Mid-term infographics on city interaction

Deliverable D13.4

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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
CKIC	EIT Climate KIC
FTE	Full time equivalent

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Summary

The purpose of deliverable D13.4 is to provide a summary of the interactions with cities, particularly those of the City Advisors (formerly known as City Guides).

This document includes several infographics which describe these interactions in addition to explanatory text.

The interactions of City Advisors with cities have been designed to support cities in their journey through this Mission and through the NetZeroCities programme. CAs have worked with cities at a range of different intensities but always at the pace of the city.

City Advisors have worked to design and deliver a support needs assessment process with the support of the wider consortium so that cities' needs could be better understood, and so that cities could be oriented effectively into the programme. A key priority was to identify and prioritise the way forward for cities in developing their Climate City Contracts. This process is ongoing and cyclical, and CA support reflects this cadence (moving from intensive, CCC focused activity to, for example, focusing on capabilities, peer to peer or city-specific challenge support).

The city journey has many variables, and CAs' support in this is designed to be responsive while also providing support for cities needing more guidance to remain on track within the Programme. The various end-points at which cities find themselves within the programme may have a greater or lesser involvement of CAs depending upon their own needs and the other programme support available. In this, some cities have used facilities such as the portal more intensively than others, while other cities have been more light touch in accessing specific nodes of support across the programme.

The modalities by which CAs provide support recognise the different paths through which cities undertake their journey, and reinforce the underlying principles including - trusted relationships, moving at the pace of the cities, agile, two-way learning and sharing and cities having a hand in shaping the support they require.

Keywords

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

1. Introduction. The fundamentals of City Support

1.1 The beginning of the journey. From 30 to 112

The NetZeroCities initiative commenced in October 2021 providing the Mission Platform for the 100 Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities by 2030 Mission. The programme had been originally designed to support 30 cities at a time, but following the publication of the Mission Implementation Plan, the number of cities to be supported increased to the full complement of 100 EU Mission Cities, plus 12 cities from non-EU countries.

Climate-Neutral Cities Advisors (City Advisors or CAs) were initially envisaged as 'City Guides' and were to be onboarded in two tranches - (M8-M17 - 2 city guides appointed to support the platform and the CCC process), (M18 – M44 - an additional 8 city guides appointed). This envisaged that each City Guide would be responsible for 3 pilot cities plus their twin cities (up to 12 cities in total).

As a result of the change in scope from 30 to 112 cities, and in the process of operationalising the programme, City Guides were renamed as Climate-Neutral Cities Advisors, and the focus of their roles amended to reflect the need to work with a larger number of 112 Mission cities. Hence, while the number of City Advisors remained the same, the city categorisation differed with 10 full-time equivalent CAs working with 11-12 Mission cities each, including pilot cities, plus some additional non-Mission city pilot cities where needed.

The initial 2 FTE CA positions were filled in accordance with the envisaged timeframe, with the following 8 FTE CAs recruited before M12 to ensure that Mission cities had the support needed to start the Climate City Contract (CCC) process.

Under SGA 1, a further four CAs were agreed to be appointed by CKIC and EUC and these city advisors were successfully recruited in M21 – M24, bringing the total number of FTE CAs to 14, and the number of individuals engaged to 17.

In addition, a new role was developed – that of City Support Officers – and four roles were identified as required. Three of the four positions have now been recruited.

1.2 Designing methodologies to support cities

The first two CAs were appointed by Eurocities and worked closely with consortium partners to develop a methodology for understanding the needs of cities within Mission. This was originally broadly envisaged as a support needs assessment under T1.3. including desk-based research and some form of city engagement, but the detailed methodology was to be developed as a first step in this process.

The revised process was stepped out in the Periodic Technical Report Part B (Dec 2022) with specific reference made to the expanded scope of the support needs assessment to cover 112 cities rather than 30 in relation to T1.3.2 and T1.3.3 (page 15 of PR1). It is not intended to delve into detail on the Support Needs Assessment Process (SNAP) in this deliverable (Deliverable D1.8 addresses the SNAP methodology specifically), rather to show how the SNAP methodology has enabled CAs to support cities in a range of ways throughout their journeys to climate neutrality to date.

While the process of understanding and developing a methodology to assess city support needs was underway, there was also a need to consider how 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)?

Therefore, in addition to working to develop the support needs assessment methodology, the first EuC CAs worked with the WP 13.2 lead to devise a methodology for allocating cities to city advisors. The

methodology was tested and refined with wider consortium partners, and finally, once all original 10 FTE CAs were on board, with the CA group.

The methodology was supported by the following principles:

- The pan-European nature of the project meant that cities should be able to be easily facilitated to work across national boundaries (as well as within them);

- Language was an important criterion, but recognising that covering all the official languages of the cities involved in the Mission would be impossible, it could not be the only criteria for allocation;

- Where it made sense, location of city advisors could be taken into account (including their own regional knowledge);

- Past engagement with individual cities where ties were already in place should be considered;

- Each City Advisor would need to be supported in their work with the cities – and so city advisors organised themselves as lead and followers (ie 2 CAs per city);

- Allocations should not duplicate structures already in place (for example existing funded national networks).

The allocation of CAs resulted in small groupings of CAs working together to support each other in leader-follower structures in an agile manner to suit the needs of the cities.

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, 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.

The methodology development process included three development stages to create the SNAP methodology, in addition to a preparatory stage to receive, work with, and synthesise the cities' EOI data in order to understand what it revealed about each city and trends across the cohort.

The three SNAP development stages were:

- Stage A: City Dossier development and provision for each City Advisor;

- Stage B: Producing internal benchmarking data;

- Stage C: Detailed methodology development of the engagement component of the Support Needs Assessment Process.

SNAP began being rolled out in September 2022 and continued to be delivered intensively in its initial phase until the end of April 2023.
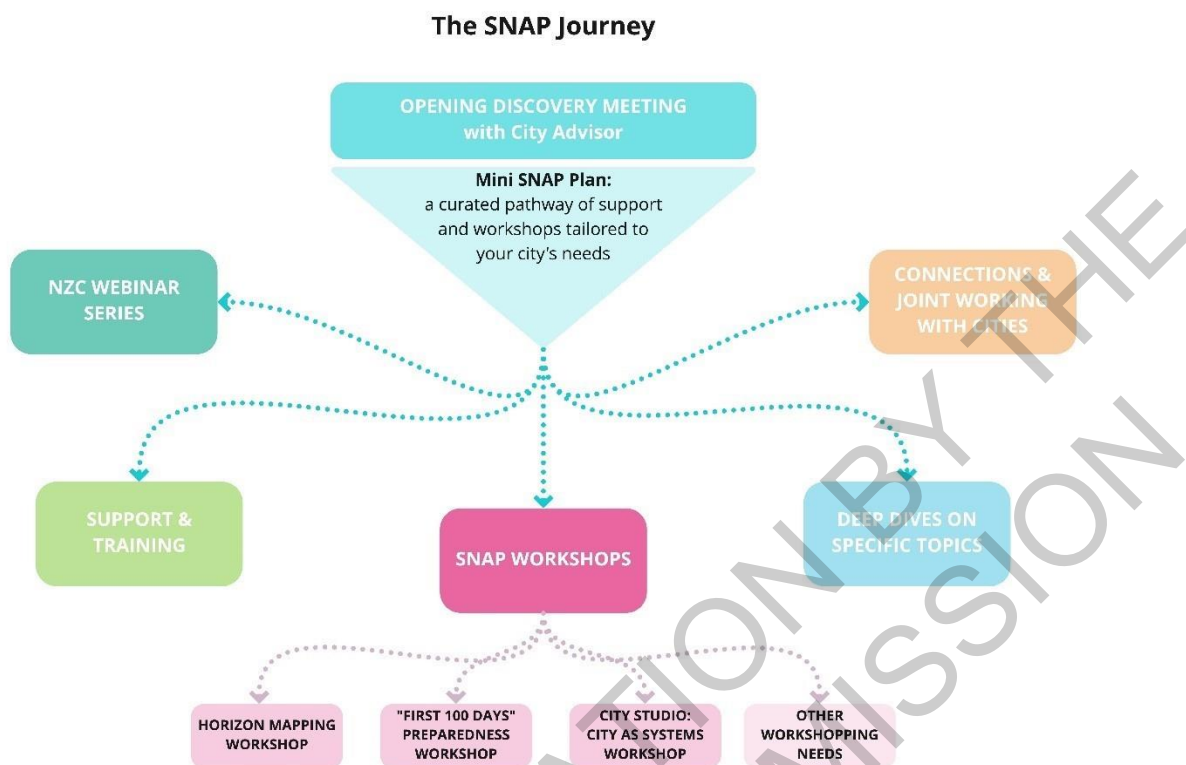
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Figure 1: The SNAP journey

1.3 The role of Climate Neutral City Advisors

The appointment of the first two city advisors triggered an immediate process to better define the role of CAs in relation to cities.

In parallel to designing the SNAP methodology, city advisors began to identify the core points at which they would be called upon to work with cities, or where they would proactively want to engage with cities, and with the wider consortium (beyond the initial programme development phase).

The City Advisor role was initially encapsulated in a three-phrase sentence:

- **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.

As the SNAP methodology rolled out it became clear that there was an additional core function that CAs were playing with respect to cities which was to:

- **Orchestrate** – deep dive workshops for cities on key thematic areas.

These four pillars of the City Advisor role (modalities) continue to represent the core of CA work. As new Mission elements have been rolled out (the PCP, for example), CAs have worked with cities through one of these four modalities. City Advisors have also played a 'critical-friend' role in cases

where cities have needed support to remain on track within the programme (under the 'Advise' modality) and in relation to providing feedback on cities' CCCs.

In relation specifically to the PCP programme, City Advisors were able to emphasise and signpost the upcoming PCP details, while encouraging cities to think about how a pilot might benefit them. Once the PCP calls opened, CAs are strictly hands-off, referring all questions to the official pilot key point of contact channel. After the first round of pilots were announced, CAs once again signposted non-pilot Mission cities to the website highlighting which pilots had been funded, to consider how they might tailor their possible future pilot application.

City Advisors have also been invited to the PCP Bootcamp phase of the first pilot programme. Depending upon the pilot and local arrangements, CAs have played various roles within the PCP team as appropriate. City advisors will continue to support the cities with their pilots as part of the wider city support.

It is important to note that in addition to the city-facing role, CAs also have an important role to play as part of the NZC platform The connection between CAs and the platform is not static, and city advisors have developed a governance structure to enable two-way engagement across the platform so that dynamic involvement and engagement of CA expertise and city-derived information is at play in key decisions across the board. While city-facing work is the core to the role of city advisors, this inward-facing interplay in the governance and operations of NZC has supported variously the design of the capabilities programme, the content, pace and intensity of city-engagement activities such as webinars and summers schools to align better with cities, the design and roll out of city support groups, (see s1.4) the CCC process (including internal support mechanisms, design of informal review process, development of the completeness check), and in designing sessions for the annual conference – reflecting the demands of cities for both policy and peer-to-peer working). City Advisors work where needed to highlight issues requiring resolution (and contribute to development of solutions pathways) such as on the concept of the GHG baseline. This approach strengthens the overarching governance of the platform, ensuring it remains agile and in touch with cities' needs.

1.4. Working together to meet the cities' needs

From the outset the City Advisors formed a strong team and took co-design as a core approach to innovating methodology and ways of working. This has involved working closely across the five T13.2 partner organisations to co-ordinate, co-design and work together to support the cities. The CA team uses a 'matrix management' approach to collaboration and ways of working, with smaller groupings to support individual cities, as well as sharing and synthesising the priorities and needs of all 112 cities to help to shape focus areas for responding to cities' needs.

The CA team also liaises with the WP leads and others across the consortium as needed, in relation to both programmatic elements and specific city needs.

Building on this collaborative approach and on the learnings from the initial engagement with the cities through SNAP, it became clear that to support the cities on the deeper challenges they face on their journey to climate neutrality would need an agile model - bringing key specialists together to work closely with city advisors to create City Support Groups - in particular to support peer-to-peer working and cohorts of cities tackling common challenges, as well as deeper dives on thematic and transversal topics.

City advisors need to remain the key orchestrator in relation to the cities, but also need to be able to work agilely and collaboratively with the specialists to design and tailor the support to cities at the time it is needed. This required that the leadership and responsibility of the City Support Groups be shared between city advisors, as represented by one of the Eurocities City Advisors, and specialists, to align with the work package responsibilities under the SGA (SGA WP2). The City Support Groups are being co-designed by city advisors and the wider consortium under SGA1 WP2. As SGA1 is a separate Grant Agreement, further detail on City Support Groups will be provided under deliverables for this Grant Agreement.

While primarily the City Advisor role is focused on working with the individual cities and their transition team, cities have also requested on occasion for CAs to present, or be otherwise involved in, stakeholder and wider engagement activities. This points to the way in which CAs are perceived by cities. The influence of CAs on cities is perhaps hard to gauge in this context, yet the overarching goal of the platform is to support cities in achieving climate neutrality through a just, smart transition. The concept of the transition itself requires an understanding that ways of working, ways of understanding and ways of acting will also need to be aligned in support of achieving climate neutrality. One benefit of having a dedicated city advisor for cities is the potential for CAs to influence the culture within administrations and stakeholders alike – to foster the necessary cross-cutting culture and to highlight where siloed-working could be hindering this meta goal. While it is still anecdotal, there is emerging evidence that working with cities on the detail of their CCCs prompts thinking within the city about which investments/project portfolios are 'climate investments' and which are not – and where the balance lies now, versus into the future. This strategic challenge links directly to the extent to which cities have embraced climate neutrality as a core organising principle in all effort.

The City Advisors with WP13 also liaise with the EC Mission team on a regular basis, both as an opportunity for sharing insights: on the work with the cities, updates from the Mission team and connections/synergies with other EC initiatives.
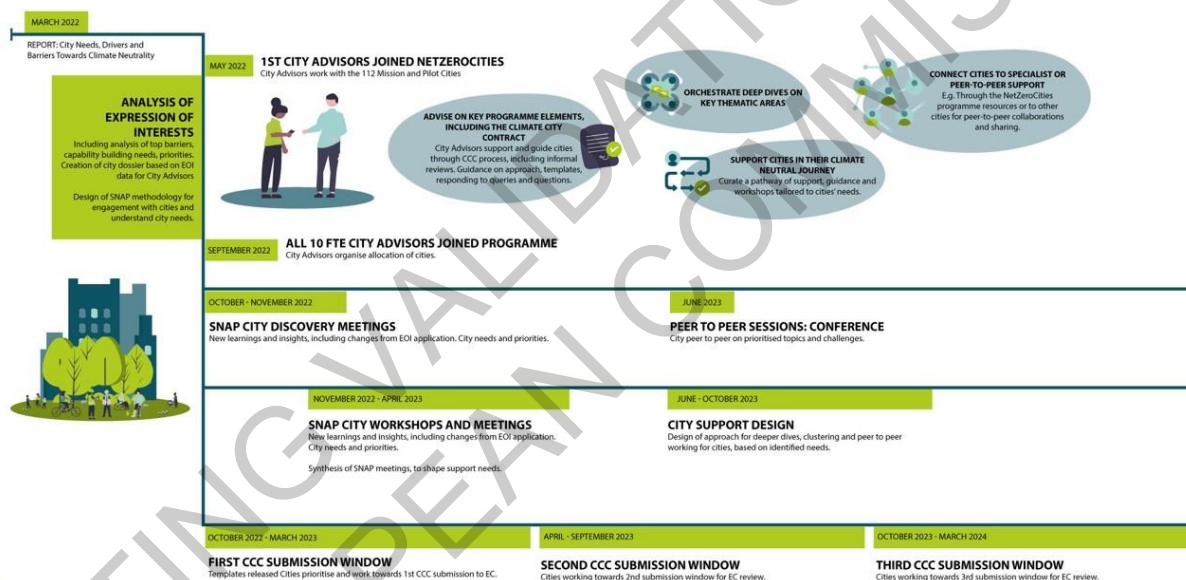

Figure 2: Understanding city needs

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2 Pathways to support: implementation

2.1. Outcomes from first SNAP roll-out

It was clear from the initial discovery meetings with cities 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.

This is in accordance with a core principle of SNAP – to start the process where cities are - rather than trying to impose artificially from outside the city's needs. The needs of cities evolve however, and CAs have also identified the need for a process that enables city advisors to quickly capture where the city finds itself along its journey at any given time.

A mini-SNAP or SNAP review process is being developed currently 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, CAs 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.

With regard to requests for peer-to-peer support from individual cities, each CA has taken this information on board and the CA group has collectively liaised in order to, firstly:

- Identify the number of issues where cities have asked for peer-to-peer engagement;
- Identify potential pathways for these issues.

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.

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100 CLIMATE NEUTRAL CITIES' INDICATIVE JOURNEY

The quantity and distribution of cities in this graph are not exact, but indicative to give an idea of the flow and movement of cities throughout their journey.

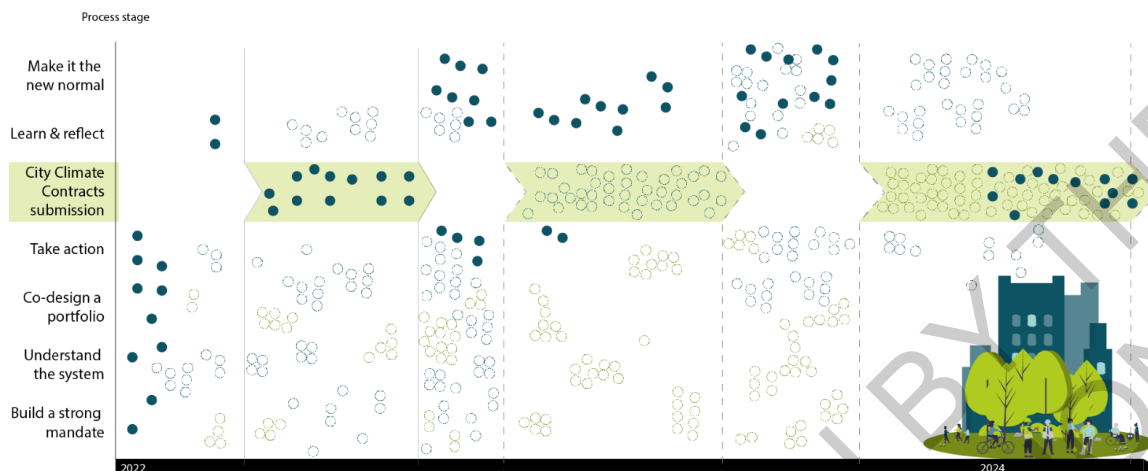LEGEND: ● Window 1 cities ○ Window 2 cities ○ Window 3 cities

Process stage

- Make it the new normal
- Learn & reflect
- City Climate Contracts submission
- Take action
- Co-design a portfolio
- Understand the system
- Build a strong mandate

2022   2024

Figure 3: Mission Cities – indicative journeys in the programme

2.2 Wider support involving CAs

A key learning from this intensive SNAP roll-out phase was that cities engaging with the methodology often wanted to use it internally with others within the city administration or with wider stakeholders. This underlined the importance of the methodology being both replicable and scalable.

At the same time as the SNAP methodology was being rolled out, the NZC portal was being operationalised (officially going live in June 2022). A key ongoing function for city advisors is to signpost to NZC resources and activities. The portal is the primary space for these resources, and CAs used the opportunity of discovery meetings to reinforce NZC messaging about the existence and availability of resources and functionality of the portal.

From the outset cities were able to register on the portal to access resources, webinars, create or join groups.

City Advisors have been variously involved in working with cities on the portal, along the principle of being driven by cities' needs. For example, for German cities it was important for them that their CA be involved in the portal group established by the German cities, whereas for other cities, if they are working in a portal group it is either independently, or specifically for city officers (rather than wider support).

Another ongoing signposting function for city advisors is to highlight for cities when webinars are being planned and where to find recordings for webinars, along with the location of new resources as they come on stream.

2.4 A focus on: Supporting the CCC process

A significant part of the role of CAs over the first year of engagement has been to support cities in their development of Climate City Contracts. As an innovative governance tool, the CCC includes three parts (the Commitments document, the Action Plan and the Investment Plan), and necessarily involves the city working with stakeholders within the city using a systems-based approach to governance and implementation. The CCCs vary in several important ways from existing approaches to city climate action plans which are germane to the way in which CAs have supported them. These include:

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- The concept of the Climate City Contract as a document for people that clearly defines the commitments of the city but also key stakeholders within it to achieve climate neutrality by 2030;

- The commitments document being a key communication tool while also being something which demonstrates real (preferably tangible) commitment by being signed by the city and by key stakeholders;

- The investment plan acting as a bridge for the city administration, but also other stakeholders to encapsulating and understanding the investment needed to reach climate neutrality;

- The idea that the CCC should focus on what is not already being undertaken through other measures and means (e.g. SECAPs) – thereby reflecting that this process is not designed to supplant pre-existing city processes, but is one which extends climate action to embrace all its citizens and stakeholders, recognising that it is a journey where everyone must play a part;

- The notion of a programme baseline – enabling progress in the CCC to be tracked against a recent inventory rather than against historic baselines such as the common baseline year of 1990;

- The understanding of what climate neutrality means in the context of the programme, and what residual emissions might also entail for cities.

These points were the focus of considerable work for CAs both in face-to-face meetings with cities, but also in working with the wider consortium and the EC to clarify, resolve and in some cases identify solutions to questions they gave rise to. An overarching roadblock often faced by cities was how the innovative approach under the CCC could align with internal and pre-existing ways of working on emissions reductions and related areas (climate justice, open data, adaptation etc).

In general, the process by which CAs worked with cities to support them in their CCC process, was to use the Climate Transition Map as the core orientation, working with cities in the following ways:

- Using the SNAP methodology to understand where they are in their journey of understanding the system, working with stakeholders, working with city data (GHG, financial and other related data), and cities' understanding/preparedness to engage with key concepts such as the transition team, impact pathways, portfolios of action, fields of action and levers of change;

- Offering and facilitating SNAP workshop modules on the CCC Action Plan, Transition Team and the Investment Plan;

- Liaising with finance colleagues to organise IP Coaching sessions, and participating in these – making the connections to other parts of the CCC;

- Answering specific questions related to the CCCs, or where we could not answer these, coordinating these with our NZC colleagues via an internal process for them to be answered by the right specialist;

- Designing and delivering workshops sometimes in concert with specialists on specific aspects of the CCC process (for example, on involving stakeholders, the transition team etc);

- Reviewing early written material from cities and providing feedback in the capacity as a 'critical-friend';

- Arranging for, and being part of, an informal review process on CCC drafts (the review process organised by specialists);

- Meeting with the city with the review feedback and working with them to understand it and to advise on incorporating elements into revised drafts;

- Providing general signposting to webinars, emails, resource guides for cities on the CCC.

CAs worked with the consortium to resolve more challenging questions (as highlighted above), internally and with cities – for example, holding workshops with cities to better understand their position on key issues, and to co-create ways to integrate the CCC process into the city's understanding and approach to climate neutrality.

As cities have engaged with the opportunities for submitting their CCCs in different phases/timeframes, the work with individual cities varies considerably depending upon when and whether they intend to submit a CCC imminently. These submission timeframes (windows) are set by the EC Mission team with two such windows occurring per year.

The process by which cities moved from considering a general intention to submit at a particular time, and the decision whether to delay or continue with meeting this deadline has a number of inflection points:

- The city team having an in-principal commitment to aim for a particular timeframe (and orienting work to meet this);

- Matching the city internal ambition with levels of resourcing to carry out the work;

- The detailed process of working with the CCC guidance and templates (and the range of questions and queries this throws up);

- Consideration of internal and external roadblocks that emerge to cities moving forward with their timing ambition (these often emerge quite late in the process);

- Aligning key stakeholders to work with the city in finalising the documents – in particular committing to actions and agreeing to sign the CCC within the timeframe;

- Aligning formal approval processes with the mechanics of the submission window (here, some cities have required lengthy internal approval timeframes).

A good indication that cities are seriously engaging with the scale of the task at hand in embracing the CCC as an innovative governance tool is the extent to which they are asking technical questions about the process or the templates. While the questions asked and answered during the lead-up to the first window submission show a clear peak that coincides with those cities that decided to submit, in subsequent windows it is expected that we will see similar peaks in the lead up to the submission deadline. However, it is also likely that cities will take the opportunity to learn from each other and from the existing answers that have already been made available – meaning that the number of questions to be asked in future windows may be comparatively lessened.

Some cities have made strategic decisions not to move forward with the CCC until other key processes have been completed or internal resources made available. These include completing SECAPs, C40 Climate Action Plans, local, regional or national elections, local consultations on threshold issues (such as bus infrastructure). As well, many cities have sadly dealt with high intensity disasters locally and regionally (flooding, fires, storms, earthquakes and heat domes). These unplanned interventions have set many cities back in their timeframes.
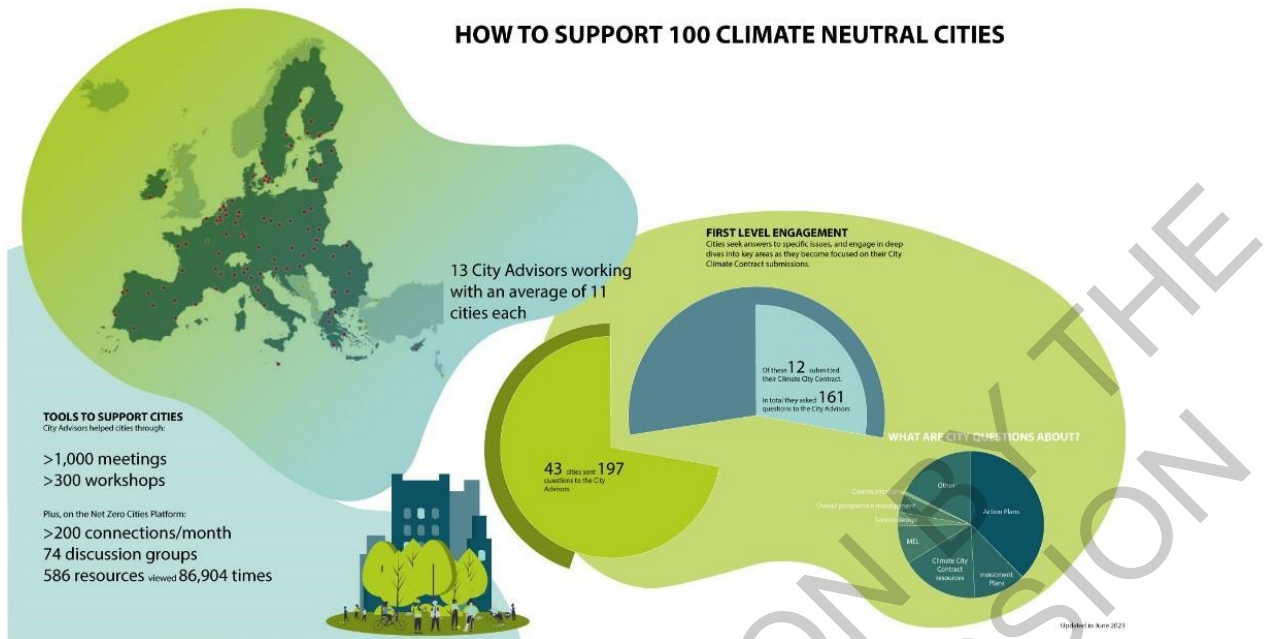
Figure 4: Focus on CCC support

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3 Conclusion

The process of city advisors engaging with cities has revealed some key insights which are important learnings for any scale-up process. These include:

- Starting where the city is at in their journey (not imposing) and at their pace (but also recognising where cities need support to remain on track in the programme);

- Listening to cities, understanding their context and avoiding assumptions;

- Working in an agile manner to respond to cities' needs;

- Building trust as a key ingredient to working more closely together;

- Recognising that as the process evolves, so do the demands and even the appropriate responses – thus the need to avoid rigidity;

- City Advisors are generally at their best when working collaboratively and with co-creation at the heart of key innovations (in small teams and as a larger group involving specialists);

- Bringing out the best in every individual means recognising that as we have done with the cities, so with the CA team – bringing together a blend of skills, experience and expertise and cultural context to work in an environment of mutual respect and empowerment within matrix management framework.

As the NZC initiative moves into an even more intensive period of working with cities, there will continue to be new insights that emerge from working closely with cities on an individual basis, but also in groups – whether this is via peer-to-peer networks or in NZC focussed opportunities spanning learning, reflecting, sharing, piloting, implementing and innovating. The platform will continue to draw on the work of city advisors to reflexively improve the offer.

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