

Kumba's rationale for investing in the MCPP is shaped by three interrelated imperatives. The first is managing systemic closure risk. With mine closure projected within approximately fifteen years, Kumba faces a high-risk scenario in which town economy and municipal collapse could intensify social instability, reputational exposure and long-term legacy risks. The second is shifting from municipal substitution to municipal capability. Historically, mines in several Northern Cape towns have stepped in to provide services and infrastructure. This is especially true in the case of Kathu, that got established as a mine town. Kumba recognises this model as unsustainable and has invested in strengthening municipal systems instead of perpetuating dependency. The third is aligning Social and Labour Plan and socioeconomic development investment with long-term regional development pathways, ensuring that mining expenditure contributes to assets and institutions that remain viable post-closure.

The agreed MCPP focus areas on the Northern Cape include strategic and spatial development planning, integrating mine closure scenarios into municipal and regional

plans, water services management and infrastructure sustainability. Acute regional water scarcity, reliance on mine-dewatering in Gamagara, challenges with infrastructure asset management, and financial viability to ensure municipalities can operate and maintain inherited assets and regional collaboration to mitigate against the implications expected mine closure in the region culminated in the establishment of the Gamagara-Tsantsabane Regional Development Compact.

The development of pathways for regional economic transition through the municipal SDFs, and the commissioning of a Regional Socio-Economic Impact Assessment in 2025, conducted through the MCPP, marks a turning point in both municipalities' and Kumba's approach, drawing on a shared evidence base and vision to guide both municipal planning and future socioeconomic investment alignment.

6.3 Municipal Context: Gamagara and Tsantsabane

Gamagara Local Municipality hosts Sishen Mine and serves as a key economic and administrative node within the Northern Cape iron ore belt. The municipality experienced fragmented planning, weak infrastructure management and limited coordination across departments at programme entry. However, it also benefits from comparatively stronger leadership capacity and administrative stability. The MCPP investment focuses on embedding integrated planning systems, including the Spatial Development Framework (SDF), Integrated Development Plan (IDP) and Capital Investment Framework (CIF), and strengthening water and infrastructure management to support long-term service sustainability in Kathu and surrounding settlements.

Tsantsabane Local Municipality, home to Kolomela Mine and the town of Postmasburg, represents one of South Africa's most vulnerable mining municipalities and a municipality with limited financial viability. High dependency on mine-derived revenue, ageing infrastructure, severe water challenges and limited internal capacity places the municipality at acute risk from mine closure. The MCPP investment in Tsantsabane prioritises water services capability, institutional stabilisation, financial management and leadership development, recognising that without significant improvement, the municipality would be unable to absorb closure shocks.

6.4 Regional Perspective

Crucially, Anglo American and Kumba's investment rationale extends beyond individual municipalities to the mining region and the bigger Northern Cape regional system. The Gamagara-Tsantsabane Regional Development Compact, supported through the MCPP, represents a deliberate attempt to align municipal, provincial, industry and national stakeholders around a shared post-mining future. This regional framing distinguishes the MCPP value add as anticipatory and systems-oriented, rather than reactive.

In summary, Kumba Iron Ore's investment in the MCPP reflects a long-term risk management and legacy strategy, using municipal capability development as a lever to support regional resilience, improve service delivery, protect infrastructure value and enable economic diversification for transition beyond mining.

6.5 Gamagara Local Municipality

6.5.1 BASELINE: WHAT THE PROGRAMME FOUND

At the commencement of the programme between 2019 and 2020, Gamagara Local Municipality presented a deeply constrained institutional environment, characterised by fragmented internal systems, unreliable financial and planning data, compliance gaps in infrastructure sectors and strained relationships with external stakeholders, particularly the mining sector.

The baseline was not defined by a single weakness but by a systemic lack of institutional coherence. Core municipal functions including Technical Services, Planning, Finance and Economic Development, were not in alignment, resulting in a municipality that struggled to understand its own systems, manage its assets or respond strategically to development pressures.

At the same time, the municipality operated within a high-stakes economic context, heavily influenced by mining activity. This created an additional layer of risk. Institutional weaknesses were not only internal governance issues but also direct threats to long-term economic sustainability and municipal viability.

6.5.1.1 Municipal Perspective of the Baseline

Siloed Departments and Institutional Fragmentation

The most consistently identified baseline constraint across municipal interviews was the presence of seemingly impenetrable departmental silos, with limited coordination between planning, finance and technical services. Departments operated independently, without shared data systems or structured coordination mechanisms. The Revenue Manager described this condition, stating that

We were not having the correct communication with all the departments. It was as if Finance was dealing with things on its own, separate from the other departments.

This fragmentation had institutional consequences. Planning decisions such as subdivisions, township development or building approvals were not systematically communicated to Finance for billing updates. Similarly, infrastructure projects undertaken by the Project Management Unit were not aligned with asset management systems in real time. The absence of coordination was therefore not an administrative inconvenience but a structural condition that undermined municipal capability, preventing the integration of planning, service delivery and revenue systems.

Unstable Municipal Financial Systems

The Finance function was characterised by systemic instability and incomplete data, primarily due to repeated financial system migrations. Gamagara had transitioned through four different financial systems, namely Finstel, Sebata, Phoenix and Munsoft, each resulting in data loss, incomplete records and unverified historical accounts.

The most critical issue was billing uncertainty. The municipality could not reliably confirm whether all properties were billed for all services. Regarding this, the Revenue Manager stated that,

We were not 100 per cent sure that we were billing all the services on all the stands.

This gap was compounded by an incomplete property register. Approximately 600 properties were missing from the valuation roll, including newly developed areas that had never been incorporated into the billing system. At the operational level, metering data was unreliable. Meters were not systematically linked to stands, faults were not consistently detected and prepaid system records were incomplete. The result was a municipal revenue system in which the true revenue base was unknown, and billing outputs were at best, partial estimates.

A Planning Function Without Operational Authority

The Development Planning function was undermined by planning instruments that lacked operational credibility and practical usability. The Spatial Development Framework of 2021 did not address the land, housing, infrastructure and service challenges of a rapidly growing town, nor guide development in relation to emerging economic sectors, including renewable energy and post-mining diversification.

More critically, the Land Use Management Scheme of 2021 did not enable development facilitation for growth and introduced a significant implementation problem. In revising the earlier framework, the scheme removed zonings without accounting for existing rights already exercised on the ground, creating legal and administrative uncertainty for property owners. This resulted in a situation where the municipality could not guide development nor implement its planning instruments in practice, weakening its regulatory effectiveness.



A Non-Strategic Local Economic Development Function

The Local Economic Development function was largely non-operational and strategically weak at baseline. The interviewees in the Development Planning focus group indicated that the LED office had, for a period, been functionally inactive, with no approved strategy and limited direction. Where it did operate, the function was understood in narrow terms, focusing on administrative support and small-scale initiatives, rather than as a strategic instrument for economic transformation and diversification. This represented a critical institutional gap in a municipality whose long-term economic stability would depend on reducing dependence on mining activity.

Water Management: Compliance and Operational Gaps

The water management function exhibited significant compliance and operational deficiencies. Key planning and regulatory instruments, such as Water Safety Plans and Operations and Maintenance Plans, were either absent or not operationalised. Where such documents existed, they were typically produced by consultants and left unused. As described by municipal technical staff, 'Having plans is something else; executing plans is the determining factor.'

Operationally, the system was reactive. Leak management, borehole monitoring, and supply system maintenance were inconsistent. The Green Drop score, a national measure of wastewater treatment compliance, stood at approximately 26 per cent, reflecting serious performance challenges.

Infrastructure Planning and Project Management Unit Limitations

Infrastructure planning was similarly underdeveloped. The Project Management Unit operated without a structured, multi-year planning framework, drawing projects from the Integrated Development Plan in a reactive, list-based manner. There was no Capital Investment Framework linking infrastructure investment to spatial patterns or financial planning. In addition, relationships between the Project Management Unit and asset management functions were weak and at times, in conflict. As one official reflected: 'Back in the day, we used to fight.'

This misalignment had direct consequences for asset registration, maintenance planning and financial reporting.

6.5.1.2 The Mine Partner Perspective of the Baseline

From the perspective of Kumba Iron Ore and Anglo American stakeholders (the Stakeholder Relationship Manager at Sishen, the Principal of Social Impact and Sustainability at Kumba Iron Ore and the SED Specialist at Kolomela), the baseline in Gamagara was defined by both institutional weakness and systemic economic risk, closely linked to the municipality's dependence on mining activity.

A key insight from the mine partner's perspective is the quantification of this dependency. Approximately 35 per cent of municipal revenues came from Kumba. This represents a major structural risk as the closure of mining operations, projected around 2041, would result in a substantial loss of municipal revenue, with direct implications for service delivery and financial sustainability.

Mine partners also identified weaknesses in planning and governance systems as a risk to their own operations, noting that municipal inefficiency had previously been included in the company's risk register. At a relational level, the baseline was characterised by a trust deficit between the mine and the municipality, with limited transparency, weak information sharing and largely transactional engagement. As one mine representative noted:

The trust deficit meant we did not have access to the information we needed to engage properly.

In addition, Social and Labour Plans were developed without sufficient alignment to municipal planning frameworks, reducing their effectiveness as tools for coordinated development. The baseline challenge was therefore both institutional and systemic: weak municipal capability limited planning and service delivery, economic dependence on mining created long-term sustainability risks and fragmented relationships reduced the effectiveness of collaboration between stakeholders.

6.5.1.3 Government, Sector and Collaborator Perspectives of the Baseline

From the perspective of government, sector and collaborator stakeholders, the baseline in Gamagara was understood not simply as municipal weakness but as part of a broader pattern of systemic institutional failure. This was characterised by weak planning credibility, fragmented information systems, and the absence of effective coordination across actors operating in the mining corridor.

A central issue identified across external stakeholders is that at baseline, Gamagara's planning systems were not considered credible or usable by external partners. From a district planning perspective, the Strategic Planning Manager of the John Taolo Gaetsewe District Municipality (JTGDM) notes that the municipality did not have a credible SDF and that land-use planning had been facing legal challenges.

This lack of credibility extended beyond the existence of planning documents to their practical usability. The SIP Lead of Infrastructure South Africa observed the inability of an external partner to access coherent or reliable information required for investment planning.

In practice, this meant that basic datasets required for infrastructure funding applications were either unavailable or could not be extracted over extended periods.

A second consistent theme in the collaborator evidence is the absence of effective coordination platforms at baseline. Stakeholders emphasised that key actors, municipalities, mines and government departments are operating in silos, with limited structured interaction or alignment. From a district perspective, this manifested in weak intergovernmental relations, and this also affected the mine-municipality relationship.

From this perspective, the key baseline problem was not simply weak municipal capacity, but the absence of an enabling environment in which stakeholders could engage collectively around shared development goals. This lack of coordination significantly constrained the municipality's ability to address complex challenges such as post-mining economic transition.

The implementation team's entry point into Gamagara was data. The municipal lead at Gamagara asserted that the team offered to work through the municipality's own information, demographic data, census data, the questions of where data came from and how reliable it was. These conversations opened the relationship and led to further requests to access verified indicators, analyses and projections for socioeconomic, settlement, ecosystem services and climate change-related information made available by the CSIR, as well as subsequent on-the-ground verifications of land, infrastructure, metering, etc.

At programme entry, Gamagara faced a set of development planning challenges that went beyond the absence of current planning instruments. There was no long-term development perspective, limited capacity to coordinate large-scale investments and significant difficulty accessing reliable and consistent data for planning purposes. Leadership instability including periods of acting appointments in key positions, compounded these challenges and is an important contextual factor in understanding the pace and continuity of progress.

6.5.2 WHAT WAS BUILT:

6.5.2.1 Municipal Perspective: What was built

Spatial Development Framework, Local Economic Development and Capital Planning

The most significant municipal-level capability built in Gamagara through the MCPP lies in the reconstruction of the Development Planning function as a credible, practical and internally understood system rather than a set of externally produced documents. This is most clearly evidenced in the Spatial Development Framework, the evolving LED function and the introduction of capital planning discipline through the Capital Investment Framework.

The revised Spatial Development Framework represents one of the strongest planning outcomes across all programme municipalities. Prior to the programme, Spatial Development Framework processes were largely consultant-driven, resulting in documents that municipal officials struggled to interpret, update or apply. The MCPP-supported review departed decisively from this model. It was structured around weekly coproduction sessions, in which municipal planners worked through every spatial dataset, assumption and planning choice alongside the programme team. As the Acting Manager for Town Planning explained:

Previously, every piece of information was collected outside and just given to the municipality. With this SDF, we had to sit every week for every piece of information that went into the SDF and discuss it. That is how it was different. It is not our old way of doing things.



This intensive process produced two interlinked outcomes. First, the Spatial Development Framework itself is substantively stronger. It explicitly addresses renewable energy development, incorporates corridor logic and aligns more clearly with the provincial Spatial Development Framework and the District Development Model's One Plan, making development decisions more defensible and consistent with higher-level spatial priorities. District planning evidence confirms that Gamagara's Spatial Development Framework and LED work now reference and reflect district and provincial frameworks far more clearly than before.

Second, the process has built genuine internal planning capability. Both the Acting Manager for Town Planning and the Town Planner demonstrated the ability to articulate the Spatial Development Framework's spatial logic, apply it to live development applications and use the draft document as a practical decision-making tool even before formal adoption. Development applications for solar energy facilities are now assessed against the Spatial Development Framework's economic sector guidance and corridor-related decisions are tested against its spatial vision.

A particularly important innovation is the inclusion of a dedicated mine-closure and post-mining transition section, developed with direct reference to the 2024 Regional Socio-Economic Impact Assessment commissioned by Kumba. This marks a fundamental shift in planning orientation: spatial decisions in Gamagara are now being made with the post-mining future explicitly in view. As the Town Planner noted:

There is a clear linkage between mine closure and the current draft SDF. There is a section that specifically talks about activities that should happen in order to assist the economy when the mine closes during the periods they have specified.

Despite these gains, the Spatial Development Framework has not yet been formally adopted by the council. While it is guiding decisions in practice, formal adoption remains a priority, as legal standing and political endorsement are necessary to secure its long-term authority.

Alongside the Spatial Development Framework, the programme supported the development of a Capital Investment Framework, which represents a significant conceptual shift in infrastructure planning. Prior to the Capital Investment Framework, infrastructure investment decisions were largely derived from the Integrated Development Plan project lists, without systematic spatial logic, service-demand analysis or sequencing. The Capital Investment Framework introduces a different discipline: it links proposed developments to the infrastructure required to support them and sequences that infrastructure investment ahead of development triggers. The LED Manager captured the significance of this shift succinctly:

It gives you an idea of what the project will cost, and the investment required to realise it. If you invite an investor and present a catalytic project, but you do not know the cost, they will not consider it. Costing is a very important part of planning. It is very critical.

This has strengthened the quality of business cases and improved planning credibility. Provincial Project Management Unit evidence contrasts the earlier one-paragraph business-case culture with more structured, evidence-based submissions now emerging from Gamagara. Infrastructure South Africa similarly identified the MCPP's role as a critical integrator, enabling higher-quality documentation for Budget Facility for Infrastructure processes. As with the Spatial Development Framework, however, the Capital Investment Framework has not yet been tabled with the council. Without a political mandate, infrastructure sequencing logic cannot bind budget decisions. Council endorsement is therefore an immediate priority.

The LED function illustrates both progress and fragility. When the current LED Manager arrived in late 2024, he encountered an office that had been nearly non-functional for some time. What existed was not an operational LED unit, but an 'intellectual' platform

was created through the programme: the Spatial Development Framework's economic diversification logic, the Regional Compact's development pathways, and the Regional Socio-Economic Impact Assessment's future-economy scenarios. As he explained:

The LED office was non-functional for some time. I came in 2024 with the purpose of restructuring the office and providing direction for it to be more functional. We still need a lot of support.

An LED strategy was developed and taken to council in December 2025, with a decision to deliberately strengthen it through additional stakeholder participation. This was not a technical failure, but a process-quality decision, reflecting a recognition that legitimacy and co-creation are prerequisites for implementation. The LED Manager's reflection captures a broader institutional shift:

There is nothing that I do as LED that does not touch on town planning, or municipal services, or finance. The MCPP has really done a good job in the attempt to dismantle that stronghold.

Nonetheless, without a formally adopted LED and SDF strategy, will enable the municipality to claim a consolidated strategic economic direction. Resubmission of the LED strategy with documented participation is a priority, particularly given Gamagara's post-mining risk profile.

Revenue, Finance and Infrastructure Management

In Revenue, Finance and Infrastructure Management, the programme has delivered clear but unevenly embedded capability gains, with some systems stabilised and others still incomplete.

Revenue enhancement work has been one of the most tangible interventions. The programme enabled the finance function to reconstruct its property register and billing base in ways that previous initiatives had failed to achieve. Approximately 600 properties have been added to the valuation roll, tariff errors corrected through bulk imports, and meter-to-stand plotting completed, revealing for the first time where billing is absent and why. The Revenue Manager described her turning point as immediate:

After my first meeting, the discussions, and when we started exchanging information, I could see this one was giving me what I needed.

Equally important has been the conceptual shift within the finance function. Joint working sessions with planning and technical services have strengthened understanding of how planning approvals, infrastructure data, and billing systems are interdependent, addressing one of the core baseline silo problems. However, sustainability remains partial. While the property register is now largely documented and durable, billing corrections and meter reconciliation are still incomplete and a current focus of the programme. Programme exit before this work is finalised would leave Gamagara with improved records but an unreliable billing base. The billing correction workplan should therefore be treated as a priority, not an open-ended improvement process.

In water and infrastructure management, the programme supported a decisive shift from reactive complaint-response to proactive, system-aware operations. Water Safety Plans for Olifantshoek and Dibeng have been produced and council-adopted, and are being applied operationally. Notably, municipal staff led these processes themselves, including taking the plans through council. As the Water Technician stated:

Our expectation was for the MCPP to teach us how to fish, not to hand us solutions. We wanted the programme to ensure that, at the end of it, we knew how to produce documents like the Water Safety Plan and the Operations and Maintenance plan ourselves.

Operational practices now include daily proactive patrols, systematic borehole monitoring, a 48-hour leak repair standard, and 24-hour on-call coverage for bulk supply issues. Prepaid

meters are being installed to replace faulty conventional meters, addressing billing gaps and non-revenue water simultaneously. The Green Drop score has improved from 26 per cent to 44 per cent, and the Director for Technical Services has set 70 per cent as a formal stretch target.

As the Engineering Technician for Water observed:

Our maintenance team responds to complaints much faster now. We no longer let situations linger; we attend to issues quickly.

At the same time, a critical technical gap remains: the municipal water balance has not yet been verified. Programme exit before a credible, defensible water balance is established would undermine both revenue recovery efforts and future funding applications. This is also regarded as a priority with direct financial implications.

6.5.3 INTERGOVERNMENTAL AND INTERNAL COLLABORATION

The programme has contributed to the strengthening of both internal coordination and intergovernmental relationships, addressing one of Gamagara's most entrenched baseline weaknesses.

District planning evidence indicates that relationships between Gamagara and district structures have improved, with technical guidance now being received more constructively and integrated more effectively into municipal planning processes. Internally, cross-departmental interaction between planning, finance and technical services has increased, supported by joint programme sessions and shared problem-solving.

More broadly, municipal and external evidence points to the emergence of a stronger enabling environment. Officials, councillors, district actors, provincial departments, mines and sector partners are now engaging through shared forums rather than disconnected bilateral processes. This has laid the groundwork for more coherent planning, particularly in relation to the post-mining transition.

6.5.3.1 Mine Partner Perspectives: What Was Built

From the mine partner's perspective, the most important achievement in Gamagara has been the transformation of the mine-municipality relationship, alongside progress in strategic planning for mine closure and post-mining transition. The Stakeholder Relations Manager at Sishen framed the change explicitly as a trust shift:

The trust deficit has been really dealt with. I am having access to information that I could not have before, because of the MCPP's involvement.

A clear indicator of this shift is the change in planning language used by municipal officials. As he noted:

When you start hearing them talking about the mining resilience strategy, that is a classic example of a shift in how they have been doing things.

Mine partners also described a paradigm shift in how support is provided. Rather than filling municipal gaps with mine-employed staff – a model that collapsed when support was withdrawn – the focus has shifted to skills transfer and institutional capability building:

We have shifted from providing resources to transferring the skills to the existing resources of the municipality to ensure continuity.

At a strategic level, the Regional Socio-Economic Impact Assessment developed through the MCPP framework has formalised post-closure obligations, providing a quantified evidence base for social transition planning. As the Principal for Social Impact and Sustainability at Kumba headquarters noted:

If you close these mines in 2041, the entire Vaal Gamagara water scheme is dependent on water from Kumba. What is going to happen in terms of the water supply in that area?

Social and Labour Plan alignment has emerged as the mechanism through which future-economy priorities are being locked into five-year contractual commitments. The mine partners stressed that this window cannot be missed, as Social and Labour Plans bind investment decisions for an entire cycle.

6.5.3.2 Government, Sector and Collaborator Perspectives: What Was Built

From government and sector perspectives, the programme is consistently described as a strong integrating function within a previously fragmented system. Stakeholders emphasised that what has been built is not only improved technical outputs, but the ability to connect different parts of the municipal system and external partners into a more coherent whole.

In this respect, the programme is seen to have addressed a core baseline gap, the absence of integration across planning, finance and infrastructure functions, enabling more credible planning and investment engagement.

From a sector-wide perspective, the programme is also understood as addressing a much larger structural challenge, that moves beyond Gamagara, and that is the sustainability of mining-dependent towns. The SALGA Senior Manager for Community Development framed it as such:

For the very first time, we now have a chance to prevent ghost towns rather than trying to resuscitate a town when it has become a ghost.

This highlights that what has been built is not only municipal capacity, but a framework for managing long-term regional transition.

The MCPP team's perspective on what was built in Gamagara highlights dimensions the external view does not fully capture and reflects an approach that was consistent across all partner municipalities, not unique to Gamagara alone. Peer learning was a major vehicle for institutional capability building that extended beyond individual municipal boundaries. The first peer learning session the team convened brought together development planning teams from all ten municipalities the programme worked with people who had never previously met and engaged around shared challenges. Over time, training events on infrastructure asset management, capital expenditure frameworks and other technical subjects were designed with deliberate cross-municipal and cross-functional invitations.

The team also emphasised the deliberately capability-oriented design behind every engagement. The programme lead points out that:

No meeting was just a meeting. Every session with a mine or municipality was designed as a capability development event, pre-designed with facilitators, structured so that people left with more skill, more connection, and more interaction than when they arrived. This was not always visible to participants, but it was deliberate.

The regular Water Wednesdays' sessions in Gamagara and Tsantsabane are an example of this approach; they are structured, recurring engagements that build both technical knowledge and the team cohesion on which institutional capacity depends. What government and collaborator stakeholders observed as improved coordination and stronger planning outputs was, from the inside, the product of sustained, deliberately designed work extending far beyond the visible technical interventions.

6.5.4 THE GAMAGARA-TSANTSABANE REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMPACT: GAMAGARA PERSPECTIVE

The Gamagara-Tsantsabane Regional Development Compact represents the most significant cross-municipal outcome of the MCPP in the Northern Cape and arguably the programme's most ambitious institutional innovation. From the Gamagara perspective,

the Compact is not simply a coordination platform but the emergence of a new regional planning architecture, designed to address structural economic risks, particularly mine closure, that cannot be resolved within municipal boundaries alone.

At baseline, planning and development in the corridor were fragmented, with municipalities, mines and government actors operating in parallel rather than in alignment. The Compact has begun to change this by creating a shared space for structured engagement, where trade-offs, complementarities and value-chain linkages can be explored collectively. As the district planning perspective captured:

The MCPP managed to achieve something that we envisaged but could not through conventional planning processes. There is now discussion and alignment to see trade-offs and value chain extensions between the two municipalities and districts.

This reflects a fundamental shift: from isolated planning processes to regional, system-level thinking about development trajectories. The absence of a long-term development perspective, challenges in coordinating large-scale investments and the difficulties associated with accessing reliable and consistent data for planning purposes needed to be overcome. The MCPP made a significant contribution in addressing these challenges, particularly through support to the IDP process and the establishment of a common evidence base. Similarly, development leadership challenges, including instability in key positions and periods of acting appointments, needed to be addressed.

6.5.4.1 What the Compact Has Produced for Gamagara

From Gamagara's perspective, the Compact has generated a set of interlocking institutional, planning, and relational outcomes, rather than a single discrete product. These can be understood across four main dimensions: regional planning coherence, strategic framing of post-mining transition, improved stakeholder alignment and emerging institutional platforms.

Regional Planning Coherence and Integration

The most immediate outcome of the Compact for Gamagara has been the integration of its planning work into a regional framework. Through the Compact, Gamagara's Spatial Development Framework, LED strategy and Capital Investment Framework are no longer stand-alone municipal instruments, but are increasingly aligned with Tsantsabane's development trajectory, district-level planning frameworks and provincial spatial priorities.

This has enabled planners to move from a municipality-centric approach to a corridor-based perspective, recognising that economic systems, labour markets and infrastructure networks operate across boundaries. Development opportunities, particularly in renewable energy and industrial corridors, are now conceptualised as shared regional assets, rather than being competed over or planned in isolation.

Strategic Framing of Post-Mining Transition

A second major contribution of the Compact has been the establishment of a shared strategic framework for post-mining transition, grounded in the 2024 Regional Socio-Economic Impact Assessment. For Gamagara, this represents a critical shift from implicit risk awareness to explicit, evidence-based planning. The Regional Socio-Economic Impact Assessment provides scenario modelling of Kumba-only mine closure, full corridor closure and future economic pathways. These scenarios are now embedded in municipal planning instruments, particularly the Spatial Development Framework. This means that planning decisions in Gamagara are increasingly being made with reference to a quantified future, rather than short-term development pressures alone.

The Compact has therefore enabled Gamagara to transition from a municipality reacting to growth pressures, to one beginning to plan for structural economic change over a 15-to-20-year horizon.

Improved Alignment with Mine Planning and Investment

From the mine partner's perspective, one of the most important outcomes of the Compact is its role in aligning Social and Labour Plans with municipal and regional development priorities. For Gamagara, this alignment creates a direct link between municipal planning frameworks and mining-sector investment decisions, which are otherwise structured in separate regulatory and institutional spaces. As noted in mine partner evidence: the Social and Labour Plan contains some of these developmental agendas, and it locks those initiatives for the next five years. This means that the Compact provides a mechanism through which future-economy and transition priorities can be embedded into legally binding investment commitments, reducing the risk that development planning remains aspirational.

However, from the Gamagara perspective, this process is still underway. While alignment discussions have begun and are considered a major advance, the full integration of Social and Labour Plans with regional development pathways is not yet complete and remains a critical next step.

Strengthened Multi-Stakeholder Alignment and Engagement

A further outcome of the Compact has been the creation of a functional multi-stakeholder engagement platform, which did not exist at baseline. From Gamagara's perspective, this is one of the most important institutional changes. The Compact brings together municipal officials, councillors, district and provincial government actors, mining companies and external partners. This has enabled more coordinated discussions on development priorities, particularly in relation to infrastructure, economic diversification and post-mining planning.

Importantly, the Compact has shifted engagement from transactional and compliance-driven interactions to more strategic collaboration, allowing stakeholders to engage around shared challenges rather than individual mandates. Evidence also suggests that the Compact is beginning to generate replication demand, with other municipalities in the corridor expressing interest in participating. This indicates that the model is being recognised as valuable beyond its initial scope.

Institutional and Relational Change

From a Gamagara perspective, one of the most significant but less visible outcomes of the Compact is the change in institutional behaviour and relationships. The Compact has contributed to increased openness in discussions between municipalities and external partners, greater willingness to share information and the emergence of a shared language around mining resilience and economic transition. This is reflected in the observation that municipal officials are now beginning to reference concepts such as the Mining Resilience Strategy in their planning discussions, an indicator that post-mining thinking is being internalised at the institutional level.

These relational shifts are critical because they underpin the sustainability of more technical outputs. Without improved trust and coordination, planning frameworks such as the Spatial Development Framework and the Capital Investment Framework would not translate into collective action.

Institutionalisation and Sustainability Risks

Despite these achievements, the Compact remains in a transitional phase and its long-term sustainability is not yet secured. From Gamagara's perspective, several risks are evident.

Institutional independence remains untested. The Compact continues to rely on programme facilitation. Its ability to function autonomously, without CSIR or MCPP coordination, has not yet been fully demonstrated. Political embedding is also incomplete. Formal council resolutions and alignment within municipal political structures are still outstanding, limiting the Compact's authority as a binding planning framework. Finally, election-cycle risk is real. As highlighted in collaborator evidence, political transitions may disrupt continuity if Compact principles are not fully institutionalised.

From an external perspective, this central challenge is captured explicitly:

As wonderful as it is, it will fail if there is no ongoing support in monitoring or assisting implementation.

6.5.4.2 SenseMaker Triangulation: Gamagara

Gamagara's SenseMaker dataset shows strong and consistent participation, with dominant themes of improved collaboration, increased confidence and the value of the programme's working-alongside approach. These patterns are directly corroborated by interview evidence across multiple functions. Officials independently describe shifts from siloed working toward coordinated cross-departmental engagement, supported by structured planning processes such as the SDF, CIF and joint finance-technical sessions.

Similarly, SenseMaker's emphasis on confidence aligns with accounts from the Water Technician, Revenue Manager and planning officials, all of whom describe taking ownership of processes they previously could not engage with (e.g. from presenting to council to using data in real-time decision making). However, there is some divergence between positive SenseMaker narratives and interview assessments. While SenseMaker captures genuine improvements in capability and institutional functioning, interview evidence highlights the persistent planning execution gap, incomplete revenue and billing reforms and dependence on key processes that are not yet fully operationalised or politically endorsed (e.g. SDF and CIF adoption). The programme's Academic Collaborator cautions about deliverables versus ownership and further reinforces this gap. Collectively, the evidence suggests that Gamagara's capability gains are real and increasingly institutionalised but that sustainability depends less on additional capacity building and more on fully embedding and executing the systems already developed.

6.5.5 GAMAGARA LOCAL MUNICIPALITY SUSTAINABILITY ASSESSMENT

The sustainability question for Gamagara is not whether the programme has produced outputs but whether those outputs are sufficiently embedded in the municipality's institutional design to survive the reduction or removal of MCPP facilitation.

What Has Been Embedded

The updated Spatial Development Framework incorporating post-mining development scenarios is the most consequential embedded output. Unlike a capacity-building event or a workshop series, a statutory planning instrument creates an ongoing institutional obligation: future planning cycles must engage with the scenarios the Spatial Development Framework contains, regardless of whether the programme that produced them is still active. The Integrated Development Plan alignment to the Regional Socio-Economic Impact Assessment's three-scenario modelling extends this embedding to the municipality's principal development planning instrument.

The Developmental Leadership Programme has produced a cadre of officials and political leaders whose thinking about their role has changed in ways that are not easily reversed. Leadership development of this kind is more durable than procedural changes because it is embedded in people rather than systems, but it carries the corresponding risk of being dissipated by staff turnover and political transition.

The Regional Development Compact, while not a Gamagara-only output, represents a significant embedded achievement. The Town Planner in Tsantsabane now thinks about Gamagara as part of his planning responsibility. Gamagara's planning function now thinks about Tsantsabane as a development partner rather than a neighbouring municipality. The relational infrastructure that emerges from this collaboration will be embedded in working relationships that will outlast any document or programme structure.

The Social and Labour Plan consultation cycle's integration of MCPP future-economy data in Sishen's five-year contractual commitments is a structural embedding of programme outputs in the regulatory instrument that governs the mine's community obligations. The

programme's overall impact is that the post-mining development thinking developed through the MCPP is now a base for Municipal and Mine prioritisation of projects inside the Social and Labour Plan, which means it will shape community investment choices regardless of whether the MCPP continues.

What Remains at Risk

The Compact has produced excellent plans. What it has not produced is the funded implementation architecture to give those plans institutional permanence. Within the Northern Cape context, the approved SDFs (aligned with the regional economic pathways) will be required for Departmental Service Delivery and Budget Implementation Plans to contain aligned projects as funded line items. Both the National Spatial Development Framework and the Northern Cape Provincial Spatial Development Framework prioritise the mining region as a critical action area. However, plans and project pipelines that live in no department's programme of action, nor in industry investments will not be implemented through normal bureaucratic processes when the facilitation energy that produced them is no longer present.

Staff and political continuity at Gamagara represent a second structural risk. The programme's institutional embedding is partially a function of specific individuals in specific roles: the Municipal Manager's active championing of the programme, the mayor's personal commitment to the Compact, the officials whose participation in the Developmental Leadership Programme has shifted their orientation.

6.5.6 GAMAGARA LM ASSESSMENT: PROGRESS WITH INSTITUTIONALISM – EVALUATION FRAMEWORK (A-D)

As set out in Section 3.7, the four-point progression model (A-D) is not a rigid classification, municipalities may sit at different points across different outcome areas. The letters are shorthand for the following stages: A= status quo at programme entry, B= improved delivery, C= institutional readiness, D= post-mine sustainability.

Gamagara's overall progress reflects movement from Point B (improved delivery) towards Point C (institutional readiness) with specific gains in development planning approaching institutional readiness and further gains in revenue management and water, reflecting the improved delivery stage. The progression is credible and the direction is clear, particularly around embedding post-mining thinking. The most important remaining task is completing and embedding what has been built: council adoption of the SDF and CIF, completion of revenue enhancement and formal integration of Compact agreements into departmental and partner work plans, so that progress does not remain dependent on programme facilitation.



6.6 Tsantsabane Local Municipality

6.6.1 BASELINE: WHAT THE PROGRAMME FOUND

Tsantsabane Local Municipality represents the most severe baseline condition across the MCPP programme, combining institutional depletion, operational fragility and immediate exposure to mine-closure risks.

Unlike municipalities where structural vulnerabilities remain prospective, Tsantsabane had already begun to experience the effects of declining mining activity, making it the programme's most critical test case: whether targeted interventions can translate into institutional resilience before closure impacts fully materialise.

Across municipal, mine, and external perspectives, the baseline is characterised by the near absence of functional planning systems; severe water-management and compliance gaps; high levels of financial stress; a fragile institutional culture and weak accountability mechanisms; and the absence of a coordinated platform for managing the post-mining transition. At the same time, the presence of committed individuals and leadership created a narrow but critical enabling condition, allowing the programme to operate in a highly constrained environment.

6.6.1.1 Municipal Perspective of the Baseline

A Planning Function Without Foundational Systems

The planning baseline in Tsantsabane was not only weak; it was functionally absent. The Town Planner, only the second ever appointed in the municipality's history, inherited a planning function with no current documents, no institutional memory, and no integrated systems. Both the Spatial Development Framework and the land-use scheme were outdated, and there was no land audit or asset register. As he described:

I joined the municipality without having any documentation that relates to town planning. All the documents were outdated.

This absence of planning infrastructure had systemic implications. Without a credible Spatial Development Framework, the municipality could not guide development or attract investment. Without a land audit, land ownership disputes could not be resolved. Without a functioning land-use scheme, zoning decisions lacked legal certainty. Crucially, planning operated in isolation from finance and infrastructure systems, meaning that development decisions did not translate into revenue or service planning outcomes.

Water Management: Compliance Failure and Operational Dependency

The water-management baseline reflected deep institutional and technical weakness, with both compliance and operational systems underdeveloped. There was no Blue Drop or Green Drop compliance, no Water Safety Plan and no systematic groundwater monitoring or data systems. Water management was largely manual and reactive, with limited institutional capacity to diagnose or anticipate failures. The baseline is captured most clearly in the account of the Process Controller:

Before the MCPP, I did not do water monitoring. I would go to work to start pumps and switch pumps off.

This reflects not just a lack of tools, but a lack of professional capability and system awareness, with frontline staff unable to manage infrastructure proactively or independently.

Fragmentation, Silo Culture and Institutional Weakness

The municipality's internal functioning was further characterised by fragmented institutional practices and weak coordination mechanisms. Departments operated in silos, with planning, technical services and finance functioning independently. There were no structured processes linking development approvals, infrastructure provision and revenue systems. The result was a municipality in which decisions were taken without integrated data or coordination, reinforcing inefficiencies and limiting institutional learning.

'Thin' Capacity and Extreme Key-Person Dependency

A defining characteristic of the Tsantsabane baseline was the extremely limited availability of skilled human-resource capacity. Critical municipal functions depended on a very small number of individuals, particularly in Planning and Technical Services. This created a structural condition of high vulnerability, where institutional capability was concentrated in individuals rather than embedded in systems. This baseline condition emerged as a major sustainability risk, as capability gains achieved through the programme remained unevenly distributed across municipal staff. The Governance and Revenue Collaborator identifies the structural incompleteness of the enabling environment as the primary sustainability risk.

Political Fragmentation and Community Disconnection

At the political and community level, the baseline was characterised by fragmented stakeholder relationships and weak communication systems. The mayor's account highlights the absence of a coordinated platform for engaging mines, resulting in fragmented Social and Labour Plan processes and limited oversight by the municipality. This fragmentation contributed directly to community unrest:

Previously, there was a lot of unrest. People were marching to our mines because they don't understand.

Councillors were not consistently equipped to engage communities or provide structured feedback, weakening accountability mechanisms and trust between the municipality and residents.

6.6.1.2 The Mine Partner Perspective of the Baseline

From the Kolomela mine perspective, the baseline in Tsantsabane was defined by institutional instability, weak accountability, and operational risk. The municipality was described as lacking clear strategic direction and the institutional capacity to execute its mandates effectively:

Previously the municipality did not have a clear direction. They were running without a plan for expansion or a way out of the challenges they were facing.

Capacity constraints were particularly severe. The municipality was not fully staffed, and turnover in key roles such as wastewater management undermined continuity. Management oversight and accountability systems were weak, further limiting implementation effectiveness. From the mine's perspective, this had direct implications for its own operations. Municipal inefficiencies affected the alignment of Social and Labour Plan and Corporate Social Investment projects, reducing their developmental impact and creating planning uncertainty.

Financial conditions compounded these challenges. The municipality's debt to Eskom and the water board resulted in operational disruptions, including water shedding and stalled infrastructure projects:

There have been instances of water shedding and projects that could not be launched because electricity could not be connected due to the ongoing debt.

Importantly, mine partners framed the baseline not only as a municipal problem, but as a shared risk environment, affecting both local governance and mining operations.

6.6.1.3 Government, Sector and Collaborator Perspectives of the Baseline

External stakeholders situate Tsantsabane within a broader mining-region transition crisis, where institutional weaknesses intersect with long-term economic vulnerability.

Financially, the municipality was in a structurally fragile position. The Governance and Revenue Collaborator identified approximately R470 million in consumer debt, an incomplete indigent register and an understaffed revenue department. This reflects a municipality caught in a downward fiscal cycle, where service delivery constraints and revenue weaknesses reinforce one another.

More fundamentally, collaborators identified the absence of an enabling governance platform as the central baseline failure. While some infrastructure and individual capability existed, there was no mechanism to align municipalities, mines, government departments and communities around a shared development pathway. As articulated:

What is missing is a real consolidation of the enabling environment. The platform.

Without such a platform, planning processes remained fragmented, and implementation was unlikely to succeed. At a regional level, the Northern Cape evidence highlights the scale of the challenge. Tsantsabane forms part of a corridor expected to face large-scale job losses and economic decline linked to mine closure, with significant implications for municipal revenue and national economic systems. In this context, Tsantsabane's baseline reflects not only municipal weakness, but a system-wide failure to plan for structural economic transition.

6.6.2 WHAT WAS BUILT

6.6.2.1 Municipal Perspective: What was built

Strategic Development Planning

The most significant institutional gain in Tsantsabane lies in the construction of a functional and credible development planning system, where previously no such system existed. The strongest evidence of this transformation is found in the Spatial Development Framework, which has evolved from a non-functional or outdated instrument into a research-grounded, applied planning framework with both internal ownership and external recognition.

The Town Planner's account reflects the depth of this change:

I have been involved in many projects of Spatial Development Framework, but what I have seen with ours, it seems as if we are starting the Spatial Development Framework from the start.

Unlike conventional approaches, the Spatial Development Framework was produced through coproduction, with municipal officials directly participating in the generation and interrogation of spatial evidence. This has resulted not only in a stronger document but in a transfer of planning capability, enabling the municipality to use the Spatial Development Framework as a live decision-making tool, rather than a compliance document.

The Spatial Development Framework has also introduced structured thinking about post-mining scenarios, which is critical in Tsantsabane's context. It explicitly models both a negative trajectory of population decline and economic collapse and a positive trajectory of economic diversification and sustainability, providing a strategic frame for decision making under uncertainty:

If we just continue with the status quo, we are going to lose population. Then we put another scenario: if we plan for the future, this is likely to happen.

A particularly tangible outcome is the identification of renewable energy as a core economic pathway, with specific land areas and development conditions already mapped. This is reinforced by political leadership, with the mayor independently identifying diversification sectors including renewable energy, agriculture, tourism and mineral beneficiation.

In addition to the Spatial Development Framework, the programme has supported the establishment of foundational governance instruments, including Tsantsabane's first-ever land audit, a functioning asset register and emerging linkages between land use, zoning and revenue systems. These are critical institutional building blocks. Without them, the municipality would remain unable to manage land, enable development or maintain credible financial systems.

Importantly, cross-departmental integration has begun to improve. Council now understands the role of planning, technical departments contribute spatial data to development decisions and early linkages between planning and billing systems are emerging. While incomplete, these changes reflect the initial formation of an integrated municipal planning system.

Water Management

Water management represents the most clearly measurable and demonstrable area of capability development in Tsantsabane, combining regulatory compliance, operational improvements and individual technical skill transfer.

The most visible achievement is the attainment of Blue Drop compliance, a regulatory milestone independently confirmed by mine-partner evidence. Beyond compliance, the programme has fundamentally changed how water is managed. What was previously a reactive and outsourced function has become increasingly internalised and system aware.

The shift is captured in the Superintendent's account:

Previously, if there was an issue with a borehole, we did not assess it first. Now we are able to go there and try to establish what the problem might be.

At the operational level, the transformation is most vividly illustrated through the Process Controller's experience. His role evolved from basic operational activity to full system management, including monitoring, diagnostics and maintenance:

Now I can tell you what is happening to the borehole, inside and outside.

This has produced direct financial benefits. Previously, borehole maintenance required external contractors costing approximately R70,000 per visit. The municipality can now conduct this work internally, representing potential savings of up to R210,000 per month.

The water management system has also benefited from the operational use of Water Safety Plans as living management tools, the establishment of in-house monitoring systems, peer-learning relationships with Moses Kotane municipality and reduced dependence on outsourced services. However, sustainability remains fragile. Critical compliance and reporting functions remain dependent on a small number of individuals, particularly the Superintendent, highlighting the ongoing risk of single-point failure.

Institutional Enabling Environment

Beyond technical outputs, the programme has contributed to the gradual construction of an institutional enabling environment, although this remains incomplete and uneven.

At an internal level, officials report a shift from reactive, outsourced and fragmented practices toward more confident, collaborative and evidence-based approaches. Cross-departmental engagement, particularly in areas such as water compliance, has improved, as functions such as finance, technical services and supply chain are required to collaborate in Blue Drop and Green Drop processes.

At a leadership level, the Municipal Manager has played a critical enabling role. His commitment to evidence-based planning and participation in programme platforms has strengthened institutional confidence, enabled cross-boundary collaboration and supported a shift toward data-driven decision-making. As reflected in his account:

Before the MCPP, there was never an engagement between Tsantsabane and Gamagara. Now we share resources.

Externally, the enabling environment has expanded through intermunicipal engagement with Gamagara, participation in regional compact processes and exposure to national and international learning platforms. However, from a collaborator's perspective, this enabling environment is still the weakest dimension of the system, with community ownership, political alignment and cross-sector coordination not yet fully consolidated.

6.6.2.2 Mine Partner, Government and Collaborator Perspectives: What Was Built

From the mine partner perspective, the programme has produced real but incomplete progress, combining technical improvements with continuing institutional risks. Kolomela evidence confirms important gains, including improved regulatory compliance, particularly for reporting towards Blue Drop; better understanding of water and sanitation requirements; stronger integration of data into Social and Labour Plan planning; and improved transparency in the mine-municipality relationship.

However, the mine perspective is also the most critical in the evaluation. Concerns centre on weak follow-through on plans, incomplete institutionalisation of capability and ongoing gaps in municipal staffing and accountability. Most significantly, the Social and Economic Development Specialist raised a critical sustainability warning:

If the programme support ended tomorrow, the municipality would definitely collapse.

This suggests that while the programme has contributed to managing service risks, built important capabilities, these are not yet institutionally embedded at scale and dependency risks remain high. Government and sector stakeholders emphasise the programme's role as an integrator, improving planning quality, enabling Spatial Development Framework processes and supporting infrastructure funding applications. Infrastructure South Africa evidence highlights its contribution to credible planning documentation, while the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs and the South African Local Government Association emphasise skills transfer and replicable tools for broader government use.

At the same time, the collaborator perspective from Kagiso Trust adds a critical governance lens. While technical gains are clear, sustainability risks remain political and structural. As the collaborator argued, excellent plans will fail without an enabling environment that includes political will, community ownership and cross-boundary collaboration:

It does not matter how well we plan or what we put on paper if we do not have the right people around the table.

The collaborator perspective adds a structural lens. While technical gains are evident, the enabling environment remains incomplete, particularly in relation to governance, political continuity and revenue sustainability.

6.6.3 THE GAMAGARA-TSANTSABANE REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMPACT: TSANTSABANE PERSPECTIVE

From Tsantsabane's perspective, the Regional Development Compact represents both a critical opportunity and an unresolved institutional test. At the baseline, there was no platform for coordinated engagement between municipalities, mines and government. The Compact has created such a platform, bringing together political leaders, municipal officials, mining companies and sector partners. The mayor's account captures this shift:

To bring relevant stakeholders together to get things done together in ways none could achieve alone.

For Tsantsabane, the Compact has produced a shared regional development vision through the Regional Economic Development Pathways document, a formal Memorandum of Understanding with Gamagara, increased alignment between municipalities and mining stakeholders, and improved understanding of post-mining risks. It has also played a critical role in political leadership development, shifting leadership from localised and transactional engagement toward regional and strategic collaboration.

However, the Compact remains at an early stage of institutionalisation. While it has created a shared diagnosis and platform for engagement, it has not yet fully translated into funded development pipelines, binding partner commitments, or a fully developed and costed social transition plan. The mayor highlights the central sustainability risk:

The incoming council must know what we leave behind and how to take over this collaboration.

From this perspective, the Compact's success depends on whether it can survive political transition cycles, changes in leadership, and the withdrawal of programme support.

6.6.4 SENSEMAKER TRIANGULATION – TSANTSABANE LOCAL MUNICIPALITY

Tsantsabane's SenseMaker data reflects consistent and active participation across collection rounds, with dominant themes of collaboration, confidence and practical learning through the programme's coproduction approach. These findings are strongly corroborated by interview evidence. Officials describe tangible shifts in how they work: the Town Planner coproducing planning instruments. This account aligns closely with SenseMaker narratives that emphasise teamwork, problem-solving and ownership of technical processes, indicating that reported changes reflect deeply embedded practice rather than surface-level perception

At the same time, triangulation reveals significant institutional fragility that SenseMaker alone does not capture. While participant narratives reflect high confidence and positive experience, interview evidence highlights acute structural risks, including dependence on single individuals in both planning and water compliance, an unresolved revenue crisis and incomplete enabling environment conditions for long-term sustainability. External perspectives, particularly from the mine partner, introduce even stronger caution, with concerns that the municipality remains highly dependent on programme support. This divergence suggests that SenseMaker accurately captures depth of capability and ownership at the individual level, while interview evidence surfaces systemic vulnerability and uneven institutionalisation, pointing to the central challenge of translating strong individual gains into resilient, system-wide sustainability.

6.6.5 TSANTSABANE LOCAL MUNICIPALITY SUSTAINABILITY ASSESSMENT

What Has Been Embedded

Blue Drop compliance has been achieved and reporting maintained, with support from the MCPP. Water Safety Plans are in active operational use. The Postmasburg Water Safety Plan drafted in 2021 is still the operational reference for water safety management five years after its production, a positive durability signal. A quarterly groundwater quality monitoring programme is operational, with instruments now in municipal stores and managed independently by the Process Controller and his team.

The borehole monitoring system handover is the clearest technical system transfer in the entire programme: verifiable through borehole records, contractor expenditure before and after, and operational logs, with up to R210,000 per month in potential contractor cost savings now embedded in in-house capability. A water laboratory has been established, enabling in-house water testing.

The Spatial Development Framework is in Phase 5, incorporating mine-closure scenarios, renewable energy positioning and precinct plans. District planners and the Office of the Premier are requesting it. A land audit has been completed for the first time in the municipality's history. An asset register has been established. Council now understands the role of the planning function. Technical services' GIS-based engineering maps are integrated into development application processes. The Town Planner, having completed a master's degree through the programme's encouragement, can represent the municipality at provincial level with the confidence and technical depth to attract funding and defend planning decisions.

The Regional Development Compact has produced a signed Memorandum of Understanding between Gamagara and Tsantsabane, a Regional Development Pathways document, a multi-stakeholder platform drawing in the Office of the Premier and district municipalities, and the engagement of new Independent Power Producers in the compact framework. Intermunicipal resource sharing with Gamagara has been initiated. The Municipal Manager's championship of the programme has been deep, sustained and externally corroborated across all stakeholder categories, and it has created the institutional conditions for officials to invest themselves genuinely in the work.

What Remains at Risk

Compliance work is concentrated in one person. The Superintendent for Water and Sanitation is responsible for the Water Safety Plan review, Blue Drop submission quality, water balance processes and supported acting directorship, which MCPP support scaffolded during leadership vacancies. If she were unavailable, compliance functions would stop.

The Director for Technical Services identifies this with precision:

Compliance would really struggle, because the things she is doing alone, with no one to rely on to continue when she is not available. The borehole handover model, which transferred a specific system to a specific individual with full documentation and support, is the template the programme has already proven. The Water Safety Plan review and Blue Drop submission processes need the same treatment before programme exit.

A single individual holds the Planning responsibility. The Town Planner is the sole town planner in the municipality. The Spatial Development Framework Phase 5, the land audit, the asset register, the land-use scheme review, the cross-departmental GIS integration, the regional compact engagement and the provincial planning relationships all sit with one person. He names this himself, without prompting, as the most important unresolved issue:

What will happen if tomorrow I decide to leave and join other municipalities? Who will continue with this programme, because there is only one planner in the municipality responsible for all these programmes that we are busy with?

Revenue enhancement is at the assessment stage. R470 million in consumer debt against approximately 15,000 accounts, with an incomplete indigent register and an understaffed revenue department, constitutes the most significant unresolved financial risk in the programme. The data extraction has been completed but the implementation plan has not yet been co-created. Without a functioning revenue base, the institutional capability gains in planning and water management cannot be financially sustained through and after mine closure. This is the most consequential gap in the current workplan.

The Spatial Development Framework and land-use scheme are not yet formally adopted, meaning the legal standing of planning decisions is not yet fully secured. The revenue-zoning-billing linkage is not yet complete. Kolomela-funded posts for municipal capacity that were committed approximately two years ago have not been filled. Local government elections in November 2026 could result in some of the impactful municipal political champions and those with institutional knowledge of the programme not returning. The Compact council resolution is pending in Gamagara, leaving the Compact's political foundations asymmetric. And the post-mining transition is not a future scenario for Tsantsabane: one mine has already closed and Kolomela's closure horizon is the most proximate mine closure risk in the entire programme.

6.6.6 TSANTSABANE LM ASSESSMENT: PROGRESS WITH INSTITUTIONALISATION – EVALUATION FRAMEWORK (A-D)

Similar to that of Gamagara LM, this section uses the four-point progress model defined in Section 3.7, the letters indicate stage, not a rigid or final classification. A = status quo at programme entry, B = improved delivery, C = institutional readiness, D = post-mine sustainability.

Tsantsabane's overall progression reflects movement from Point B (improved delivery) towards Point C (institutional readiness), with specific gains in water management, which is the programme's most demonstrably completed handover. The municipality has made immense progress on development planning: the SDF exists and is in use but formal adoption and operational embedding across departments is incomplete. On financial sustainability, the municipality has also improved, but it still tackling the unresolved revenue crisis (multi-million consumer debt). The most urgent remaining tasks are: revenue enhancement completion, council adoption of planning instruments and succession planning for water management functions.

6.7 Overview of the Northern Cape

The Northern Cape component of the MCPP covers Gamagara and Tsantsabane local municipalities, supported by Kumba Iron Ore through its Sishen and Kolomela mine operations respectively. As outlined in section 2.8, the two municipalities sit within an iron-ore and manganese corridor facing one of the most significant economic transitions in any South African mining region: the modelled impact of Sishen and Kolomela closure is more than 30,000 regional jobs and 80,000 nationally, within an approximately 15-year horizon.

What distinguishes the Northern Cape component from the Limpopo component is not only the urgency of the timeline but the regional architecture that has developed around it. Kumba's investment has been more consistent and progressively strategic, repositioning the MCPP from a municipal support programme to a tool for managing regional transition. The Gamagara-Tsantsabane Regional Development Compact, a multi-stakeholder framework aligning municipalities, mines, provincial government, district municipalities and SALGA around shared post-mining development pathways, is the programme's most ambitious institutional innovation and it emerged from the Northern Cape component.

Both Gamagara and Tsantsabane were heavily dependent on their mining partners because they were made up of mining communities, with the mine as the economic anchor. The critical risk facing these municipalities is not hypothetical. If mines were to close without adequate preparation, the municipalities and town economies could collapse. The MCPP's most important achievement in the Northern Cape has been to get both municipalities to envisage scenarios, where each strategic planning document reflects post-mine orientation. That shift in institutional identity is a programme achievement. This is highlighted by the Minerals Council's Head of Performance that:

They are municipalities that no longer say, 'what can the mine do for us?' but are beginning to say, 'what can we do with the mine?' They are municipalities that actively ask how to ensure alternative economies are in place when mines close, because they are aware that the mines will close. They engage not with a blame mentality, but constructively. That kind of forward-looking mentality is important.

However, he further points to an important structural gap: the incomplete inclusion of traditional authorities. In his own words:

What is still missing, even in the Northern Cape, is the extent to which traditional authorities have been brought in. Mining tends to happen in rural areas, and those settings have traditional leadership. They remain key stakeholders who have for a long time been ignored, and they need to be part of sustaining the development vision in host communities.

This is a democratic legitimacy risk that the Compact must address before it can claim to represent the full stakeholder landscape.

6.7.1 WHAT THE PROGRAMME HAS PRODUCED IN THE NORTHERN CAPE: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

What Has Been Built

Integrated development planning aligned to post-mining scenarios: Both Gamagara and Tsantsabane now have SDFs that are substantively stronger, more internally understood and directly linked to the post-mining future. Gamagara's SDF includes a dedicated mine-closure and post-mining transition section developed with reference to the 2024 Regional Socio-Economic Impact Assessment. Tsantsabane's SDF explicitly models both a decline scenario and a diversification scenario, providing a strategic frame for decisions made under uncertainty. Both municipalities' planning functions have shifted from consultant-produced compliance documents to coproduced, practice-embedded instruments.



Water capability with a demonstrable handover model: Gamagara has moved from reactive complaint-response to proactive, system-aware water operations, with its Green Drop score improving from 26 to 44 per cent. In Tsantsabane, the borehole monitoring system handover is the clearest technical system transfer in the entire programme: verifiable through borehole records, contractor expenditure before and after, and operational logs, with up to R210,000 per month in potential savings now embedded in in-house capability. Blue Drop compliance has been attained and maintained.

Revenue and infrastructure management improvements: In Gamagara, approximately 600 properties have been added to the valuation roll, tariff errors corrected and meter-to-stand plotting completed. In Tsantsabane, building plan approvals are now communicated to finance for property value updates. Neither municipality has completed this work; both have established the foundation on which completion depends.

The Regional Development Compact: The Gamagara-Tsantsabane Regional Development Compact brings together two municipalities, two mines, the provincial government, district municipalities and SALGA in a shared framework for post-mining regional development. It has produced a signed MoU, a Regional Development Pathways document, a multi-stakeholder platform drawing in the Office of the Premier, and an emerging alignment between SLP investment cycles and regional development priorities. It is the most concrete demonstration in the full evaluation of a programme output, developing an institutional life that extends beyond the MCPPP itself.

A changed mine behaviour: The 2026 request from Sishen's Stakeholder Relations Manager for SLP alignment with the Regional Development Pathways is formally documented. This represents a qualitative shift from parallel delivery to coordinated investment – the deepest and most durable form of programme impact. Also, both municipalities are starting to adopt a form of thinking that is beyond the mine, where each strategic planning document reflects post-mine orientation.

What Remains at Risk

- **Financial sustainability:** Both municipalities remain heavily dependent on mine-derived revenue. In Tsantsabane, approximately R470 million in consumer debt represents the most severe financial sustainability risk in the programme. Revenue enhancement work has been initiated but not completed in either municipality.
- **Individual concentration in water management:** Both municipalities' water capabilities are significantly concentrated in specific individuals. The borehole handover model must be replicated across remaining water management functions before programme exit.
- **Compact independence from CSIR facilitation:** The Regional Development Compact has been facilitated by CSIR throughout. Its ability to function autonomously has not yet been tested.
- **Political and leadership continuity:** The Mayor of Tsantsabane, the primary political architect of the Compact, is departing in approximately eight months. Neither municipality has confirmed successor arrangements for the champions who have driven programme progress.

Northern Cape: Evaluative Summary

Within Gamagara and Tsantsabane, the programme has contributed to clear changes in municipal and institutional functions, including stronger alignment of planning to post-mining scenarios, improved water and infrastructure management and more embedded capabilities. The Regional Development Compact is a genuine departure from the 'mines displacing local government' dynamic the programme was designed to address. The critical unresolved gap is financial sustainability: both municipalities remain heavily dependent on mine-related revenue. Revenue enhancement work remains a priority in the next phase of implementation.



CROSS-CUTTING FINDINGS: CAPABILITY, SUSTAINABILITY AND VALUE FOR MONEY

The following findings apply across both regions and all four municipalities. They address the central evaluative question: whether the programme's investment has produced capability gains that are real, embedded and sufficient to prepare municipalities for mine closure and economic diversification.

7.1 Finding 1: The Programme's Most Consistent Impact is Relational Before it is Technical

Municipal teams that describe improved interdepartmental collaboration also describe improved use of technical tools, better planning and more confident decision making. Teams where collaboration has not improved show more fragmented technical gains. For the mining partners, this means the programme's value cannot be assessed by counting technical products alone. The relational change is the foundation on which product quality and durability depend. A land audit that sits in one department, or an SDF that is produced by a consultant and handed over, does not produce the same institutional outcomes as the same tools built through genuine collaboration and internalised through shared practice. This finding indicates that the programme impacted positively on institution-building and changing institutional culture.

7.2 Finding 2: Individual Capability has been Built and Institutional Embedding is a Work in Progress

The programme has developed strong individual capability across municipalities. While there is a perception that capacity may be lost when individuals leave, the approach has deliberately focused on team-based development and involvement across multiple roles. Evidence from Blouberg and Gamagara shows continuity in planning work despite staff turnover and in Blouberg, asset management capacity has remained embedded within a team. The programme's emphasis on collective engagement and facilitated reflection has supported this shift beyond individual mentoring.

Although staff turnover remains a risk, there are clear signs of growing institutional traction over time as a result of officials as participating individuals being consistently involved.

7.3 Finding 3: Active Municipal Collaboration and Progress Evident in All Four Municipalities

The Northern Cape municipalities have incrementally adopted a post-mining planning framework. The programme has moved all four municipalities meaningfully from their position at programme entry toward improved service delivery, with Gamagara and Tsantsabane beginning to approach institutional readiness on specific outcomes. There is a shift in the institutional identity of The Northern Cape municipalities as there is evidence that both municipalities are now adopting a form of thinking that is beyond the mine, where each strategic planning document reflects post-mining orientation.

7.4 Finding 4: Programme Resourcing, Time Frame and Scope Impact Outcomes

The MCPP's structure of having two regions created a context with the same programme model, the same implementation partner and the same methodology, applied to municipalities with broadly comparable baseline conditions but with materially different programme resources, time frames and scope. In the Northern Cape, Kumba's investment has been consistent and progressively strategic, enabling increasing the scope to target several focus areas simultaneously, which enables more of an institutional approach. In Limpopo, De Beers' investment has also been consistent but smaller scale, with limited resources and a reduced scope over time. Therefore, the institutional outcomes are not equivalent. However, the improvement in both regions demonstrates that the sustained presence with targeted interventions to address root causes has produced tangible improvements in the municipalities' performance, with the depth of that improvement shaped by the scale of investment behind it.

7.5 Finding 5: Financial Sustainability is the Most Critical Unresolved Risk across All Four Municipalities

Technical planning capability, water management systems and institutional coordination gains are all genuine. The most significant unresolved risk across all four municipalities is financial sustainability. Revenue bases remain structurally dependent on mine-related economic activity; consumer debt is severe; billing systems are incomplete; and revenue enhancement work has not been completed in any municipality.

Across these contexts, the programme has enabled a clearer articulation of these constraints and supported municipalities in developing a shared understanding of the challenges. It has also created a basis for collaboration and coordinated action in addressing revenue management and local economic development priorities. Financial sustainability is not one programme outcome among five; it is the enabling condition for all others. Whilst revenue enhancement must be a priority, financial viability remains a systemic challenge for local government in South Africa.

7.6 Finding 6: The Programme has Produced a Replicable Model but Sustained Replication Requires Institutional Embedding

The MCPP has demonstrated that it can produce meaningful institutional, individual and service gains. It has proven that long-term institution building is the most effective means towards improved municipal performance. However, it was not without its core challenges which included the time it took to onboard the municipalities to be supported, the inconsistent participation of some public institutions and funding limitations. These are risks which could limit the expansion of the methodology. This presents both a challenge and an opportunity. The challenge is that it is reliant on a specific sector within the private sector to achieve what should be intergovernmental constitutional responsibilities; and it is restricted to where those sectors are present and impactful. Inconsistent public institution participation, resource limitations or an unwillingness to fund such initiatives by the private sector would render it ineffective. For the MCPP methodology to be replicable, the intergovernmental system needs to take the lead in embedding it in municipalities where it is required throughout the country.

7.7 Finding 7: The MCPP's Methodology is its Most Replicable Asset

The distinctive feature of the MCPP most consistently identified is its methodology: working alongside rather than working for; entering with a problem-driven diagnostic rather than a predetermined solution; building capability through practice rather than instruction; and maintaining sustained presence rather than delivering a product and exiting.

CSIR's role as a trusted intermediary is a distinctive feature noted by multiple participants across municipal, mine and government stakeholder groups. The CSIR's position, being neither a government department nor a corporate funder, has enabled a quality of engagement that neither government-delivered nor mine-delivered support could achieve. Municipal officials describe being able to raise difficult issues in CSIR-facilitated spaces that they would not surface in the presence of funders or government oversight bodies. This sense of psychological safety has been an important enabler of honest self-assessment and genuine problem-solving.

Collectively, these seven findings make the following evaluative argument: the MCPP has produced real and corroborated institutional gains in all four municipalities; those gains are more durable and advanced where investment has been sustained; the most critical unresolved risk is financial sustainability; and the programme's most important remaining task is embedding what has been built, not building more. The methodology and institutional relationships are more valuable than any individual technical output but will dissipate if not deliberately institutionalised.



RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 Contextual Foundation for Recommendations

The baseline conditions outlined in Section 2.1 are common across most municipalities, especially those in predominantly rural areas. The findings indicate that the MCPP context-specific rather than a one-size-fits-all methodology, is a sustainable way to overcome those conditions. Although this initiative was funded and piloted by the private sector, municipal capability support is the constitutional and legislative responsibility of the intergovernmental system. In this respect, the MCPP's sustainability and future success lie with its recognition and active support within the intergovernmental system as a standing collaboration rather than a government-initiated programme.

It is important to note that this is not suggesting that the MCPP itself should be exclusively adopted or absorbed by DCoG, SALGA or any other government body. The evidence in this report suggests the programme functions as it does precisely because it is collaborative, independent, adaptive and jointly owned by industry, government and municipalities rather than housed within a single institution (see Finding 7). However, since providing municipal support is a public sector responsibility, the methodology should find a home within public institutions primarily and be championed by an entity that is able to corral the ecosystem of local government support. Therefore, the recommendations that follow should be read as calling for government to recognise, support and help resource the model as a standing collaboration, not to take it over as a departmental programme. Generalised best practices and lessons learnt from the programme's implementation could also assist and inform the design of other support and capacity-building initiatives undertaken by the government.

These recommendations are enhanced by the findings, the requirements of section 154(1) of the Constitution and Chapter 3 of the Draft White Paper on Local Government, which deals with cooperative governance, intergovernmental relations and planning for collective impact. S 154(1) of the Constitution states that 'The national government and provincial governments, by legislative and other measures, must support and strengthen the capacity of municipalities to manage their own affairs, to exercise their powers and to perform their functions.'

The Draft White Paper enhances this responsibility by recommending: a mandated national policy coordination centre for the local government system; a multi-sphere planning, implementation and performance management system with two-way accountability; a single data-driven system of oversight, early warning, intervention and enforcement; a single system of differentiated support and capacity building; and binding cooperative-governance protocols for sector delivery in local geographies.

The MCPP has enabled an appropriate application of s 154(1) and applied the Draft White Paper recommendations. Among the reasons for its success: the consistent involvement and flexibility of the private sector; the role of a quasi-state body (CSIR) as the implementing agent, which was able to ensure that champions, stakeholders and supporters were consistently involved and played the roles expected of them and that the reforms themselves were driven and owned by the municipality and its officials. To sustain and roll out such a programme requires national and provincial government departments to adopt a partnership approach to municipal capability that includes the private sector with institutions such as the CSIR playing the crucial role of bringing and keeping the champions, stakeholders and supporters engaged throughout the multi-year roll-out. Peer learning and sharing are central to this methodology, a function best performed by institutions sitting outside of, but still linked to, the state.

8.2 Recommendations: The Municipalities

All Four Municipalities

- Complete revenue enhancement work as the next phase. Define specific deliverables: metre-to-stand reconciliation completion dates, valuation roll update timelines and billing correction milestones.
- Develop and implement formal succession planning and knowledge transfer mechanisms for all individual-concentrated capabilities, using the Tsantsabane borehole handover as the template: named system, named successor, documented handover, verified independence.
- Secure council adoption of all outstanding planning instruments (SDF, CIF, LED strategies, LUMS) before programme exit. Formal adoption converts a planning product into a governance obligation.
- Establish formal political handover documentation and incoming leadership induction processes, particularly given election cycle timing. Political embedding cannot rest on the goodwill of outgoing leaders.
- Secure funding for the completion of GIS work and GIS licences.

Gamagara and Tsantsabane (Northern Cape: Mine Closure Focus)

The focus for the Northern Cape municipalities must be on deepening and completing the institutional gains already made, given the mine closure timeline. The Compact must be given formal council endorsement in both municipalities and embedded in departmental Service Delivery and Implementation Plans with funded line items. Revenue enhancement, Water Safety Plan maintenance, and LED strategy adoption all should be a priority, moving forward.

Blouberg and Musina (Limpopo: Economic Diversification Focus)

Economic diversification planning must be treated as an immediate programme priority, not a deferred aspiration, given Venetia Mine's medium-term planning horizon. The CitySolve licence must be secured through a municipal budget line before programme exit. The LUMS must be tabled for council adoption. Alternative funding pathways through the Minerals Council, DCoG and DBSA must be actively explored and formalised before any further De Beers funding interruption can occur. An immediate focus should be the refurbishment and upgrading of Musina's infrastructure, particularly in relation to its role as a Special Economic Zone. The asset management foundation established through the programme now needs to be extended into budgeting, financing and prioritisation for maintenance and refurbishment, alongside stronger alignment of intergovernmental investment in recognition of Musina's role as a national gateway.

Priority should also be placed on LED implementation in both municipalities. Blouberg requires a new LED strategy as a matter of urgency, while Musina requires LED implementation support to convert its developed strategy into funded projects.

8.3 Recommendations: Intergovernmental Institutions

DCoG

- As established in Finding 6, the programme has not lacked champions. DCoG, Anglo American, SALGA, MISA, provincial governments, the Kagiso Trust, individual municipal political and administration leaders, and CSIR have each championed it in different ways. It is an example of public-private-social sectors collaborating towards shared goals as envisaged in a uniquely South African approach to the developmental state. What is missing and unsustainable, is a central champion with the combined national mandate, capability and secured funding to harness this approach at scale across municipalities across South Africa. DCoG is best positioned to close this specific gap, not by replacing the existing champions, but by providing the institutional backing without which an MCPP methodology could not succeed.
- Establish the policy and intergovernmental architecture for a differentiated, sustained and publicly resourced system of municipal capability support. The findings confirm that relational, problem-driven and sustained support produces qualitatively different outcomes from project-based or compliance-driven interventions. DCoG must provide the policy mandate, coordination framework and funding mechanisms that allow this approach to function at scale across all municipalities, and which ensure a coordinated strategy for long-term regional development between the three spheres of government especially in regions that are dependent on a single or dominant industry.
- Establish the institutional and financing architecture for cross-sectoral partnership in municipal capability development. Public institutions cannot replicate this programme's outcomes without the sustained co-investment of trusted intermediaries and private-sector partners. DCoG must create the mandate, frameworks and incentives that enable collaborative, multi-stakeholder capability programmes to be recognised, resourced and integrated within the intergovernmental system.
- Convene a national dialogue which commits to a binding intergovernmental compact for long-term financial and governance resilience in institutionally stressed municipalities. Institutional and financial sustainability are the most critical unresolved systemic risks, driven by structural revenue dependency on extractive industries and severe consumer debt. DCoG must lead the development of an intergovernmental response that addresses the structural conditions of municipal distress, thereby enabling its role envisaged by s 154(1) of the Constitution and the Draft White Paper on Local Government.

SALGA

- Position itself as the national institutional custodian of municipal capability development, giving effect to its mandate under municipal support. The evaluation demonstrates that relational, sustained and problem-driven support produces fundamentally different outcomes than project-based delivery. SALGA must use its unique cross-sphere positioning to define what good capability development looks like, set expectations across the local government sector and ensure that the lessons of programmes like the MCPP inform national support frameworks.
- Prioritise leadership stability and political continuity as structural preconditions for institutional capability. Individual dependency and leadership discontinuity are the primary mechanisms through which institutional gains are lost. SALGA must advocate for – and create enabling conditions around – structured succession, knowledge transfer and political induction, embedding these as governance norms across the sector rather than leaving them as programme deliverables for individual municipalities.
- SALGA must use its national voice to ensure that fiscal frameworks, grant systems, and intergovernmental transfer mechanisms are designed to support municipalities in resource-dependent and post-mining contexts, and to make the case for investment in revenue capability.
- Provide the institutional continuity and intergovernmental convening power that no single programme or implementing agent can sustain. The trusted-intermediary role – the capacity to convene municipalities, government and private sector around shared development challenges – is the programme's most replicable and most endangered asset. SALGA is positioned to hold this role within the intergovernmental system, ensuring that the institutional relationships, knowledge and planning compacts built through the MCPP are not lost when programme funding cycles end.

Provincial Government

- Assume the coordinating and enabling role envisaged by s 154(1) as the sphere of government closest to municipalities. Given that individual and institutional capability in these municipalities remains fragile, the provincial government must shift its orientation from oversight and compliance to active, sustained support, providing the technical, financial and coordination resources that allow municipalities to consolidate and embed the gains already made.
- Prioritise the conditions for institutional sustainability, with particular focus on digital systems, planning instruments and succession. Provincial government must ensure that the enabling conditions for sustainability are treated as a provincial responsibility, not deferred to programme funders.
- Lead provincial-level intergovernmental coordination on post-mining economic transition, recognising that no single municipality can manage this challenge alone. The Offices of the Premier in both the Northern Cape and Limpopo must take ownership of multi-sphere coordination on economic diversification and municipal financial resilience, as a long-term provincial development imperative, not a programme management task.
- Champion the institutionalisation of collaborative capability development as a provincial norm. The replication of the MCPP model depends on the existence of public institutional champions with the mandate and credibility to convene multi-stakeholder partnerships.

8.4 Recommendations: Mining Companies and Resource Sector

Commit to sustained, multi-year investment at a scale sufficient to work across multiple work streams simultaneously. Intermittent or scaled-back investment produces systematically inferior institutional outcomes, not lower-cost equivalent ones.

- Mining partners (De Beers and Kumba): Secure a formal multi-year MCPP commitment for all four municipalities to prevent funding interruptions that could undermine current gains. Where necessary, alternative or complementary co-funding arrangements with DCoG and DBSA should be explored to support continuity.
- Encourage other resource extraction companies to fund similar programmes in the municipalities they operate in.

8.5 Recommendations: MCPP

The recommendations above address the enabling environment and institutional actors required for sustainability and replication of the MCPP. The following addresses the programme itself: what should be retained, improved or done differently going forward. The phased approach and the sustained-presence methodology are the programme's most important assets and must be retained in any next phase. As Finding 4 establishes, both regions demonstrate that sustained presence with targeted interventions produces tangible institutional improvement, with the depth of that improvement shaped by the scale and scope of investment behind it, not by one region outperforming the other. Any extension or replication of the model must build in the multi-year commitment and the dedicated municipal lead function that have been central to its effectiveness at a scale sufficient to sustain them. The programme's internal team configuration mixed CSIR disciplines, external technical partners integrated as MCPP rather than as consultants, and the shadowing system ensuring that a capability-oriented person was always present alongside technical experts is a distinctive feature that should be explicitly documented and replicated. The internal teaming practices that the programme required of municipalities were modelled within the team itself, and this internal coherence was a source of credibility that programme documentation has not yet fully captured.

The reflective practice infrastructure, SenseMaker, peer learning events and structured session reflection should be explicitly retained and resourced in the next phase. These are not optional monitoring additions; they are the mechanism by which the programme builds institutional learning culture within municipalities and their removal would reduce the programme to technical assistance.

Most urgently, the programme should document what it has learned about navigating structural challenges: funding cycle disruptions, political transitions, staff turnover and periods of institutional instability. Six years of experience across eight municipalities in varied funding and political contexts have produced a body of adaptive management knowledge not yet captured in implementation guides. Producing this documentation before the current programme team transitions is the most time-sensitive legacy knowledge product the programme has yet to create.

What is at Stake if MCPP Support Ends?

Finally and most importantly, although not necessarily a recommendation, but befitting to end with, is to consider the stakes should MCPP support be withdrawn or substantially reduced, at short notice or without a transition plan. A meaningful share of the institutional gains documented in this report would be at risk of reversal, particularly in areas where progress still depends on a small number of individuals, temporary system arrangements (such as externally hosted GIS licences), or ongoing facilitation of private-sector engagement that municipalities cannot yet replicate internally. This is not a prediction that funding will be withdrawn, nor a comment on any funder's intentions; it is a statement in the interest of the municipalities, funders and government partners who will use this report, of what is genuinely at stake in the continuity of support, so that the decision to sustain, adjust or transition the programme can be made with a clear view of its consequences.



CONCLUSIONS

The MCPP has produced something real and meaningful. Across four municipalities, two provinces and six years of sustained engagement, the programme has demonstrated that a problem-driven, trusted-intermediary, working-alongside approach can shift the institutional trajectory of mining municipalities in ways that project-based or compliance-driven interventions cannot. The development is credible. The methodology is sound. The evidence base is strong.

The central conclusion of this evaluation is that the programme has built capability, but is not yet finished building it, and the remaining work is the hardest part. This includes embedding individual gains into institutional systems, completing financial sustainability foundations, securing political endorsement of planning instruments and establishing a path for replication. They require deliberate, funded and sustained action in the period that remains.

For the commissioning partners, the investment has produced value that would not have existed without the MCPP and that value is at risk of being lost if the programme exits before the remaining work is done. The question is not whether the MCPP has worked, it is whether the investments made over six years will be protected and replicated by completing the work that remains. The recommendations are intended to achieve this protection and replication.



