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Application to join the Open Government Partnership Local Government

Dear Open Government Partnership Co-Chairs,

The South African government is a founding member of the OGP. Former Deputy, now President Ramaphosa's remarks when South Africa assumed a role as Government Lead in 2015 are notable. He indicated that South Africa has much to share "...on how we think we can strengthen our internal mechanisms to ensure greater transparency and inclusive participation". We believe the same of our local space.

Our local jurisdiction is a region of the Eastern Cape of South Africa with 80,390 inhabitants that operates under the administration of the Eastern Cape Provincial government and within the system of concurrent powers laid out by the Constitution of South Africa.

Several different complex challenges face us, outlined within our Integrated Development Plan (IDP) 2019-2020. These include an ongoing water crisis and calls

Makana Municipality shall strive to ensure sustainable, affordable, equitable and quality services in a just, friendly secure and healthy environment, which promotes social and economic growth for all.

...a great place to be

We share the recognition of the fundamental role that local governments play given their proximity to the people, and that cities, states, regions, provinces, counties and other jurisdictions deliver crucial services that require effective and responsive governments. We are especially encouraged by the OGP's recognition that:

"Today, implications of the COVID-19 pandemic in our societies are still yet to be seen, but it's clear that collaboration, transparency, and citizen participation will be fundamental pillars on the future recovery. It's right at the local level where the emergency demands swift action, national and local cooperation, and multi-stakeholder approaches.:"

This opportunity to join the OGP Local program is one that we see as a chance to deepen multi-stakeholder collaboration, shared learning and accountability. We have developed a collaborative relationship with various civic actors within our locality through the Makhanda Circle of Unity organisation over the past year. Through this partnership we seek to embrace the values of calling for greater civic participation in public affairs, openness in our engagement with citizens to improve services, manage public resources, promote innovation, and create safer communities.

As part of our commitment to becoming members of the OGP local program we have highlighted specific thematic policy areas that we wish to address together with civic partners. These are those of marginalized communities, water & sanitation, citizen participation, public service delivery, fiscal openness. Some of our local partners continue to [support mechanisms](#)¹ for building stronger connections between the municipality and those it serves in addition to ongoing [citizen updates](#)² from the Executive Mayor.

Our commitment to participating in the program includes the goal of working to spread the practices of open local government within our own jurisdiction with the help of our civic partners, In particular, we wish to leverage civic engagement to provide oversight. In the short-term we are committed to making policy formulation and decision making more transparent, using channels to solicit public feedback, and deepening public participation in evaluating our own activities.

We also wish to share our efforts in the longer term amongst the seven local municipalities in the Sarah Baartman District in the Eastern Cape and with the wider provincial government. For example by piloting contextually relevant approaches to tackling common problems such as the management of water and sanitation and issue of fragmented Land Use Management.

Our partners such as the Public Service Accountability Monitor (PSAM) have a good track record in running events to foreground ways to share information with open participatory planning processes to expedite the provision of services such as roads, alternative water sources and address housing backlogs as well as the provision of alternative energy sources for rural and urban areas.

Our municipality is well positioned to be part of a learning network. We are already part of several networks that seek to promote the principles of open government. In the past - Makana Municipality ward councillors have participated in budget oversight

¹ <https://www.grocotts.co.za/2020/05/27/a-link-between-communities-and-the-government/>

² <https://www.grocotts.co.za/2020/05/20/makana-covid-19-update/>

workshops supported by local civic partners such as the PSAM and Black Sash. Our local media highlighted one such example supported by the speaker of the provincial legislature; the '[Putting the People in Parliament](#)'³ project. The Public Service Accountability Monitor and civil society partners are part of this project that is supported by the European Union (EU) and Heinrich Böll Foundation (HBF) which seeks to foster closer engagement between people and their elected representatives. While this is a provincial-level project - we have opportunities to learn from key local organisations with whom we regularly work.

As such, the thematic policy areas where we wish to contribute good practices and lessons learned for other members will be in regards to the challenges of supporting marginalized communities, water & sanitation, citizen participation, public service delivery and fiscal openness.

The benefits that we foresee to our involvement in this program reflect national priorities for the strengthening of local government during this period. Our national and provincial leadership structures have placed a strong emphasis upon the role of local municipalities in working to address the impact of the COVID pandemic on our communities. By joining the OGP local network we thus seek to learn about and adopt approaches to enhance and strengthen the accountability and transparency of our local government response which is central to these efforts.

In turn by joining the OGP program, we wish to support the work we have started with the MCU to drive forward processes aligned with our development priorities working with local stakeholders to enhance accountability, citizen engagement and transparency. A secondary objective is also to assist with the longer term response and recovery from COVID-19 and learning from open government interventions that can support these efforts.

In our context, we see that public access to reliable and correct information is central in mitigating and preventing the effects of the virus in communities. Information is also crucial to mitigate the effects on the lives of the most vulnerable, and to meeting our development priorities.

A key mechanism for co-creation and monitoring initiatives in these areas from the side of the municipality is our IDP. This is shared via a Community Based Planning (Mayoral Imbizo) process, with an IDP Representative Forum (Community Stakeholder engagement) and IDP/Budget roads shows. Officials provide engagement between the municipality and stakeholders and include the Communications Unit and members of the Municipal Council as outlined below and provided for in the Constitution of South Africa. Public participation is fundamental to this and it is hoped that a process of co-creation may be incorporated with some ease.

Our own track record on open government or co-creation with non-governmental stakeholders is well illustrated by initiatives to engage with monitoring and social accountability initiatives. Namely;

- Adoption of MobiSAM (Mobile Social Accountability Monitoring)

³ <https://www.grocotts.co.za/2019/10/30/a-wedge-in-parliaments-door/>

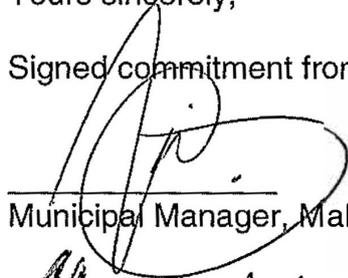
- Monitoring and reporting on the municipal finances with National Treasury and civil society⁴

Our municipality has capacity to work on projects with the support of the Makhanda Circle of Unity and has existing relationships with a range of civic partners (Kagiso Trust, Makhanda Revive, Grahamstown Residents Association, Grahamstown Business Forum) through the MCU coalition.

While the primary role of the municipal council is that of political oversight of the municipality's functions, programmes and the management of the administration, we are committed to working closely together with MCU and other civic partners to build capacity to support our involvement in this programme.

Yours sincerely,

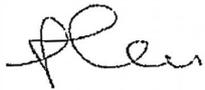
Signed commitment from:



Municipal Manager, Makhanda:



Executive Mayor, Makhanda:



Makhanda Circle of Unity Co-Chairs, Makhanda:

⁴ <https://openup.org.za/blog/municipal-money-webinar>