



NET ZERO CITIES

Report on support needs assessment for CCC

Deliverable D1.8

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Abbreviations and acronyms

Acronym	Description
WP	Work Package
SNAP	Support Needs Assessment Process
EoI	Expression of Interest
NZC	NetZeroCities
CCC	Climate City Contract
CA	Climate-Neutral Cities Advisor; City Advisor
EuC	Eurocities

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Summary

The purpose of deliverable D1.8 is to provide a summary briefing analysing the aggregate needs of cities in the CCC process. It is the first of a two-part annual report on support needs assessment for CCC.

The Support Needs Assessment process, while broadly envisaged at the outset of the programme, was designed to be a dynamic, agile process in which Climate-Neutral Cities Advisors (CAs, or City Advisors) would work with cities to both understand their needs, and to help cities navigate into the 100 Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities by 2030 Mission and the NetZeroCities Programme within this framework.

The methodology has enabled cities and CAs to work together in a way which quickly established a space for cities to grasp the key concepts embedded in the programme, while also identifying at a high level specific city needs, barriers and priorities for support. This 'snapshot' approach also facilitates a range of modalities to occur following on from SNAP engagement, and indeed allows for a cyclical process where needed. The SNAP methodology draws on previous city-informed research, and also on the information cities provided within the process to join the Mission.

As a methodology, SNAP is both agile and adaptable – able to be deployed in a variety of settings and with the direct support of CAs or with cities and stakeholders separately from NZC personnel. This report summarises the process to develop SNAP, how it has been applied and key outputs from the process to date. As a tool that is key to the work of CAs, SNAP will continue to play a part in the relationship of CAs to cities as they continue their journeys towards climate neutrality.

Keywords

CCC, Support Needs Assessment, peer-to-peer, workshops, city support, City Advisor, Climate Neutrality



1 Introduction

This document will present the Support Needs Assessment Process (SNAP) methodological development, roll out, key learnings and content outputs up to September 2023.

1.1 Linkages to other reporting requirements and deliverables

Technical Report Part B1 (Dec 2022) set out the design phase of the Support Needs Assessment Process which occurred from May to September 2022 (page 15).

In addition, Deliverables 13.4 and D3.5 refer to the process-focussed outcomes of SNAP in the context of the work of the Climate Neutral Cities Advisors with cities.

1.2 Support needs assessment as envisaged in the Grant Agreement

At the commencement of the NetZeroCities programme, relevant project partners with responsibility for D13.1 produced the document entitled, *'Report on City Needs, Drivers and Barriers Towards Climate Neutrality'*.

This report deployed a survey methodology with more than 60 cities in order to identify the needs, drivers and barriers being experienced by cities in their journey towards climate neutrality.

The report was foundational in considering how to assess the support needs of the full 112 Mission cities as they journeyed towards climate neutrality.

In addition to this deliverable, the support needs assessment requirement was documented at a high level in the grant agreement, as follows:

"T1.3.3 Support Need Assessment for CCC Applications: Based on the Eols, ICLEI and EuC will carry out a support needs assessment with cities in order to enable them to create CCC propositions locally in a participatory and inclusive co-creation process led by the local government. Finalized CCC propositions will contain a locally co-created content draft for a CCC as a basis for the next phase. It will detail politically binding commitments and support needs from other levels of government and other signatories to the CCC."

The first two Climate-Neutral Cities Advisors (CAs) appointed to the programme (EuC) in May 2022 were tasked with working with relevant partners to develop a support needs assessment methodology, taking into account the findings of the D13.1 report, the Expression of Interest and other relevant information that could shed light on working with cities and understanding their needs in greater detail.



2 Support needs assessment: an integrative concept

While the process of understanding and developing a methodology to assess city support needs was underway, there was also a need to consider how City Advisors (CAs) would work with cities (for example, how would CAs be linked to cities, how could CAs be supported in their work, what were the priorities for these allocations, and how could CAs conduct work within methodological boundaries such as SNAP across the 112 cities). This process, which was referred to in the Technical Report Part B as 'City Clustering', in part informed the development of the SNAP methodology, in that the way of working with cities could optimise understanding cities' needs, or alternatively, could run counter to and complicate this appreciation.

As part of this evolution of approach, City Advisors' role was conceptualised as work across four key modalities with respect to city-facing work (this is covered in detail in deliverable 13.4):

- **Support** – cities through the programme and give guidance on the journey to climate neutrality;
- **Connect** – cities to other peers and to experts where needed;
- **Advise** – on programme elements when they arise;
- **Orchestrate** – deep dive workshops for cities on key thematic areas.

City Advisors also conduct consortium-facing work, and of relevance here is the extent to which CAs are the conduit for information, sensemaking and synthesis to the wider consortium resulting from, for example, the SNAP process.

It was apparent at the outset of the design process to understand city support needs, that the support needs assessment methodology would need to encompass more than an isolated assessment of city needs, but rather, a way to join, assist and understand cities on their own journey as they engaged with the Mission in all ways. Building on the report delivered by D13.1 '*Report on City Needs, Drivers and Barriers Towards Climate Neutrality*', it was recognised that there were going to be a range of ways in which cities would require support, but that the central theme of the city journey needed to be anchored to the support provided.

The city journey includes (but not exhaustively) – working through the phases of the Climate Transition Map to enable the city to build the governance structures and mandates within the city, developing their Climate City Contracts, focusing thematically where needed, identifying capacity-building needs, working with other cities, and potentially, becoming pilot cities with associated twin cities.

As such, the Support Needs Assessment Process (SNAP) was developed to be an agile two-way process between the city and the City Advisor: working at the pace that suits each city, enabling the city advisor to understand where the city is in their journey, what their needs are in the short and longer term, and how the platform can help.

2.1 Support needs assessment process (SNAP) as designed and rolled out

In T1.3.3 SNAP, the EoI data provided by cities (and passported by the EC) was extensively cleaned by Eurocities CAs with support from project partners in order to be useable for synthesis as outlined in Stage A below – this required internal hackathons to enable the data to be used in the appropriate format (i.e., numerical rather than text etc). Eurocities CAs proposed the core methodology and a co-design process for developing the Support Needs Assessment Process which included the elements below. An internal benchmarking report – Stage B below – helped prepare CAs for active engagement with cities.



Newly recruited CAs contributed to the co-design process – helping to refine the workshop methodologies in particular and working to define the roll-out process as outlined in Stage C of the process.

Stage A

- Creating a Mission City ‘Dossier’ including the relevant information from each Mission City EoI application and a small amount of additional information to provide background to each city’s characteristics (largely sourced from Eurostat);
- Combining key data to synthesize key characteristics (for example creating metrics for population density, emissions intensity, etc, from EoI data);
- Designing a format for the Dossier to enable each City Advisor to easily access information for their assigned cities;

Stage B

- Clustering information from the EoI to analyse similarities and differences amongst the Mission City cohort (e.g., location, climate zone, density, emissions intensity);
- Producing an internal benchmarking analysis and report for City Advisors reflecting these key characteristics.

Stage C

Developing a detailed methodology for the city engagement phase of the Support Needs Assessment Process, (developed through a series of internal co-design workshops with consortium partners):

- City Discovery meetings - a 1.5-hour introductory meeting with the city team to a set agenda and format that incorporated a common presentation tailored for each city and a set of key lines of inquiry for the meeting (completed by November 2022);
- Three workshops designed to identify city support needs, work with cities to understand where they are placed in the Climate Transition Map, help to determine the appropriate pace and way of working for the city within the programme, identify where expert-led deep dive support might be required and identify opportunities for peer-to-peer connections with other cities.
- Internal workshop with City Advisors to synthesise outputs from the initial City Discovery meetings with cities. The workshop (held 26 and 27 October 2022) which identified the anticipated timeframe for signing the CCC, city priority needs and barriers, expectations in relation to achieving climate neutrality, and any other emerging issues that require a consortium response;
- Internal synthesis feedback workshop with wider consortium in November 2022 – to focus on key areas requiring service design responses;
- Detailed design phase for the SNAP workshops in November 2022;
- SNAP workshops rolled out from mid-November 2022 onwards.



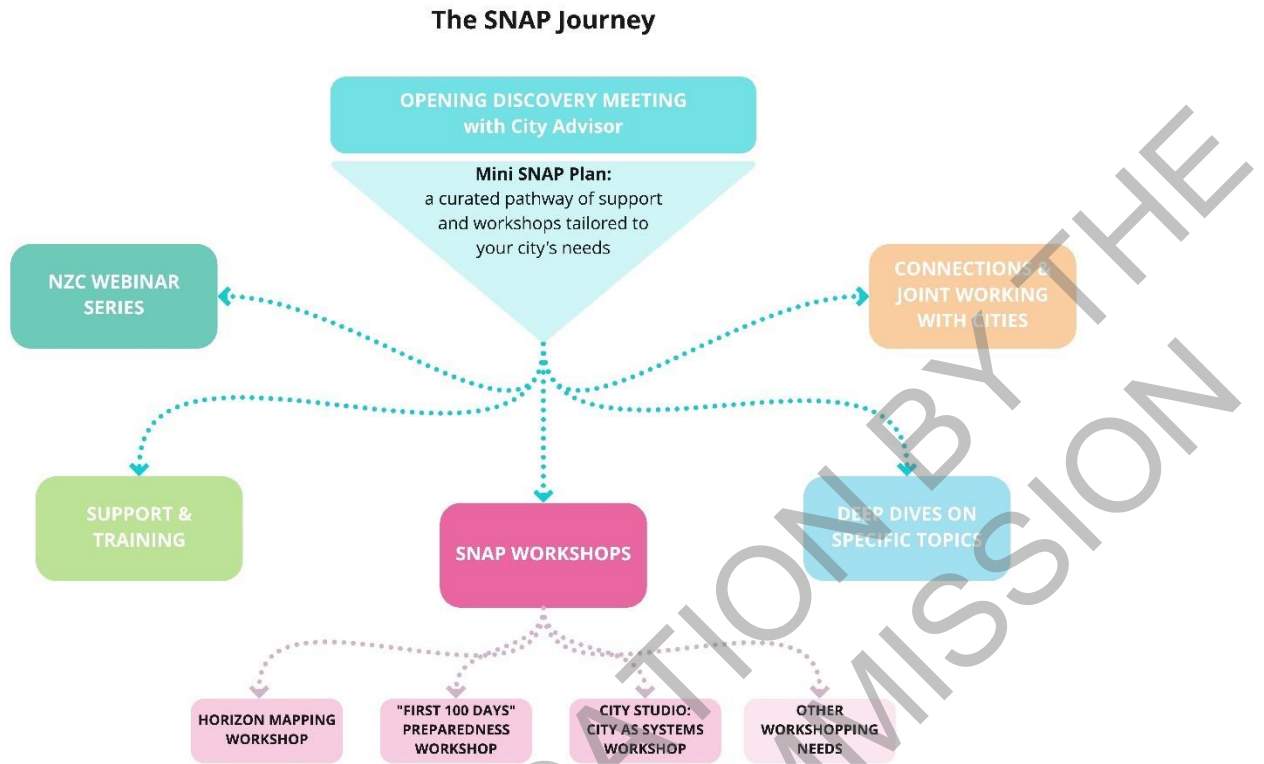


Figure 1: The SNAP journey

2.2 Support needs assessment process (SNAP) evolution during the roll-out phase

During the rollout of the SNAP process, further workshop modules were designed by CAs in response to the needs of cities. These included, recognising that what was termed the 'First 100 days workshop' was in fact a series of thematic modules as follows:

- Financing the transition
- Understanding the transition team
- Exploring risk and uncertainties
- CCC Action Plan
- Stakeholder Impact Mapping
- Transversal Impact Pathways
- Data governance

These modules were developed to be used as short, 30-60 minute, interventions to get city teams focused on the challenges or issues these topics presented and were able to be selected by cities in concert with their CAs for application.

2.3 Principles at play in working with cities via SNAP workshopping

The SNAP process was designed to enable cities to:

- Align city teams towards a common goal for climate neutrality;
- Enable city teams to navigate the core concepts and tools of NetZeroCities and the broader Mission for 100 Smart and Climate Neutral Cities by 2030;
- Help city teams to identify existing gaps, opportunities and synergies in their existing climate plans with the broader activity within the city;
- Focus effort of city teams in their work with wider stakeholders and partners across the city in a climate alliance for climate neutrality;
- Help cities to engage with the innovative climate governance tools of the climate city contract (including for example the commitments document, the action plan and the investment plan).

Underlying the design of SNAP are the following principles which, together, form the basis of engagement, including:

- Understanding the starting point of each city is critical to support a city in its journey;
- Recognising and going at the pace of the city while acknowledging the need to be the city's 'critical friend' at key moments – keeping the city on track in the programme;
- Within each city there might be multiple starting points from one team to another;
- Reaching a shared understanding of these multiple internal perspectives is the first step in working towards a collective climate transition;
- Appreciating that cities have differing levels of capabilities and capacities to facilitate or undertake the work climate transition – but sometimes the gaps and opportunities are not clear to city teams;
- Without a navigation process for engaging with the climate transition, cities can be challenged to engage at the depth needed.

2.4 SNAP pathways

At its highest level, SNAP is envisaged as a way to land cities into the programme – wherever it makes sense for them to 'begin'. SNAP is not a single pathway, but a series of city journeys depending upon a range of factors for each city. These could include:

- The speed at which cities have entered into the CCC drafting process (for example Spanish cities had already been working together for some time and did not require the SNAP workshops to support them in their process – while other cities are yet to engage with the workshop offering, because they do not intend to work intensively on the CCC until late 2023 or 2024);
- The degree to which cities have drawn on their own analytical and sense-making tools to create a clear picture of their journey at systemic level;



- The extent to which cities are just beginning to explore key concepts such as systems innovation, impact pathways and levers of change (for some the concepts were fresh, while for others they preferred to work with existing concepts);
- Parallel processes in place at national or regional level in which the cities are engaged;
- The specific demands for problem solving interwoven into their particular journey (for example understanding and responding to resourcing and capabilities challenges);
- The robustness of city dynamics, institutions and the impact of political and other changes that might be occurring (including local natural disasters).

SNAP: City Pathways

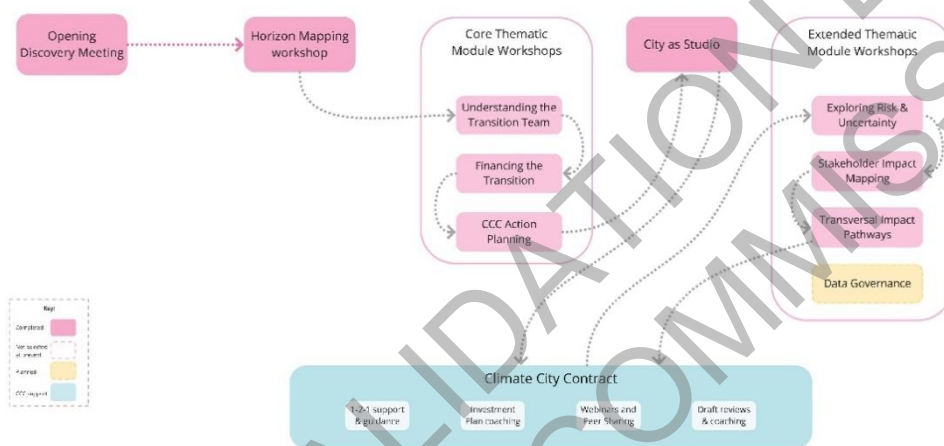


Figure 2: SNAP Pathways: Example – how cities use SNAP

SNAP: City Pathways

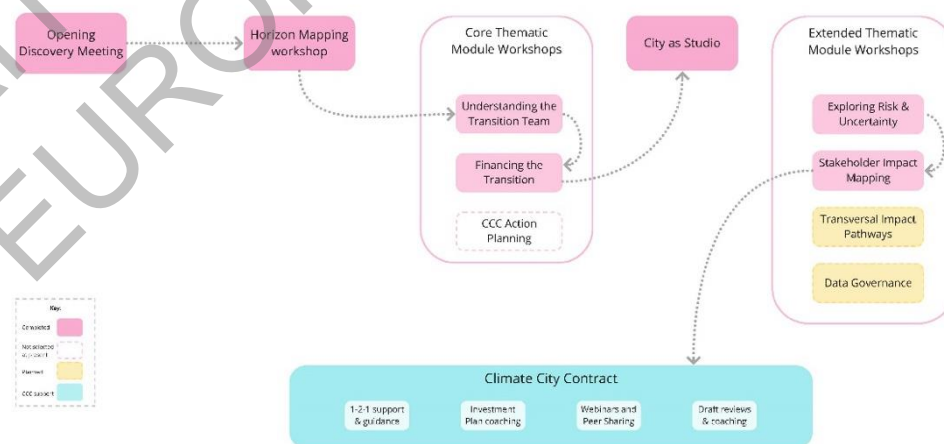


Figure 3: SNAP Pathways: Example – how cities use SNAP



SNAP: City Pathways

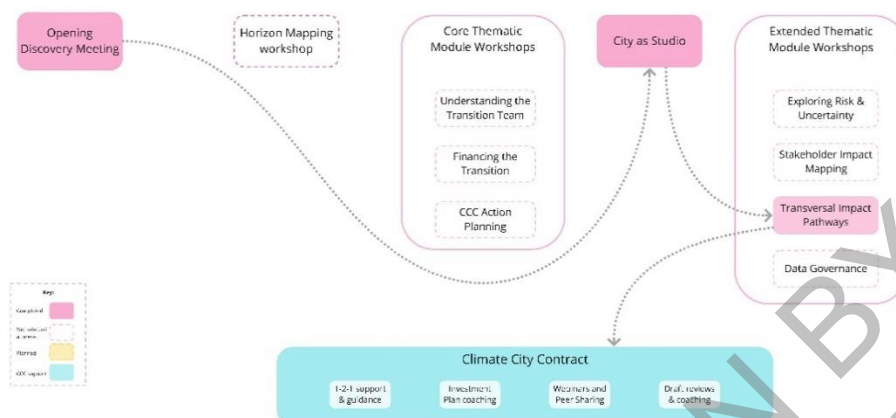


Figure 4: SNAP Pathways: Example – how cities use SNAP

As expected, the initial discovery meetings with cities confirmed that not all cities were ready or needed all stages of the SNAP methodology to be deployed at the outset. Some cities were engaged in parallel processes which covered a similar methodology, while others were either not yet prepared, or were in related processes which meant that they did not have the capacity to devote to SNAP workshops.

Of the 112 Mission cities, all held discovery meetings and approximately 70% of cities held one or more SNAP workshops, or have SNAP workshops planned. At the end of September 2023, the number of SNAP workshops held or planned with cities stands at 218 (a combination of in person and online). In addition, cities had a further 88 workshops beyond the designed SNAP workshop set but following on from the SNAP discovery meeting, and in total an estimated 1000+ meetings during this time.

This varying set of pathways through the SNAP process that evolved further confirmed SNAP core principles – to start the process where cities are, and to be driven by the city's pace and needs, rather than trying to impose artificially from outside the city's needs.

The process of city engagement beginning with the SNAP discovery meeting could therefore involve a city having a discovery meeting, several SNAP workshops, an in-depth workshop with specialists and more; or it could simply involve a discovery meeting followed by an intensive engagement on the CCC process.

Some workshops were held individually with cities online, while others were held in person, and sometimes with groups of cities. For example, the Italian cities and the Greek cities each had two days of workshopping in March 2023, where specialists were also asked to contribute to the delivery of SNAP. In Finland, several group workshops have occurred, and this has also been the case for the Polish cities.

3 Synthesising cities' needs

Whichever pathway cities engaged through the SNAP process, a number of outputs and outcomes can be drawn from these pathways (specifically reflecting the power of SNAP as a navigation tool within the programme). This is encapsulated in figure 5:

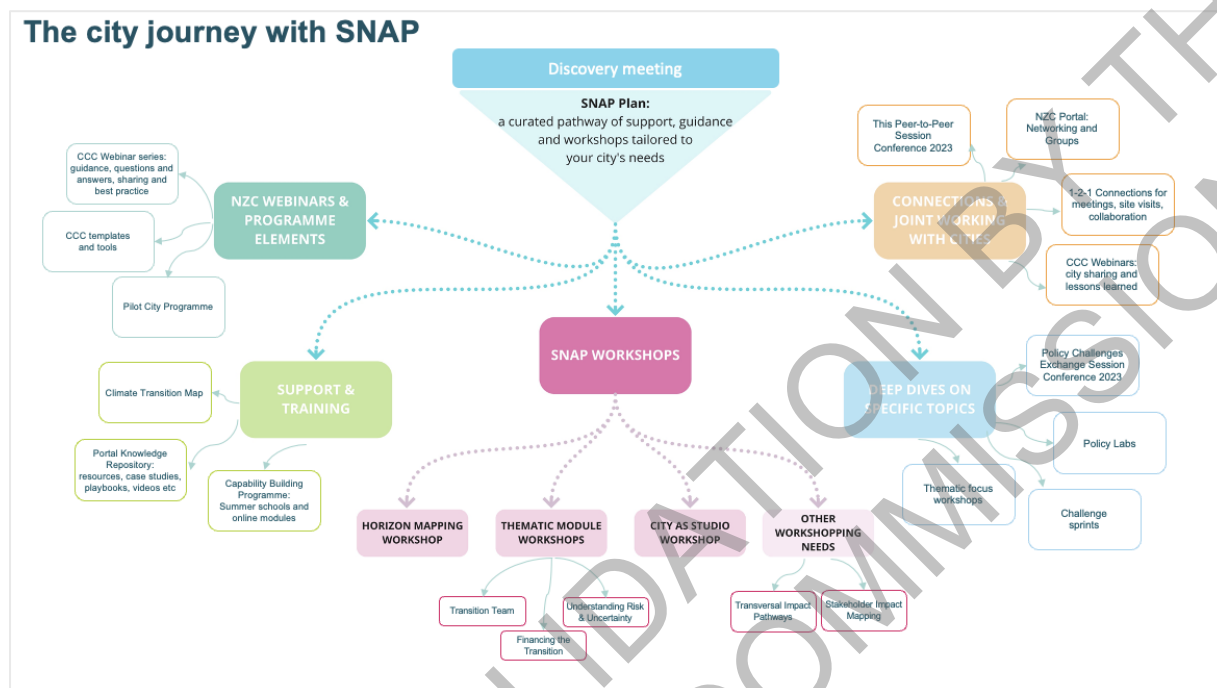


Figure 5: The city journey with SNAP

A mini-SNAP or SNAP review process is being developed under the SGA1 Task T2.2.1, to enable agile checking-in with cities while also staying in keeping with this fundamental principle of a city-centric approach.

One of the outcomes of the initial SNAP process was a clear sense from cities on where they required support going forward. This 'diagnosing' function has performed largely as planned in that cities which needed deep dive workshops with specialists were identified and those workshops were able to be designed in collaboration with specialists. Where cities required more detailed support on the CCC process, city advisors were able to direct cities along a range of pathways in the first instance towards existing resources, and then to work with cities directly on key CCC related issues.

3.1 Identifying barriers and challenges

SNAP has provided NZC with a clear picture of the barriers and challenges that cities continue to face, and where cities require further support in addition to identifying the core areas where cities wanted to work together.

City Advisors initially synthesised the information from the discovery meetings into an internal synthesis report in December 2022, and, following an additional synthesis session in April 2023, a summary of key issues was presented to the NZC conference in Brussels in June 2023.

City Advisors found that the barriers cities had identified in the EoI process, and those that were identified by D13.1 remained valid. In addition, new barriers were identified including:



- the extent to which lack of resourcing and staff internally within cities is acting as a direct barrier to action (as distinct from the lack of capability of resources) - in some cases cities are experiencing a total resourcing freeze while others are experiencing retrenchments;
- the impact of the war in Ukraine is taking its toll in some key supply chains and, coupled with complex procurement policies at differing levels of government is creating barriers for some cities;
- the lack of city-centred tools or the resources to engage meaningfully with the private sector at all levels – this includes those companies that span many borders, SMEs which can be very difficult to reach, and local companies whose drivers, objectives and business language can seem a world apart from city government.

New insights were also identified, including that:

- all cities want support for peer-to-peer engagement – a message which has only strengthened over the first year of engagement and raised by cities at the inaugural Kick-Off Event on 13th June 2022;
- that cities, while welcoming the systems-based approach, also want the opportunity to achieve tangible innovation – with many anxious to begin implementing and testing tangible ideas for climate neutrality for example in procurement, ways to address scope 3 emissions, in addressing vehicle fuels, in permanent sequestration and working with the carbon cycle and in district-based solutions;
- that the pace of support is important to cities – and concerns that support might reach them at not the right point in their process.

City Advisors identified a number of priorities for working with cities as a result of the SNAP process, including:

- Continuing to work at the pace that suits each city – this includes offering the right support at the right times;
- Creating peer to peer infrastructures was needed if peer to peer working is to be enabled (recognising that it is difficult to make happen without a level of support and governance in place);
- To meet these two requirements (peer to peer infrastructures and pacing), tailored support is needed, and the mechanism identified by NZC for delivering this is through establishing City Support Groups where specialists and city advisors would work together with cities and which would better facilitate city-to-city working via thematic sprints for example;
- Some barriers require core policy work to resolve and this might require policy labs and other mechanisms for these challenges to be conceptualised in a manner which recognises that new solutions might need to be identified and scoped for future consideration in a regulatory context.





Figure 6: Understanding city needs

3.2 Peer to peer support

A key finding from the SNAP process was that cities wanted ways to engage with other cities on thematic issues where they could learn from each other in granular detail about their experiences in relation to the theme in question. City Advisors recognised that it is quite a challenge to identify and then organise peer-to-peer working across the 112 cities at the granular detail required. To address this conundrum CAs synthesised the demands for peer to peer working from the SNAP process and then designed a process by which these topics could be further categorised and understood.

Specifically, CAs took the peer-to-peer request by theme on board and liaised with other city advisors in order to, firstly:

- Identify the number of issues where cities have asked for peer-to-peer engagement;
- Identify potential pathways for these issues (for example, the level of intensity of peer to peer working required, the duration, the nature of the peer to peer working).

The first major opportunity to trial this approach was at the NZC annual conference in Brussels in June 2023, with several peer-to-peer sessions, including one for cities to discuss and prioritise issues and explore ways of working, and the results of this session are currently being synthesised to support ongoing peer-to-peer work.

Over 40 separate issues were identified as part of synthesising the outputs of SNAP meetings and workshops that could be suitable for peer-to-peer working. This number was streamlined into six overarching areas, with 26 individual topics. Cities worked together on tables to address the priorities within these topics, and how they wanted to work in a peer-to-peer format going forward. The output of this synthesis work is the subject of another deliverable report.

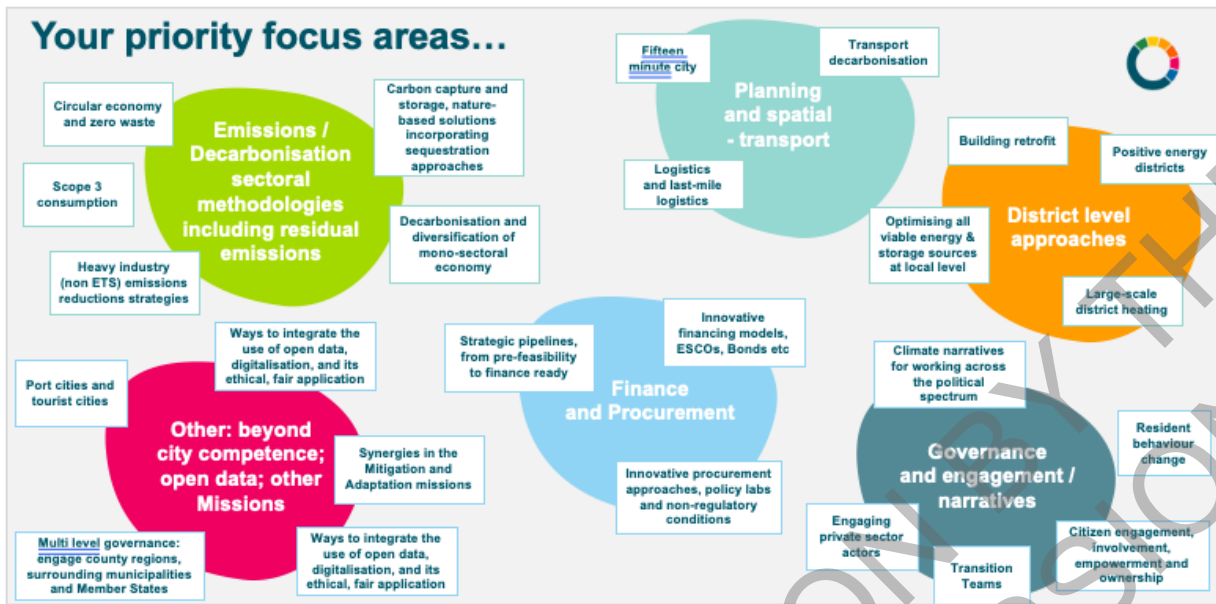


Figure 7: Priority focus areas

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4 Examples of the ways in which cities have deployed SNAP

In line with the commitment to conduct the SNAP workshop process at the pace of the city, the organisation of the SNAP workshop schedule is not necessarily linear for individual cities, nor is it directly patterned onto a clear start and finish date. Some cities wanted to access the workshops quickly and in close succession whereas others have opted to use workshops in their process where they make sense.

As the workshops are designed for both online and in person, the online canvases are available for cities to replicate and use internally, and the in-person canvases are produced in PDF format in black and white so that they can be printed in large format suitable for group working. These variables in timing, intensity, online or in person along with the preferred working language, have guided the style of the canvases deployed with cities. There are some workshops which have been most popular with cities, including the Horizon mapping workshop and the City as Studio workshop. These are described briefly below, along with examples of how they have been applied by cities.

4.1 Horizon Mapping

The foundational workshop – the Horizon mapping process is the most easily transferrable as it enables anyone in the workshop familiar with the city to identify the key projects and milestones in their field that are proposed from now until 2030, along with the barriers and opportunities to achieving climate neutrality that are linked to these milestones. The power of the workshop is that it places multiple perspectives from diverse thematic directorates on the ‘horizon’ at once – thus allowing team members to instantaneously absorb a wide range of perspectives in a single glance at the map. It enables a conversation to be generated about gaps, stakeholders, cross-cutting levers and strategies for how to overcome key barriers across the ‘silos’. The workshop can be run many times over to update the conceptual map, or to work with different stakeholders. The process invites participants to visually identify any gaps or weaknesses as they review the map out to 2030.

We have seen this at play in several cities which have deployed the methodology with stakeholder, or who have put the map on their office wall to remind them of where they started in this journey.



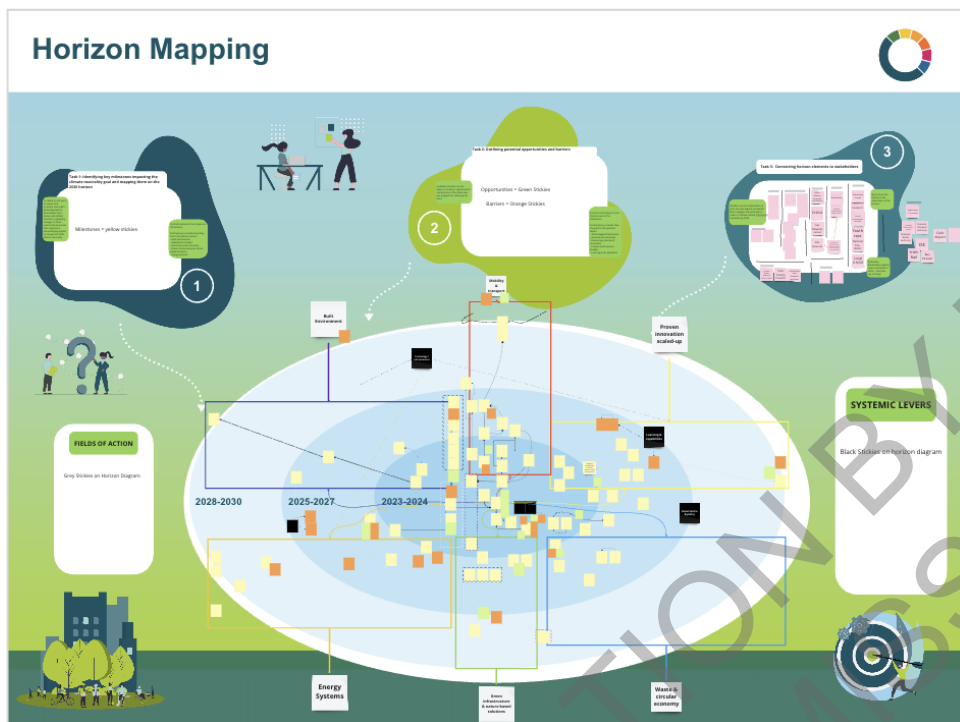


Figure 8: Horizon Mapping – an example

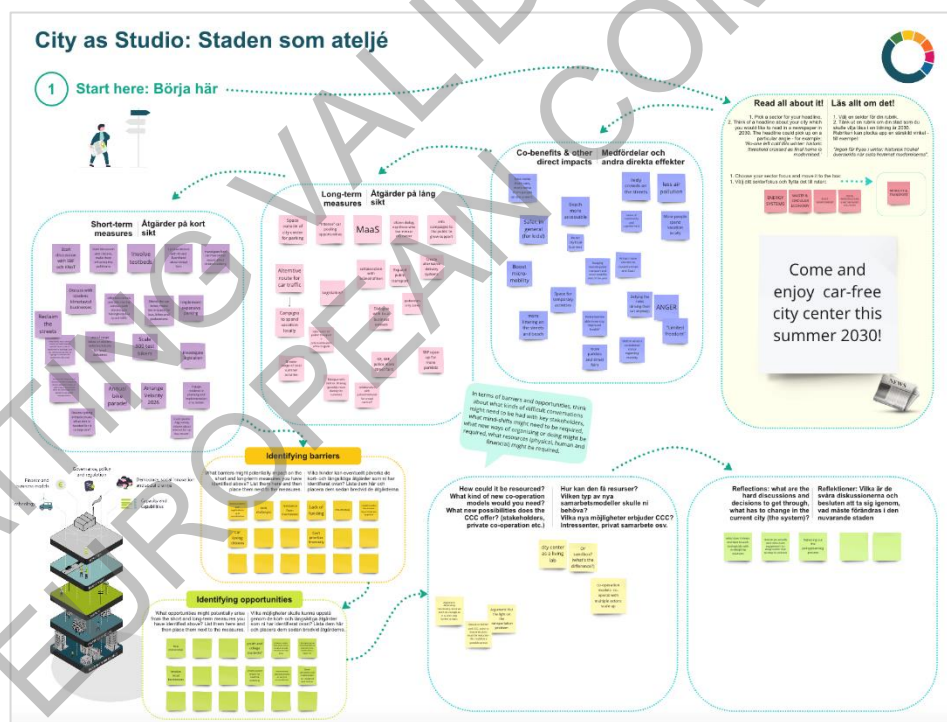


Figure 9: City as Studio – back casting local language example

Similarly, for cities close to completing their CCCs the City as Studio workshop and the related Transversal Impact Pathways workshop helps cities identify where the synergies, co-benefits and inflection points are in each of their impact pathways – as well as across impact pathways. The exercise asks of participants to consider what success looks like for climate neutrality in 2030 and to work back from this moment, considering for example the key inflection points along the way where opportunities



for building consensus, strengthening financing, the policy environment, the programmatic conditions and how these can be seized.

Some cities have used the outputs of the SNAP process directly in their CCCs, while for others, it has given them a stronger appreciation of the core concepts at play in the Mission, providing a rare opportunity for city teams to work together on sensemaking and mapping activities, while also providing CAs with a strong sense of where further support is needed.

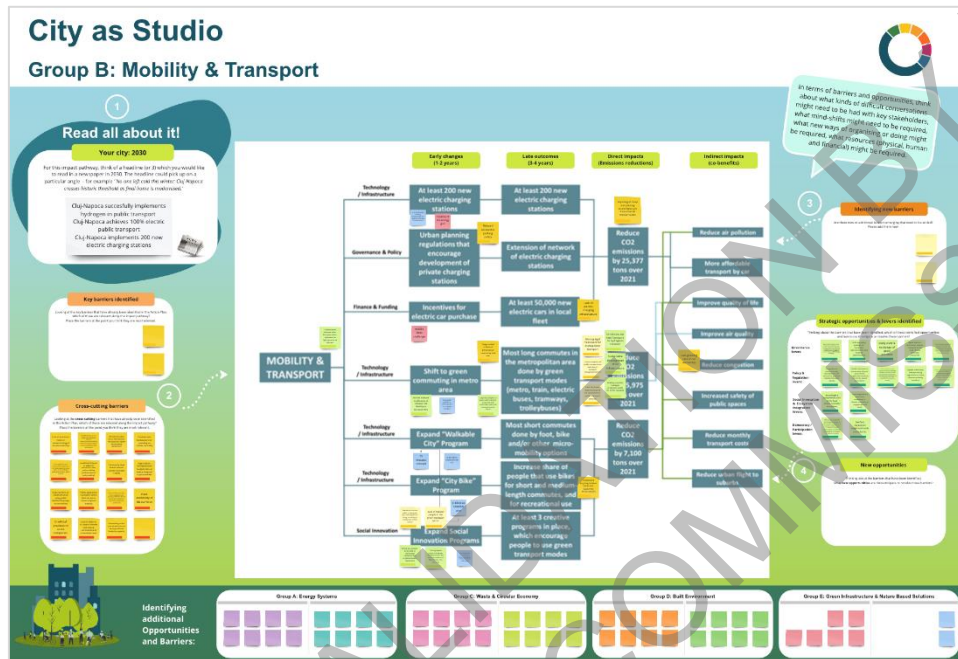


Figure 10: City as Studio – transversal example

5 Conclusion

The development and subsequent deployment of the Support Needs Assessment Process has demonstrated that cities are always 'in the driving seat' in a capacity and capability building environment and in the context of their own priorities and demands on their time. Yet cities also need support and guidance where necessary, to help them remain on track within the programme, while respecting each city's timeframe and pacing.

When cities are open and willing to engage in workshopping to help them navigate specific elements of the programme, the SNAP workshop series has proven a powerful tool to:

- Open up concepts to city teams that had been unclear;
- Allow the city team to work with each other – often appreciating detail within their own team that they had hitherto not grasped;
- Providing them with the methodologies to enable them to further explore these themes internally and externally with other team members and with wider stakeholder groups;
- Enabling cities unfamiliar with the concept of systemic transformation to grasp the power of this approach to achieving climate neutrality and to begin to identify pathways for how this could be applied at city level;
- Allow city teams to hone in on key problematic concepts or issues for them in relation to their city – or in relation to understanding the programme as it applies to reaching climate neutrality by 2030.

Cities will always be able to return to the SNAP methodologies where they want to assess a snapshot of their progress in their journey while also being inherently systemic. It is therefore a key tool for city advisors in working with cities in working with key NZC concepts from a high level through to levels of increasing granularity.

For NetZeroCities, the SNAP series has been invaluable to:

- Enable city advisors to better understand what the cities needed next, or in the near future and what might be needed down the track;
- Target practical support and guidance for working within the CCC drafting process – with the aim of developing robust and investible plans for reaching climate neutrality by 2030;
- Providing key insights to support the design and development of City Support Groups and methodologies to enable peer-to-peer support, structured challenge working and collaborative working among Mission Cities. City Support Groups (SGA1 WP2) are formed by City Advisors, City Support Officers and key specialists to work closely together to support cities.

As an adaptable tool, SNAP will be able to be deployed to refocus cities on the stage they are at in their journey in future, for example, on implementation, on learning, on CCC (re)submission, or on re-taking the snapshot of progress and reappraising the journey at its most holistic level.



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