



NET ZERO CITIES

Annual report on Platform performance no^o1

Deliverable D3.5

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Abbreviations and acronyms

Acronym	Description
WP	Work Package
NZC	NetZeroCities
SGA1	Specific Grant Agreement 1
FTE	Full time equivalent
CA	City Advisor
SNAP	Support Needs Assessment Process
CCC	Climate City Contract
PCP	Pilot City Programme
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
TLP	Twin Learning Programme

Summary

The purpose of deliverable D3.5 is to provide an annual report on the performance of the NZC One-Stop Shop Platform, summarising interactions with cities and support provided by the City Advisors and the online Portal for the duration of the entire NZC Grant Agreement.

Keywords

Mission, Platform, Portal, Services, User, Knowledge, Collaboration



Introduction

This deliverable provides the first annual report on the performance of the Mission Platform, following launch in September 2022 (NZC Milestone 5, *Platform & Portal Go-Live*). It provides a summary of service evolution and delivery via the City Advisor (described as ‘City Guides’ in the NZC Grant Agreement) team, who are the lead contact with cities for the NZC programme, and the web Portal which is the NZC digital interface with cities.

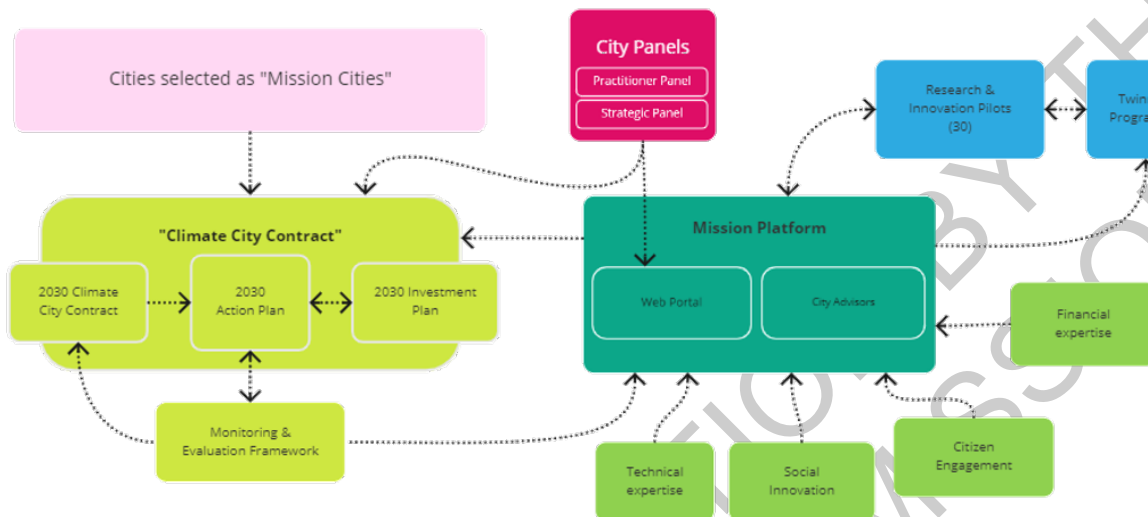


Figure 1: Mission Platform structure

While several overlapping definitions of the ‘Mission Platform’ are currently in use, this report does not refer to the platform as a synonym for the entire NZC programme, but rather, the more limited sense of the CAs and the Portal, as in the diagram above (adapted from the original NZC grant agreement). The Mission Platform therefore receives input from WP1 (CCC’s), WP2 (Monitoring and Evaluation), WP4 (Pilots), WP5 (Twins) and WP6-10 (inc. expertise on finance, social innovation, citizen engagement and technical solutions).

Accordingly, this report includes content on the Portal user interface, reported in detail via Deliverable 3.6 *Platform technical description and user guide*, and CA interactions, reported in detail within Deliverable 13.4, *Mid-term infographics on city interaction*; but does not include direct reference to the outputs of WP1, WP2, WP4, WP5 or WP6-10, which are reported elsewhere.

Following the structure of Deliverable 3.1 *Design and Specification for the Portal and Platform* (submitted M8) the report will address the following headings:

- **Portal Performance** – provide key analytics and commentary on how the portal has been used in year 1 and outline how these feed into its ongoing design and development
- **Service Delivery to Mission, Pilot and Twin Cities** – summarise how the Portal and CA team have delivered support to each cohort of cities
- **Back-End Systems** – summarise how the coordination of Platform operations evolved in practice, including both the Customer Relationship Management system and the creation of the project management themes structures in conjunction with WP11

1 Portal performance

1.1 Overview

The NZC Portal, <https://netzerocities.app>, serves as the online nucleus of the NZC community, functioning as an instrumental tool in facilitating cities transition to climate neutrality. Within the Portal, cities gain access to an array of learning resources and events, connect with peers who share common interests and challenges, create, and participate in focussed learning groups, and connect to a broader community of like-minded individuals. Additionally, the Portal serves as the space where cities manage their CCC submissions and other climate data sets.

As the Portal reached its first anniversary in the summer of 2023, an initial analysis of user data and analytics was conducted in parallel to an inform consultation process. This examination aimed to discern the most active user cohorts, as well as to assessing the utilisation patters and modalities of service. Furthermore, the analysis probed how the Portal has bolstered the Mission Platform's objectives. The insights from the data were combined with qualitative feedback to identify the main successes, challenges and opportunities moving forward.

Recognizing the ever-evolving nature of the NZC community's trajectory and needs, the services offered via the Portal are poised to adapt and progress in tandem with these dynamics. A comprehensive report of improvements and modification applied to Portal features are outlined in D3.6 *Platform technical description and user guide*. However, it is equally important to highlight the main achievements and growth pattern of the Portal and unpack the lessons learned that will steer its ongoing development.

1.2 Community growth

Since its inception, the Portal has successfully garnered a total of 2,685 registered users, of which 79% are city or local partner users (see fig. 2). This impressive growth represents a 56% increase on the number of registered users reported in deliverable D3.3 - the first One-Stop-Shop Platform report (March 2023). The robust increase in user registrations is an encouraging sign. This increase not only reaffirms the Portal's resonance with cities but also underscores its utility as a valuable tool among consortium partners. The fact that the Portal has been able to attract and engage this user base, particularly within the context of a new initiative, is suggestive of overall appeal and efficacy.

As part of ongoing efforts to gain a more comprehensive understanding of our user community, a deeper dive into user data will be a new area of focus. Specifically, the portal team will expand the exporting additional data to discern the geographical distribution of users and to better distinguish the interaction of Mission and Non-mission city users. These insights will enable us to refine and tailor our services further to better align with the diverse needs and profiles of our user base.

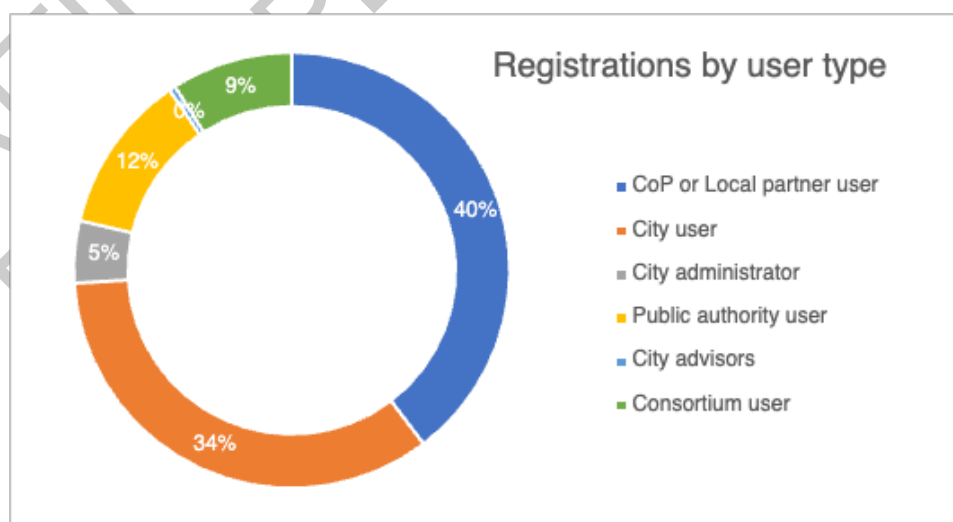


Figure 2: Portal Registrations by User Type



Valuable qualitative feedback gathered from Portal users suggests that the user experience of the Portal stands to be improved: navigation and signposting, user experience, and user onboarding. In September 2023, a series of quick win modifications were identified to improve these areas. Recognizing the significance of comprehensive onboarding, changes included a revision of the current onboarding module to more clearly present the offer of the portal and ensure new users have the knowledge to navigate confidently, these include a Portal Discovery Tour Guidebook and a video walkthrough tour, ensuring that users have ample support at their fingertips.

In continued efforts to improve the user experience, additional signposting will be introduced to support users with navigating the Climate Transition Map and knowledge resources interconnectivity, as well as overall graphic design improvements. Additional improvements have been identified however these will be supported by regular user experience feedback and consultation to ensure the Portal remains demand driven. This improvement work will be delivered under both NetZeroCities and SGA1 grant agreements.

1.3 Community engagement

Cumulatively, the portal pages have recorded 86,904 page views, with 33,202 unique views since its inception. These figures are promising and signal a substantial level of interest in the diverse content and features the Portal offers. Monthly connection statistics exhibit discernible peaks, particularly during project events and meetings, where connection numbers can range from 3,000 to 5,000 unique monthly visits. However, even during regular periods, the Portal records around 2,000 per month (see fig.3), the user base continues to expand steadily, with an approximate rate of 100 new registrations each month. It is important to emphasise that this growth has transpired without the launch of any promotional campaigns to date. This suggests the potential for even more substantial user influx once promotional efforts are initiated, further underscoring the Portal's appeal and its potential for increased engagement.

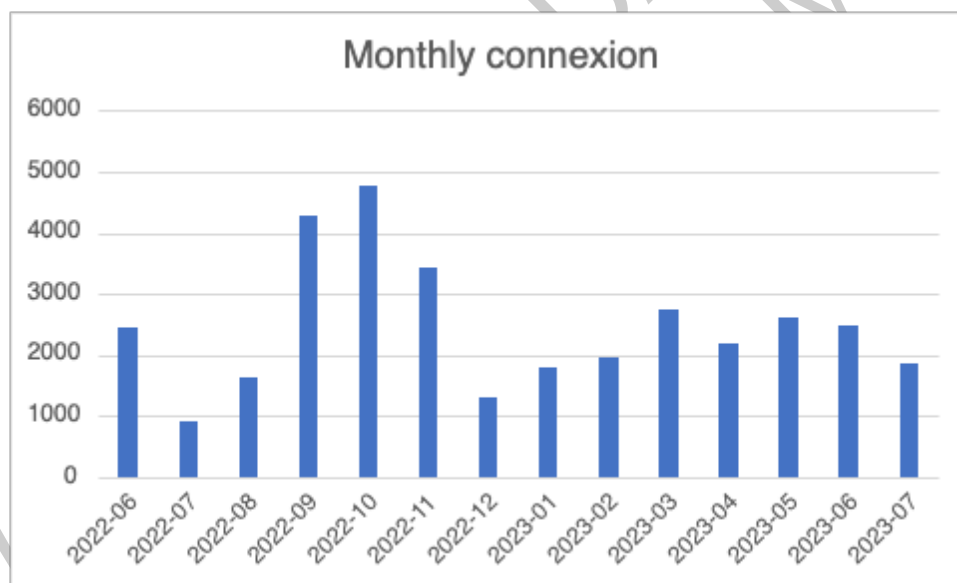


Figure 3 Monthly connections to portal June 2022 – July 2023

Nonetheless, while quantitative metrics paint a positive picture, the true strength of our community is measured by the depth of engagement and meaningful interactions that occur within the Portal. These interactions encompass user engagement through chat, the social media feed, utilisation of resources, and participation in various communal spaces. Although comprehensive data remains limited in assessing performance across these dimensions, it is notable that in comparison to other NZC online channels such as Instagram and LinkedIn, our engagement rates are notably lower. This disparity is partially expected, given that the Portal serves as a more focused and specialized space catering to a select group of users, and the frequency of content posting is inherently less frequent. However, we recognize the necessity of crafting a well-defined animation and engagement strategy aimed at augmenting interaction within the Portal, and this will be resourced under SGA1 (see section 3.4 below for detail).



To better track the detailed pattern of user engagements, a revised list of analytical indicators was created and will be monitored moving forward. Revised indicators place emphasis on key metrics such as the download rate of resources, engagement rate of posts (reactions in relation to views), bounce rate, etc. The data will support the Portal to evolve in a way that responds to needs and addresses bottlenecks and challenges faced by users.

1.4 P2P collaboration space

The Groups feature within the Portal represents the primary arenas for fostering peer-to-peer exchange and facilitating collaborative learning among our community members, encompassing NZC cities, Mission Cities, Pilot Cities, and soon-to-be-added Twin Cities. These groups serve as dedicated spaces for structured, ongoing interactions and collaborative initiatives, catering to various needs and objectives. The flexibility of the Portal accommodates both private and public groups, depending on the specific purpose and nature of the interactions.

Following the initial boom in June 2022 (see fig.4), during which 20 groups were created, new groups continue to be established with regularity, resulting in a current tally of 74. Moreover, it's noteworthy that the creation of new groups often coincides with events or in-person meetings, suggesting that these groups serve as conduits for perpetuating the learning and networking momentum generated during such gatherings.

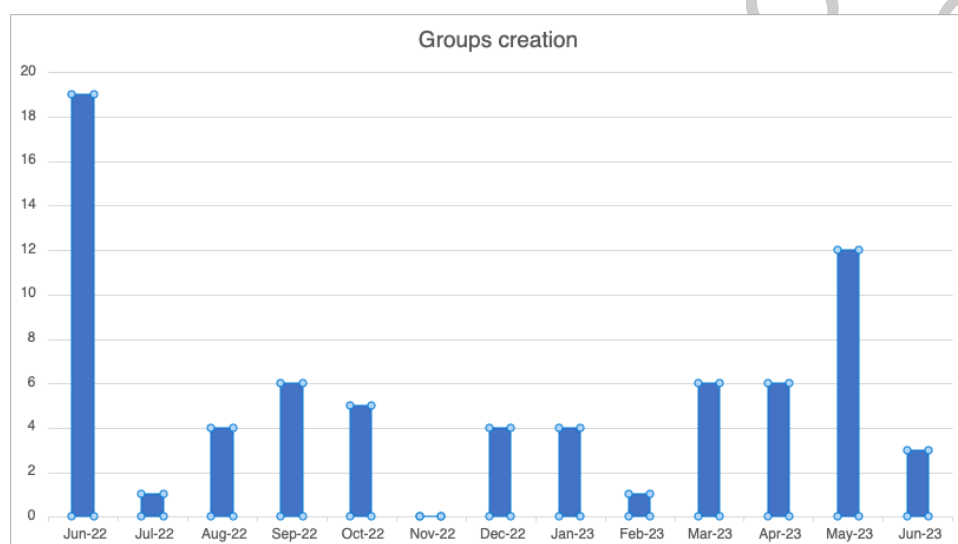


Figure 4: Portal group creation June 2022 – July 2023

Examples of groups created:

- Individual Mission Cities
- Pilot/Twin Cities
- Thematic clusters on multiple topics
- The Capability Building Programme modules
- Cities Mission initiatives
- Geographic clusters (e.g., by country)
- Content sharing for the Cities Mission conference

Recognising the pivotal role that groups play in facilitating peer-to-peer exchange, a significant step was taken in March 2023. During this period, a City Panel session was convened to discuss a range of updated and proposed Portal features. Following the feedback gathered from this collaborative approach, substantial improvements to the functionality of group pages were implemented in May 2023.



The primary objective was to enhance the online interactive spaces available to cities, transforming group pages into robust hubs for communication and collaboration. User feedback was collected from city practitioners, CAs and other NZC colleagues and the following features were introduced and/or improved:

- **A media gallery and file area were added** to facilitate information sharing and collaboration.
- **User experience was improved** through the reorganisation of features.
- **Tips tab** was added to offer detailed guidance on managing a group.

The enthusiasm surrounding the creation of numerous groups is encouraging. However, it is apparent that in many cases, the initial level of interaction and engagement within these groups tapers off over time. Additionally, some duplication of groups has been observed. These trends suggest that there is genuine interest in utilizing groups as spaces for focused interactions on specific topics or themes. Nevertheless, it is clear that further support is needed, particularly in the realms of group moderation and community management, to sustain and amplify these interactions.

In response to these observations, a trial approach is being launched through the Twin Learning Programme (due to go live in October 2023) to test new approaches to engagement. The primary objective of this trial approach is to explore new strategies to boost engagement, with a particular focus on assigning a dedicated Community Coordinator to each group. In addition to the Community Coordinator initiative, support materials for Programme Leads and Facilitators will also be developed to position key questions such as group animation, life cycle and animation activities. These resources are designed to empower community leaders and facilitators with the knowledge and tools required to effectively manage and invigorate their groups.

The ultimate aim is to foster vibrant, thriving, and sustained interactions within groups, making them valuable spaces for knowledge sharing, collaboration, and collective progress toward climate neutrality. The impact and reaction from the Pilot and Twin cities community will therefore be tracked with view to expanding the approach and guidance material across the Portal.

1.5 CCC submission & workspace

The CCC Submission pages were created in window one (March 2023) to provide a secure environment for Mission Cities, NZC Consortium reviewers and the EC to manage the upload and review of CCC Commitment, Action Plan and Investment Plan documentation. Further details of the workspace functionality are outlined in *D3.6 Platform technical description and user guide*, however, notable improvements to the user experience have been made for window two submissions (September 2023), based on feedback from window one, including:

- Checklist on city side: mandatory
- GHG Inventory added as a separate document type
- Progress bar added
- "Submission date" added
- Add a pop-up window on city view after they submitted to confirm again
- Add a button to open a blank email on outlook including all city contact points.

Further areas for improvement foreseen, include the connection with third-party climate data systems and establishing a clear vision statement on the approach.



SUBMISSION FOR CITY

Rome
Mission city, Pilot city

CONTACT POINT

[MANAGE CONTACT POINT](#)

STATUS OF SUBMISSION

LIST OF SUBMITTED DOCUMENTS

	COMMITMENTS	ACTION PLAN	INVESTMENT PLAN	CCC CHECKLIST	INVENTORY	OTHER	
<input type="checkbox"/> K01627_Framework_Creating_Sustaining_CoPs	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> K08712_Checklist_to_Evaluate_CoPs	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> K01627_Framework_Creating_Sustaining_CoPs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> K08712_Checklist_to_Evaluate_CoPs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> IRI October 13 APQC Webinar	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> flockler-feed-santa-monica-9bf4c0c6-d65b-4e73-a0...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

[Upload documents](#)

Inventory submission

Along with the above mandatory CCC (Commitments, Action Plan and Investment Plan) and the mandatory CCC Completeness Check, you have the optional possibility to upload an emissions inventory under the category "inventory". If you have recently submitted an inventory on CDP-ICLEI Track or MyCovenant (before 15th September 2023), then we can extract your city's inventory from either of these reporting platforms directly and no further action on your part is required. If you are not using any of these platforms and you would like to upload an inventory that supports your action plan, then you can directly upload it to the portal under "inventory". Please use the comment area under the submission space to indicate which inventory you would like to be considered along with your CCC – CDP-ICLEI Track (year), MyCovenant (year) or Self Uploaded Inventory (year).

Any other information you would like to make us aware of

Figure 5: City-facing CCC submission space

1.6 Knowledge offer

The specific offers of services to Mission, Pilot, and Twin cities are outlined below, but it is important to note that the Portal also hosts general knowledge services accessible to the entire NZC community, for both registered and un-registered users, in the Knowledge Repository.

The existing repository houses a total of 628 resources and qualitative feedback suggests these are critical resources to support cities in their transition efforts. These resources are accessible to the public via the general NZC website link and are not restricted via log-in to registered Portal users. Our commitment to enhancing the Knowledge Repository is evident in the effort made to categorize and accommodate a diverse range of resource formats. However, users have highlighted certain challenges, particularly regarding navigation, search functionality, and resource formatting.

As part of efforts to better serve the community, the Mission Platform is exploring strategies to provide enhanced support to resource authors and curators. This support may encompass aspects such as categorization, communication, design, and the creation of meaningful interlinkages between resources. By enhancing these facets, the aim is to create a more robust and user-friendly Knowledge Repository that empowers users with high-quality resources for their climate transition endeavours.

2 Service delivery for Mission Cities, Pilot Cities & Twin Cities

This section sets out a summary of the service delivery from CAs for Mission Cities, Pilot Cities and Twin Cities via staff within the NZC consortium and the portal. Please note the service specification for each city type is at different levels of maturity, reflecting the start date for Mission City service in May 2022 [M8], Pilot City services in March 2023 [M18] and Twin City Services in September 2023 [M24].

2.1 Service delivery for Mission Cities

Mission Cities receive support through the Mission platform to help them develop and implement their CCC, with targeted support from thematic expert services across the NZC consortium. Mission Cities



have received a wide range of support services for each phase of the CCC, depending on the city's readiness level, familiarity with systems innovation and local capacities and capabilities.

The CCC is an iterative process and designed to adapt to the unique context of each Mission City. CCCs are reviewed and adjusted on a periodic review cycle (1-2 years). The process is expressed through the Portal Climate Transition Map: <https://netzerocities.app/ClimateTransitionMap>

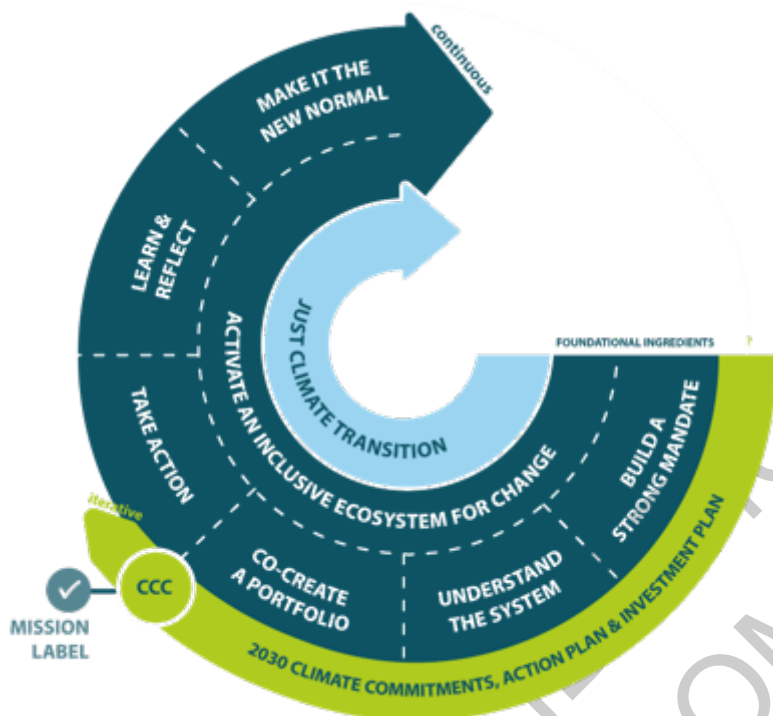


Figure 6: Climate Transition Map

2.1.1 Mission Cities & the City Advisor role

Currently, 10 full-time equivalent CAs work with 11-12 Mission Cities each. While the initial NZC Grant Agreement had planned for 2 FTE CAs in M8 and 10 FTE in M18, this was based on serving only 30 Mission Cities, rather than the actual requirement of 112. In response, NetZeroCities accelerated the recruitment of the entire team, ensuring that all 10 FTE CA positions (comprising 13 individuals, including several in part-time CA roles) were in place for the Go-Live of the Platform in September 2022 (M18) and assigned Mission Cities, using the methodology set out in D13.4.

CAs support their cohort of Mission Cities through their CCC process, connecting them to relevant NZC support services to develop their CCC. CAs also facilitate and initiate peer-to-peer exchange opportunities, actively monitoring evolving needs from Mission Cities to enable the Platform to develop tailor-made tools and services.

As envisioned in D3.1, CAs designed and conducted a supports needs assessment (T1.3.3) to understand the needs of cities within the Mission. Through the Technical Reporting PR1 document (December 2022) the scope of the support needs assessment was expanded to encompass 112 cities instead of the originally planned 30, as outlined in T1.3.2 and T1.3.3 (page 15 of PR1).

The Support Needs Assessment Process (SNAP) was developed as an agile two-way interaction between the city and the CA. SNAP (see fig.7) began roll-out in September 2022 and continued to be intensively delivered until April 2023. Out of the 112 Mission cities, all held discovery meetings, and approximately 70% of cities conducted one or more SNAP workshops. A mini-SNAP or SNAP review process is currently under development as part of the SGA Task T2.2.1.

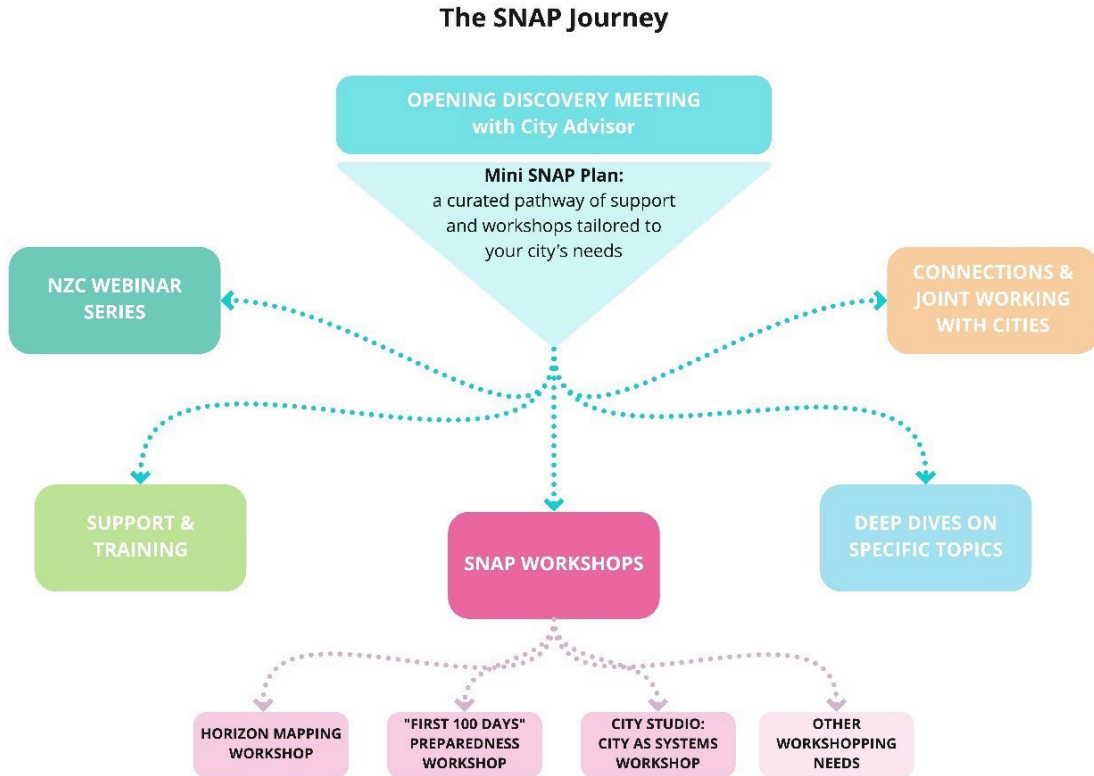


Figure 7: The SNAP journey

The design of SNAP methodology was the first step in engagement with Mission Cities and understanding city needs. Figure 8 outlines the journey Mission Cities with CAs starting with SNAP development.

CITY ADVISORS UNDERSTANDING CITY NEEDS

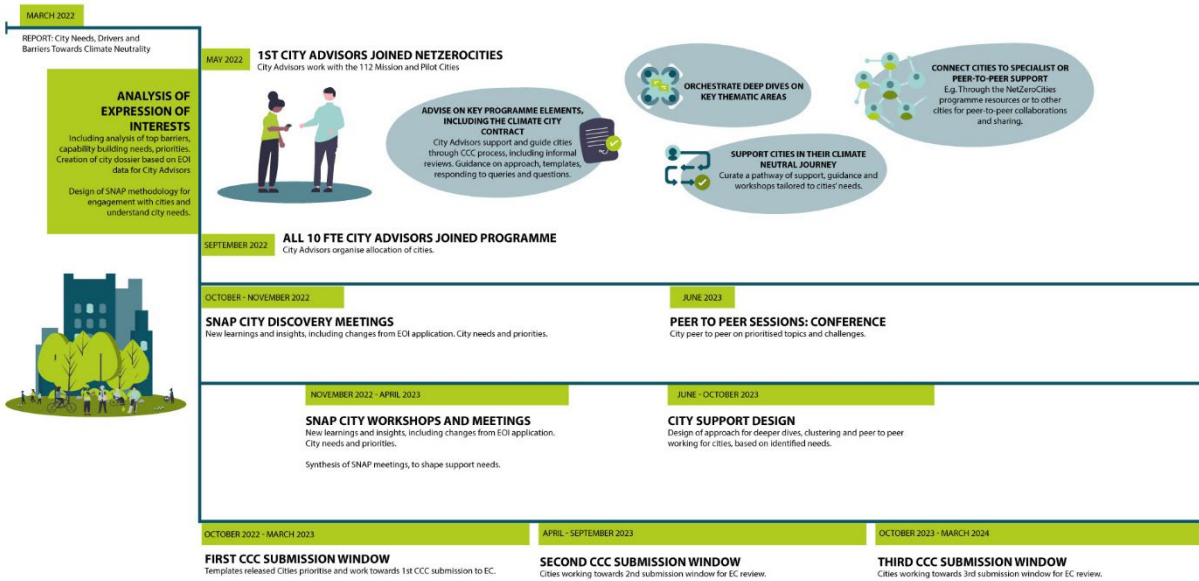


Figure 8: Timeline for Mission City support by City Advisors



Note that this report is not intended to provide detail on the SNAP and how the methodology has enabled CAs to support cities. Please see D1.8 *Report on support needs assessment for CCC*.

In general, the process by which CAs work with cities to support them in their CCC process, is 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;
- 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.

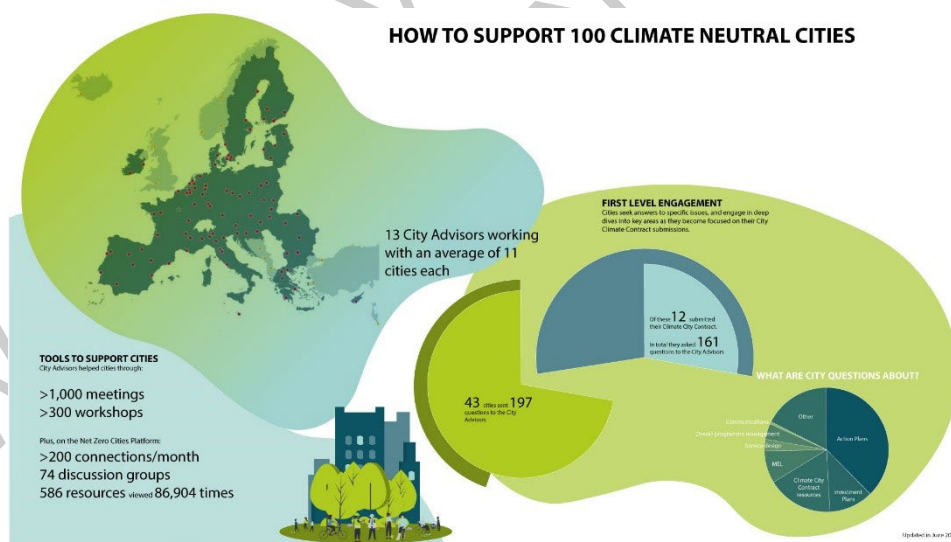


Figure 9: Focus on CCC support

2.1.2 The portal and Mission City service delivery

Following Mission Platform launch in September 2022, the portal has enabled CAs, WP1 and WP6-10 colleagues to support Mission Cities through:



- Hosting CCC resources including the CCC Resource Pack; Action Plan, Investment Plan and Commitments guidance documents and templates; CCC – Checklist
- Delivering and promoting CCC events including general information sessions, discussing key takeaways and deep dives on individual components of the CCC (see table 1)

Event	Date	Attendees
CCC output – Commitments	11/10/22	108
CCC output – Action Plans Sessions	19/10/22	127
CCC output – Investment Plan session	21/10/22	112
CCC Process, Commitments, and Governance	16/11/22	73
CCC Action and Investment Plans	17/11/22	67
CCC Process, Commitments, and Governance	23/11/22	98
CCC Action and Investment Plans	24/11/22	104
CCC Submission Info Session	06/03/23	55
CCC Series – Action Plan Takeaways from 1 st Submission Window	30/05/23	100
CCC Series – Investment Plan Takeaways from 1 st Submission Window	01/06/23	111
CCC Series – Commitments Takeaways from 1 st Submission Window	06/06/23	102
City-to-City CCC Exchange Session #1	24/07/23	27
City-to-City CCC Exchange Session #2	17/08/23	49
CCC Submission Info Session	04/09/23	39

Table 1: Online portal events from WP1 and WP6-10

- Providing access to a diverse range of resources, through the Knowledge Repository, produced by WP6-10
- Hosting the Capability building programme (developed by WP6-10 under Task 3.2.3 of the NZC Grant Agreement) through group pages, with individual groups for each module of the programme

2.2 Service delivery for Pilot Cities

In contrast to the iterative cycle of working with Mission Cities, work with the 25 pilot activities, representing 53 cities (Mission and non-Mission Cities), has followed a more linear process, from the call to submit applications through to project approval, management and closure and results dissemination.

2.2.1 Pilot Cities & the City Advisor role

Each CA is responsible for approximately three Pilot Cities. CAs works with Pilot Cities to:

- Identify needs for City Expert Support Facility allocation and assist with the application process
- Support the identification and coaching of city change makers
- Support the implementation of the pilot activities
- Support the planning and the delivery of the sensemaking / MEL activities
- Support with the planning and delivery of the City Learning programme

During the call for PCP applications, CAs were able to emphasise and signpost the upcoming PCP details to cities, while encouraging cities to think about how a pilot might benefit them. Once the PCP calls opened, CAs were 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.



CAs 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 and will continue to support the cities with their pilots as part of the wider city support.

2.2.2 Pilot Cities & the NZC Expert (WP6-10) Role

As reported under WP4 deliverables, the PCP team organised direct support to Pilot Cities from WP6-10 experts via the PCP Bootcamp. A tailored co-design process at start of PCP to help selected applicants increase the feasibility, ambition and impact of their proposed pilot activities. It offers direct expert and support tailored to the scope of the pilot activities. In Q2 2023, pilot cities supported were through thematic sessions and one-on-one support from internal NZC experts.

These activities will be further developed via the City Expertise Support Facility, which provides a bespoke response to utilise WP6-10 experts to meet PCP needs as they arise. This process is further detailed in D3.4 *Pilot City Expertise support process*.

2.2.3 The Portal & Pilot City Service Delivery

Under D3.1 Call & Grant Management module was envisioned in D3.1 to support the service delivery of the Pilot and Twin Cities programmes. However, it was not possible to deliver this module. Applications were developed and submitted on Amp Impact, an indicator management and performance tracking application built on the Salesforce platform. For the second call under SGA1, Plaza will be used. The portal development team will explore potential for integration of Plaza for future calls.

It was also envisioned under D3.1 that the portal would provide a tailor-made interactive space for PCP participants. Initial planning to create a space for Pilot Cities on the Portal was paused pending updates to features to improve functionality for peer-to-peer interaction and collaboration through groups. The necessary and appropriate updates to functionality for interactive spaces (e.g., group pages) have been made and the use of the Portal as a hub for PCP cities will be revisited for the second cohort of pilot cities under SGA1. This will allow time for more detailed planning around the way in which the Portal can best support cities in the PCP.

Existing Portal modules support WP4 in the delivery the PCP and directly support pilot cities through:

- Ability to access the NZC library of insights, information, best practices and innovation
- The Pilot Cities Guidebook and other associated documents in Knowledge Repository. This includes:
 - Information about timelines/journeys/expectations
 - Inspiration and orientation via case studies and examples to validate if their pilot activity ideas 'fit' the call and/or are innovative
 - Information about how Pilot Cities will interact with Twin Cities
- Online PCP info sessions (see table 2) including events to present the application process and to answer questions from cities.

Event	Date	Attendees
NZC Pilot Cities Programme: Ambition, Approach, Application	27/06/22	12
Pilot Cities – Refresher on the Ambition and Approach & Technical Information	05/09/22	99
Pilot Cities – Refresher on Eligibility and Assessment Criteria	07/09/22	73
Pilot City Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Info Session	08/09/22	61
Pilot Cities Programme Info-session: Ambition, approach and technical information – launch call	07/09/23	46
Pilot Cities Programme Info-session: Eligibility, Assessment Criteria & Submission platform	14/09/23	46



Pilot Cities Programme Info-session: Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning & Sensemaking	19/09/23	49
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Table 2: Online portal events from WP4

2.3 Service delivery for Twin Cities

As with Pilot Cities, the work with Twin Cities will follow a more linear process in contrast to the iterative cycle of working with Mission Cities. For the first cohort of Twin Cities, this is done as per the following timeline:

Milestone	Date
Launch of the NZC Twin City call	30/05/23- 30/06/23
Selection and matching (initial portfolio)	31/07/23 - 04/08/23
Consultation with Pilot Cities (for objection)	07/08/23 - 25/08/23
Communication with applicants (both selected and non-selected)	04/09/23
Deadline for non-selected applicants to submit feedback	18/09/23
Training for NZC facilitators	21/09/23
Official announcement of final portfolio of Twin Cities	25/09/23
Kick-off Twinning Learning Programme	28/09/23

Table 3: Twinning programme timeline

A total of 85 applications were submitted for the first Twinning Programme call and applicants went through a three-stage evaluation process:

- 77/85 applicants passed the eligibility criteria (Stage 1)
- 52/85 applicants passed the quality evaluation (Stage 2)
- 40/52 applicants were selected and paired with the Pilot Cities (Stage 3)

The 40 successful applicants will follow the Pilot Cities through their implementation.

2.3.1 Twin Cities and the City Advisor Role

Under D3.1, it was projected that CAs would lead regular P2P Pilot/Twin City collaboration meeting and facilitate periodic online meetings between representatives of the cities. However, this was premised on the CAs working with 30 Mission Cities only, rather than the 112 total in addition to Pilot Cities. CA capacity for work with the Twinning Programme is thus limited.

Facilitation will now be led by 12 NZC consortium members, four of which are City Support Officers whose primary function is to support CAs and the implementation and operation of City Support Groups. City Support Officers are responsible for 12 of the 25 Twin City exchanges and the remaining 13 will be led by consortium partners from various WPs.

2.3.2 The Portal & Twin City Service Delivery

Pilot and Twin City working is envisaged to take place in the Portal, via dedicated space in the group pages, in addition to planned online meetings and some in-person study and mentoring visits to facilitate learning between the cities.

The current plan of Twin City service delivery on the portal is as follows:

Twin Learning Programme Group (cohort 1): The group is open to all portal users but created specifically for the TLP stakeholders and is the main space for discussion, exchange and learning on the Programme. Content only appears in the feed of group members, however content published here is not private. Confidential content or learning material should not be shared in this feed/repository, however it can be used to communicate basic project material. The group may also be used by pilot or twin cities to share project highlights, photos, or key achievements with the aim of gaining visibility, inspiring others and initiating discussion. The group will be open for the duration of the cohort 1 Twin



Learning Programme plus six months. After this date, if the community is no longer active, the space will be archived.

Learning Pair Channels: 25 channels will be set up, one for each learning pair. The channels are private and the Facilitator/First City Representative will inform the User Success Manager of who requires access to each channel. The channel can be used to share documents, ask open questions, collectively problem solve, coordinate meeting follow up, track progress and learn. This space will not be introduced until after the initial onboarding of the portal to ensure users feel agency over the process and are not overwhelmed. These spaces will be open for the duration of the Twin Learning Programme plus three months. After this period, if the channels are inactive, they will be archived.

This approach will be trialled with the first cohort of Twin Cities and, if successful, replicated with future cohorts.

3 Back-end systems

The NetZeroCities grant agreement originally required (tasks 3.1.4, 3.2.1, 3.3.1) WP3 to design, build and operate a Platform organisational architecture, including operational workflows administered by a dedicated secretariat. This was elaborated within D3.1 *Design and Specification for the Portal and Platform*, which envisaged using a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system to manage:

- a database of NZC consortium members, city officers and all other service users
- internal workflows enabling CAs to coordinate support from other WPs
- external email contact with cities and other service users

However, D3.1 also emphasised the necessarily iterative design of all aspects of the Platform and the need for adaption once the service was in use. This was the case with the back-end systems, where our approach evolved following M8, when D3.1 was submitted and when the CRM system was launched, using HubSpot (identified as the preferred solution by WP3 and WP13).

3.1 Internal Workflows

In accordance with the designs set out in D3.1, in September 2022 (M12), the NZC WP3 team launched a NZC Expertise Matrix hosted in the CRM. This database provided detailed information on the areas of expertise, languages spoken, prior experience with Mission Cities and other competencies for a total of 118 people working across the NZC work package teams.

Our intention was to use this matrix to develop a ticketing system, whereby CAs could identify the relevant expert support and assign tasks accordingly. However, this approach proved restrictive and did not enable more detailed co-design work required to collaboratively scope, define and deliver support. Hence the CRM system was not used actively for ticketing.

Instead, the CAs developed a governance structure to enable two-way engagement across all other WPs so that dynamic involvement and engagement of CA expertise and city-derived information supported work in all other WPs from late 2022 onwards. This included design of the Capability Building Programme, organisation of CCC support (including internal support mechanisms, design of informal review process, development of the completeness check) and design of webinars, summer schools, and sessions for the annual conference.

3.2 External Contact Management

The CRM was also intended to manage all email contact via the following:

- Generic contact points (hello@netzerocities.eu, support@netzerocities.eu)
- Group accounts for contacting Mission Cities, Pilot Cities, Twin Cities and City Panels
- Individual email accounts for each CA



In total, **34,728** emails have been sent and managed via the CRM system. However, while the system works well for standardised mailings and for dissemination of key messages to cities, it has not proved effective for the more bespoke conversations undertaken by CAs (e.g. lack of flexibility to manage multi-party conversations).

As a result, CA emails were progressively migrated out of the CRM system and onto individual outlook accounts from early 2023, with the CRM now only used for 'corporate' group mailings and to manage the generic contact emails. The impact is shown in the chart below, which tracks the total **4,719** conversations (i.e. 'email chains' rather than individual emails) with users.

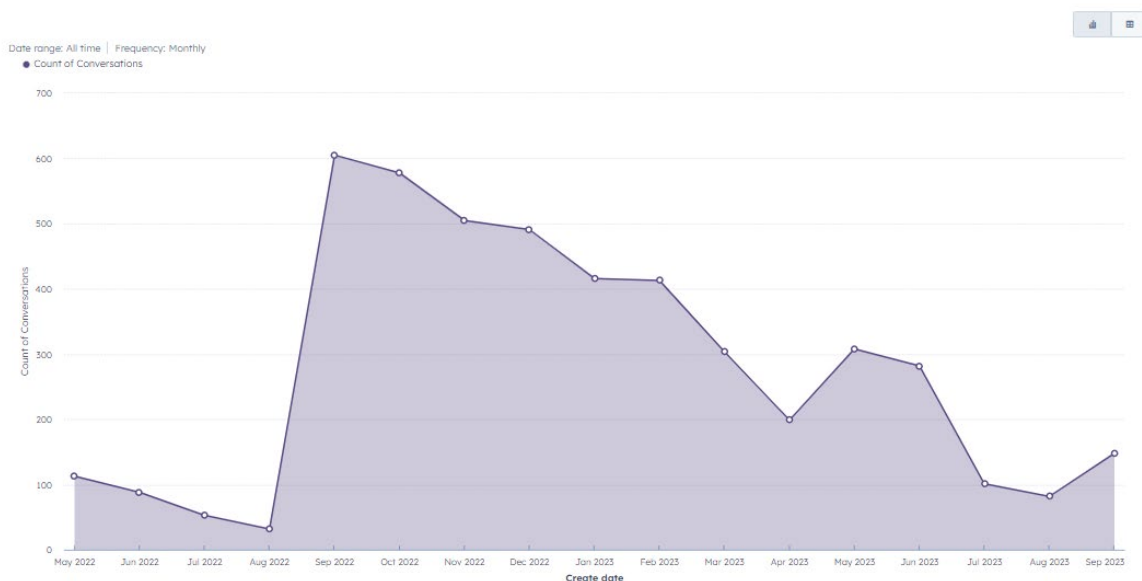


Figure 10: Email Conversations Managed in CRM

We are now scoping options for building a bespoke 'Contact Manager' module, which would integrate email management with Portal conversations, groups and chat features, enabling us to better track and manage user contacts across platforms. This work is being undertaken under the SGA1 grant but – depending on the progress and assessment of current scoping work - may result in the closure of the HubSpot CRM and migration of email management into the integrated portal module.

3.3 Themes Project Management Structure

With the commencement of SGA1 in May 2023, we were able to adopt the Themes project management model, outlined in D3.3 *One-Stop Shop Platform Report* and detailed in SGA1 D8.1 *NetZeroCities Governance & Process Strategy*. This new structure incorporates, and effectively supersedes, the Platform secretariat and operational workflows described in D3.1.

The Platform operational coordination function (NZC T3.3.1) is now integrated within the **Operations project management theme**, which combines NZC WP3/WP11/WP12 and SGA1 WP5/WP8/WP9, to jointly coordinate work. This model integrates operational support with communications management and programme management reporting, enabling us to introduce new back-end systems, including cross-work package document management, reporting and operational communications systems via Microsoft Teams and SharePoint.

The CA Team is now integrated in the **City Support project management theme**, by which NZC WP6-10, NZC WP13 and SGA1 WP2 work collaboratively. The model delivers a stable point of contact (CAs) for cities, rapid responsive support and maximum impact for resources committed. The working model



balances stability and certainty of resourcing to enable cities and partners to plan effectively, with the responsiveness to take advantage of opportunities as they emerge.

3.4 New User Support Roles

Alongside the introduction of the project management themes, the WP3 team has scoped and recruited three new roles to provide enhanced support to cities, users and other stakeholders:

Online Community Coordinator (Eurocities, funded via SGA1 WP5): This role is dedicated to fostering interaction, learning, and connections within the NZC community through online spaces, notably the Portal. The Online Community Coordinator will offer support to Portal users who aim to facilitate thematic groups or smaller communities. This support includes providing guidance materials, resources, and assistance as needed. As previously highlighted, a more structured approach to group animation is currently being tested as part of the Twin Learning Programme.

User Success Manager (LGI, funded via NZC WP3): This role involves regular feedback gathering from Portal users to ensure that the Portal remains demand-driven and user-centric. This role focuses on understanding user needs, helping users use Portal features with confidence, and identifying future opportunities for community growth and improvement.

Helpdesk Coordinator (Eurocities, funded via SGA1 WP5/WP9): To increase the responsiveness and coherence of the NZC helpdesk's offerings to cities, the Helpdesk Coordinator oversees all inquiries. The role also involves actively working to enhance the service provided, potentially through the development of interactive and intuitive resources and support services.

Outcomes of this new teams work will be reported on via future deliverables in both NZC and SGA1.

Conclusion

This report has summarised the performance and development of the Mission Platform in its first year of operations and services to cities. The structure of service delivery provided by the Portal and the CA team has evolved considerably from the designs as originally envisaged prior to go-live, but this is both expected and necessary given the iterative and dynamic nature of the Cities Mission.

The Platform will continue to evolve in its second and further years of operations, in response to emerging needs and user feedback. We will use the second annual report of D3.5 (due M36) to set out these processes alongside further quantitative analytics and qualitative feedback from cities and service users in year two, so that we can enable year-by-year comparison of Platform delivery but also focus on the rationale and design choices underlying its continuing evolution.



Bibliography

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Report on support needs assessment for CCC (*unpub*)

Mid-term infographics on city interaction (*unpub*)

One Stop Shop Platform Report: Platform technical description and user guide (*unpub*)

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