

# Open Government Partnership



## MAKHANDA PARTICIPATES IN OPEN GOVERNMENT PROCESS

Makhanda, through the Makana Municipality, is honoured to be part of the [Open Government Partnership](#) (OGP), an international model of governance and building active citizenship that is reforming how citizens can relate and contribute to decision making processes by their respective state structures. This is following an application jointly made by the Makana Municipality and the Makhanda Circle of Unity (MCoU) to participate in the OGP network in late 2020. OGP was formed in 2011, on the premise of wanting to identify a mechanism of partnering civil society and government structures to find new sustainable ways of promoting transparency and building a “participatory, inclusive & accountable governance”. Having been formed in 2011, OGP has grown to become a network of 79 countries and 76 local governments, with Makana Municipality being the first South African municipality to be accepted into the OGP network.

In a nutshell, national/local governments collaborate with civil society and work together to co-create two-year **action plans** with concrete steps – referred to as “commitments” – that can cover a broad range of issues. This unique model ensures that civil society and/or direct citizen engagement has a role in shaping and overseeing governments. Underpinning this approach to governance are four key values which all participants in the OGP network must commit to, namely:

1. **Access to Information:** Increasing public access to government held information, as opposed to only being able to access information on government activities. This

includes making deliberate steps to ensure access to publicly available information and facilitating sharing of government held information to encourage further collaboration.

2. **Civic Participation:** Promoting and increasing formal public participation in governance processes, particularly through valuing transparency, citizen proposals and citizen petitions.
3. **Public Accountability:** Setting up mechanisms and structures for state structures and/or persons to justify their activities, respond positively to criticisms and accept responsibility for failing to meet obligations and/or requirements.
4. **Technology and Innovation for Openness and Accountability:** Promoting and supporting innovative ways that facilitate information sharing, public participation, and collaboration.

Powerfully, the OGP approach has shown itself to be a successful mechanism for breaking down the boundaries and barriers that are often major hindrances between citizens and local governments. In the 10 years of its existence world, over 200 action plans have been developed and actively implemented by state actors committed to collaborating with civil society. Makhanda's participation in this process offers the city an opportunity to build on efforts to reorient and best configure local government to be responsive to the needs and demands of the people of the city.

### **How does it work?**

At the core of the OGP process is a participatory process where the government and civil society members co-create what is referred to as an **Action Plan**. Action plans are effectively built from a series of consultations with relevant stakeholders to identify gaps in governance practices that are contextually and environmentally relevant, and develop a set of firm steps (referred to as "**commitments**") covering broad thematic areas that are then agreed to and implemented by the government actors. An OGP commitment must focus on at least one aspect of open government (either in principle or related to the values of OGP). These include:

- Providing easier access to information
- Increasing Accountability
- Improving Transparency
- Enabling greater citizen participation in government decision-making

The process of drafting an action plan can be broken down into three core aspects:

1. **Ideation:** The first part of the process to develop a Makhanda Action Plan is the gathering of ideas from members of the public through as many platforms as is accessible and available. Essentially, these ideas are intended to cover broad steps that the municipality could take towards improving and widening access to governance practices (for example, an idea would be for the municipality to make procurement practices widely accessible through quarterly reports released publicly). Citizens will be given time to contribute as many ideas as they want over a set period.
2. **Deliberation:** After the receipt of ideas from the citizens of Makhanda, concentrated and targeted engagements with civil society organisations and interested persons will be held, with the intention being to develop the suggested ideas into potential commitments that the Municipality would agree to implementing.
3. **Construction:** Once ideas are developed into commitments, a draft action plan will be constructed for the consideration and passing of the Municipality.

Critically, the Municipality is mandated to participate in all of these processes as substantively as possible - this is because they ultimately will have the responsibility of turning commitments drafted through public consultation into action and progress. To strengthen oversight over the implementation of these commitments, the OGP Process offers two significant accountability structures. Firstly, a **multi-stakeholder forum** (MSF), consisting of an equal split of *civil society and municipality representatives*, will be appointed through the development of the action plan that will monitor and ensure public reporting continues to happen on progress made in relation to the implementation of action plans. Secondly, OGP has its own external **independent reporting mechanism** (IRM) which is tasked with assessing:

- The extent to which the action plan and its commitments reflect, in an area-specific way, the OGP values of transparency, accountability, and civic participation.
- Progress made on the articulation and implementation of each commitment and the plan, according to milestones laid out in the action plan.
- Providing technical recommendations regarding how OGP participants can improve implementation of each commitment and the plan.

Such extensive oversight and monitoring processes are extensive indicators of OGP principles in action, whilst ensuring that developed action plans do not sit in cupboards gathering dust but rather are continuously implemented, as necessary. Makhanda's action plan development process will run between **May and July 2021**, during which inputs and contributions from all concerned citizens will be solicited and welcome!

## **Why Makhanda: Potential to Strengthen the City**

In the [joint application](#) made by the MCU and Makana Municipality, a number of key reasons were identified that bolster the need for Makhanda to participate in the OGP. One of the largest was the identified need to deepen multi-stakeholder collaboration, shared learning and accountability within the municipality. These were linked to identified thematic areas that the Municipality committed to address with civil society partners and organisations, which include:

- Marginalized communities
- Water and sanitation
- Citizen Participation
- Public Service Delivery
- Fiscal Openness

Within the context of Makhanda, these are critical thematic areas that cover existing challenges being faced by citizens of the city. In turn, it is important to note that whilst these are thematic priorities listed in the application, they do not limit how citizens can participate, or the types of ideas that can be shared by citizens. Importantly, the municipality highlighted a key commitment to the process, noting that by *“joining the OGP local network we thus seek to learn about and adopt approaches to enhance and strengthen the accountability and transparency of [the] local government response”*.

Participating in the OGP process offers civil society organisations and interested citizens of Makhanda some vital benefits that are all geared towards improving the status of our city, and in the long term, strengthening local governance in our context. These include:

- A facilitated opportunity, through a third-party framework, to allow people to directly contribute to the identification of key priorities for the municipality.
- Strengthened governance which better speaks to the needs of its citizens.
- Direct citizen oversight and influence on the municipality and developing of a tool of accountability that is citizen owned and driven.
- Creating a language of collaboration within the city.

## **How you can participate in the process**

Suggestions and inputs are welcomed from all concerned citizens and organisations in Makhanda for the types of commitments the Municipality should adopt to increasingly open access to how it governs. To reiterate, suggestions and ideas received from citizens will all be

considered and be used to develop the Makhanda Action Plan. If anyone wants to share an idea, please do email it to [ogpmakhanda@gmail.com](mailto:ogpmakhanda@gmail.com). In turn, a Facebook group called **OGP Makhanda** will be open and accessible for all from the **7th of May onwards**, which can also be used to receive ideas and suggestions. Ideas are being received for the entire month of May, and as the days progress updates will be provided to all citizens. A report of all ideas received and considered will be shared publicly in early June, as part of ensuring the process remains as transparent and accessible as possible.

### **Key Learning Documents**

To develop and strengthen the understanding of the OGP process, please see some key supporting documents below:

- [OGP Local Handbook](#)
- [OGP Co-Creation Toolkit](#)

Some examples of successful OGP processes, including references to similar local government OGP processes from African contexts, can be found below!

1. [Every Voice Counts: Towards a More Inclusive OGP Co-creation Process – Sekondi-Takoradi](#)
2. [Subnational Data Desks Set the Stage for More Efficient, Participatory Development](#)
3. [The Case for Accountability in Education](#)
4. [Overcoming Women’s Barriers to Participating in Entrepreneurship and Public Procurement in Africa](#)
5. [Lessons from Reformers: Kaduna State](#)