



NET ZERO CITIES

Service Model for Citizen and Stakeholder Participation (updated version)

Deliverable D8.7

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This project has received funding from the H2020 Research and Innovation Programme under the grant agreement n°101036519.

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Abbreviations and acronyms

Acronym	Description
CA	City Advisor
CCC	Climate City Contract
CE	Citizen Engagement
CoP	Community of Practice
CSG	City Support Group
CSO	City Support Officer
NZC	NetZeroCities
WP	Work Package

Summary

This deliverable provides an update to D8.6: Service Model for Citizen and Stakeholder Participation (Initial Version), submitted in May 2023. It presents a review of the development, implementation, and user feedback related to the Service Model as integrated within the NetZeroCities (NZC) Portal. The model comprises two complementary yet distinct components: the Spaces for Encounter framework and a set of digital tools, collectively referred to as the Engagement Strategy Digital Tools, which include the Engagement Priority Identifier and the Engagement Strategy Enhancer. These digital tools are designed to support cities in identifying relevant resources and tailoring their engagement strategies based on their respective stages in the climate-neutral transition journey. Together, the digital tools and the Spaces for Encounter framework served to contextualise and connect a broader suite of citizen engagement instruments developed within the NZC framework. These included the Engagement Building Blocks, Civic Environment Mapping Service, Scaffolding Emergence Canvas, and Day-to-Day Lifecycle: Infrastructuring Democracy. The aim was to provide a coherent framing that was conceived to allow cities to locate and apply these tools independently, without requiring intensive external facilitation, while also supporting integration of support that could be led by City Advisors (CAs) and other NZC experts.

Despite limited early uptake due to the timing of tool release versus Climate City Contract (CCC) windows, the tools have now been integrated into tailored support offers and city workshops. Tools such as the *Engagement Building Blocks*, *Civic Environment Mapping Service*, and *Scaffolding Emergence Canvas* have gained traction and provided a basis for deepened engagement. Another relevant finding is the outcomes of the questionnaire responses from both the identifier and enhancer, which revealed a tendency toward moderate engagement levels, with most users avoiding extreme ratings.

In contrast, the broader suite of the above-mentioned engagement tools has been more actively used and positively received by CAs and city representatives. Interviews with CAs and City Support Officers (CSOs) highlight ongoing challenges in navigating the portal's extensive library of digital resources and indicate a preference for in-person and tailored support over stand-alone digital instruments.

In response to these insights, this deliverable outlines a set of targeted recommendations aimed at: enhancing the visibility and accessibility of the digital tools; ensuring the regular updating and curation of linked resources; embedding the tools more systematically into CA and other NZC experts support workflows; and strengthening cross-thematic integration within the broader NZC engagement and support architecture.

Keywords

Citizen engagement, service model, tool, portal



1 Introduction

This deliverable provides an update to [D8.6 Service model for citizen and stakeholder participation \(initial version\)](#), which was submitted in May 2023 (Month 20 of the NetZeroCities project). The initial Service Model was developed based on the first NZC grant and aimed to provide cities with structured guidance and tools to strengthen citizen and stakeholder participation in their climate-neutral transition pathways. The service model introduced and directed users (typically city users, CA's, City Specialists and CSO's) to relevant NZC digital tools and resources via the Engagement Strategy Digital tools. The deliverable also outlined the design process of the service model and included the user journeys and wireframes.

Since the submission of D8.6, significant developments have taken place, most notably the integration and implementation of the Service Model within the NetZeroCities (NZC) Portal. While the original Service Model was available in conceptual form in May 2023, its digital implementation, led by the platform development team of NZC WP3, was completed and made fully functional in March 2024. This implementation included the incorporation of two complementary but distinct components: the Spaces for Encounter framework made available as a downloadable tool, and the Engagement Strategy Digital Tools (comprising the Engagement Priority Identifier and the Engagement Strategy Enhancer). Together, these elements are designed to guide cities in identifying relevant resources and refining engagement strategies according to their unique stages on the climate-neutral journey.

The Spaces for Encounter framework and the digital tools were developed to connect and contextualise a broader suite of citizen engagement tools, including the Engagement Building Blocks, Civic Environment Mapping Service, Scaffolding Emergence Canvas, and the Day-to-Day Lifecycle: Infrastructuring Democracy. By providing a coherent structure, these tools support both autonomous city use and integration by City Advisors (CAs), City Support Officers (CSOs), and other NZC experts.

The Engagement Strategy Digital Tools were softly launched on 14 March 2024 and have been fully functional since that date. However, the evolving structure of the NZC platform, including the introduction of new support grants and ongoing technical adjustments, has influenced the usability and search functionality of digital resources on the portal. Analytics and user feedback indicate limited visibility and uptake of the Engagement Strategy Digital Tools, particularly among city representatives and CAs. A key factor in this limited engagement is the timing of the tool's availability: the Engagement Strategy tools were not accessible to cities participating in the first three Climate City Contract (CCC) submission windows: Window 1 (April 2023), Window 2 (September 2023), and Window 3 (March 2024). Only cities submitting in Window 4 (September 2024) would have had access to the tools during their CCC preparation. This temporal disconnect helps explain the lower uptake and awareness among earlier city cohorts, especially in support of the development of their CCC.

Despite this, the broader suite of citizen engagement tools has been actively used and well-received. Interviews with CAs and CSOs suggest that while digital tools provide important support functions, there remains a preference for in-person, context-specific guidance, perhaps due to the temporal disconnect of the digital tools. Moreover, the extensive array of digital resources and knowledge production available through and on the NZC Portal, combined with the ongoing need for the platform to remain responsive to rapid developments in digital innovation, continues to pose challenges for the adaptation and sustained relevance of existing tools. The portal development team is actively working to address these dynamics by updating and refining resources to keep pace with this evolving digital landscape. However, a significant challenge identified through interviews and platform observations is the difficulty of maintaining the integration and continued applicability of the Service Model in light of the growing number of newly developed tools and resources. This expansion increases the risk of the Service Model becoming outdated or disconnected from the broader resource ecosystem, highlighting the need for continuous curation, alignment, and integration efforts.

D8.7 provides an overview of the service model, its implementation and usage, analytics and user feedback, and concludes with lessons learned and recommendations.



2 Overview and implementation of the service model

The service model is designed to guide cities in shaping effective engagement approaches that connect citizens and city leaders. Its core aim is to support the activation of an inclusive ecosystem for change. It serves as a pathway for cities—as well as other users such as CA's and CSO's—to navigate the available citizen engagement tools and identify those most relevant to their context and needs. The service model is composed of the following elements:

- The [Spaces for Encounter Framework](#);
- Two interconnected **Engagement Strategy tools**: Engagement Priority Identifier and the Engagement Strategy Enhancer (these were initially called the Ecosystem Activation tools: Ecosystem Check-Up and Activation Pathfinder). Based on users' responses, the tools generate tailored recommendations by directing them to relevant citizen engagement resources;
- The different CE tools, such as the Engagement Building Blocks, Civic Environment Mapping Service, and [others available on the NZC portal](#).

2.1 Spaces for Encounter Framework

2.1.1 Overview

Spaces for Encounter are “places that enable citizens and communities to come together, discuss and create action with multiple and diverse city actors to co-create change and make decisions on issues that are relevant to them. The spaces offer a safe and facilitated space to reconcile the competing interests and agendas that could affect the effectiveness of any climate actions and ambitions. This product provides a framework of the values and process of the spaces that are needed in order to enable citizens and other stakeholders to interact in ways that can allow new understandings, ideas and actions to be scaled by the municipality” (Ayiwe et al., 2023).

These Spaces for Encounter can be present throughout the different areas of the Climate Transition Map (NetZeroCities, 2023):

- **Build a Strong Mandate:** If the commitments of the spaces are communicated with ambition and boldness, they can spark the engagement of not only the usual suspects, but of the whole community. Spaces for Encounter broaden the coalition by including citizens to combat climate change in the long-term.
- **Understand the System:** By working together, both the cities and citizens can create accountability and responsibility in the work that they do. Cities can gather new, unseen knowledge from citizens' experiences, and the collaboration can foster citizens' understanding of what is possible and not possible when it comes to leveraging action in cities. In turn, cities feel empowered and understand better how and why citizens should be included in the city's transition toward climate neutrality.
- **Co-Create the Portfolio:** The Spaces for Encounter ensure that all those involved have the ability to be supported to develop outcomes for the portfolio of climate actions. This increases a sense of agency and hope through working together towards impactful action.
- **Take Action:** With the collaboration of cities and citizens, activities and goals connected with the climate actions create tangible actions and ideas which can collectively build into movements for change.
- **Learn and Reflect:** With monitoring, evaluation and learning, Spaces for Encounter serve as a precedent for future collaboration between different actors. They start a process of dialogue and connection which can organically evolve beyond its origin. These spaces can find new ways of doing and thinking through breaking silos between actors and redefining power imbalances.
- **Make it the New Normal:** Spaces for Encounter can restructure and make us rethink how decisions are made. By enabling citizens to participate in meaningful ways, the spaces can be



used to dissolve established ideas about who is involved in forming and narrating the collective ambitions of a community. The spaces are a forum to discuss the new normal by creating higher expectations and synergy for the community to continue to horizontally collaborate.



Figure 1: Climate Transition Map

The Framework for the Spaces for Encounter is detailed in a guide available on the portal. Based on theory, research, as well as the NZC team's own experiences, the guide provides an overview of five components that are foundational to the development of these spaces:

- Description
- People
- Governance
- Management
- Helpful Resources

2.1.2 Creation and delivery

Demsoc, along with Demos, EnC, EIT UM, and ERRIN, worked on the conceptualisation of “spaces for encounter”, creating its content and developing a framework. The aim is to enable users (primarily city authorities) to create such spaces.

While the Spaces for Encounter Framework is introduced in this deliverable as a component of the broader service model, it is important to clarify that it was not conceived as a standalone “service” in the traditional sense. Rather, it acts as a conceptual and practical framework aimed at enabling the activation of participatory ecosystems and fostering long-term civic collaboration across sectors. The effective application of this framework relies on deep contextual engagement and the accompaniment of cities in building physical or symbolic spaces that serve as infrastructures for inclusive co-creation. These spaces are not merely sites of interaction but foundational nodes in a city's participatory strategy, fostering legitimacy, trust, and continuity. The success of this approach depends significantly on relational dynamics and cannot be achieved through tools alone. As such, the Spaces for Encounter Framework should be understood as a structuring process composed of actions, methods, and political will, rather than as a pre-defined service offer.

The Spaces for Encounter Framework is available for download as a [guide in PDF format](#) on the portal.

In addition, the Framework was introduced to cities as part of the Capacity Building Service. CA's and CSO's were trained to facilitate the service experience associated with the framework. Specifically, the Spaces for Encounter Framework was integrated into Module 2 of the NetZeroCities Portal (Activating ecosystems for change), which introduces different elements needed to "activate an inclusive ecosystem for change."

2.2 Engagement tools and resources

This section provides an overview of various tools designed by specialists on Citizens and Stakeholder Engagement for the NetZeroCities Platform to help and accompany cities deepen and enhance their citizen and stakeholder engagement efforts throughout their climate neutral journey. The complete list of engagement tools and resources is available on the [NZN portal](#).

2.2.1 Engagement Building Blocks

The [Engagement Building Blocks](#) offer a structured, visual, and collaborative approach to designing citizen and stakeholder engagement processes. It consists of four themed decks (goals, context, design choices, and methods) that guide users through both analytical and visioning phases. This framework supports exploration of different pathways, identification of engagement needs, and alignment among stakeholders on key design elements. It is especially valuable in the early planning stages but can also serve as an effective resource during the co-creation and refinement of engagement strategies.

The tool was conceived primarily for city teams, but it has been proven its applicability in a range of settings where engagement processes are under development. Its impact is maximised when used in multidisciplinary groups or with participants bringing diverse perspectives. By fostering collective reflection and strategic planning, the Engagement Building Blocks help ensure that engagement efforts are contextually grounded, inclusive, and well-structured.

The Engagement Building Blocks were used in the Seasonal Schools and NZC in-person events with cities. For this purpose, an additional canvas has been created, to make the co-creation tool to a learning tool. These canvases have been adapted from the learnings from the Seasonal Schools and digitalized under SGA2 WP1.

2.2.2 Civic Environment Mapping Service

The [Civic Environment Mapping Service](#) enables cities to identify and visualise the diverse individuals, groups, and organisations that influence or are impacted by the climate neutrality transition. It includes a synthesized [NZN Civic Engagement Mapping Tool](#) and a set of curated canvases, supported by the [NZN Civic Environment Mapping Guide](#). These resources are accessible through the NZC portal and are designed for use by city administrations and Transition Teams in both in-person and online workshop settings. The service helps clarify stakeholder roles, relationships, resources, and levels of influence, providing a structured approach to strategic engagement.

This service supports cities in developing a deeper understanding of their local ecosystem, identifying levers of change and key obstacles, and mapping their current position within the Climate Transition Map. It enables a more inclusive and strategic approach to stakeholder engagement, allowing cities to move beyond the usual suspects and engage a broader coalition of actors.

The Civic Environment Mapping service, including the canvas and mapping guide have been utilised to provide tailored-support cities primarily led by City Specialist on Citizens Engagement. The tools were used and integrated alongside other tools developed to accompany cities in their pre and post CCC journey, including tools such as the Portfolio Mapping and the Shaping Climate Narratives tools. These tools were mostly used during on-line workshops organised by City Advisors and led by City Specialists.

2.2.3 Strategies for designing Spaces for Encounter

Spaces for Encounter enable citizens and stakeholders with different types and levels of power to interact in carefully facilitated ways which can have a powerful effect on bridging divides and creating impact. They are spaces where citizens can encounter various stakeholders and be included in the transition to climate neutrality, both within the framework of the spaces and more broadly in the city's

work towards climate neutrality. [This framework](#) provides a way for thinking about the values and process of engagement that are needed in the spaces.

The Strategies for Spaces for Encounter have been used by DemSoc City Specialists in CSG in their work with direct city support. Currently, the Strategies for Spaces for Encounter are being revised under SGA2 WP1; the objective is to move from strategies to a methodology for Spaces for Encounter. This methodology is being co-developed with the city of Valencia.

2.2.4 Scaffolding Emergence Canvas

The [Scaffolding Emergence Canvas](#) is a tool designed to support cities in building distributed networks for urban transformation. It encourages municipalities to move beyond one-off engagement efforts by fostering sustained collaboration with frontrunners and key stakeholders. Using the Quintuple Helix framework, the canvas prompts users to categorise stakeholders according to their societal role (e.g., academia, industry, civil society, government, and the natural environment), helping to construct a dynamic, multi-actor ecosystem that supports long-term climate action.

This canvas has been employed in both in-person seasonal schools and online workshops, demonstrating its adaptability to diverse settings. It has primarily been utilized in conjunction with the Engagement Building Blocks, with which it forms a mutually reinforcing suite of tools. Together, these tools support cities in designing diversified, context-sensitive engagement strategies tailored to different stakeholder types, as well as the nature and intensity of their relationships. This integrated approach aids cities in initiating the development of long-term stakeholder engagement strategies for the climate-neutral transition. However, due to its use in conjunction with other tools, it is challenging to isolate specific usability feedback pertaining to this particular canvas.

2.2.5 Day to Day Lifecycle: Infrastructuring Democracy

The [Day-to-Day Lifecycle: Infrastructuring Democracy](#) tool supports cities in embedding stakeholder engagement systematically across all phases of urban projects. It addresses a common barrier in city-led projects: the belief that stakeholder engagement must wait until plans are fully developed. This canvas reframes participation as a dynamic, ongoing process, allowing engagement to begin at any point in a project's lifecycle.

Initially developed as a game-based exercise, the tool can also be applied to real-life city contexts. It guides users through assessing political, civic, and technical conditions, identifying key moments for engagement, and selecting appropriate goals, design choices, and methods. The process is highly adaptable and designed for iterative use; cities are encouraged to revisit and revise their stakeholder engagement strategies as projects evolve.

This tool has been employed as a capacity-building instrument during seasonal schools to raise awareness about the opportunities for enhancing citizen and stakeholder engagement, particularly in contexts where active participation can strengthen city transition teams. It has also been used in conjunction with the Engagement Building Blocks, further reinforcing its integrative value. To support its application, a card deck and a URL link for downloading a printable version of the canvas were made available to cities upon their request.

2.2.6 Shaping Climate Narratives and Activation Canvas

The [Shaping Climate Narratives & Activation canvas](#) is a structured 90-minute exercise designed to help city teams craft compelling narratives and develop tailored key messages to engage diverse stakeholder groups. It supports cities in aligning internal communication, fostering empathy, and enhancing strategic outreach by focusing on the motivations, needs, and communication preferences of different personas. The canvas guides users through identifying appropriate messaging formats and channels, helping to increase relevance and resonance across audiences.

This tool is most effective when used in conjunction with prior stakeholder mapping to ensure a clear understanding of the local engagement landscape. It is recommended for use by multidisciplinary teams, ideally including individuals who have direct relationships with, or insights into, the target groups.



The tool was initially designed and developed in response to a tailored support request from the city of Aachen. It was subsequently adapted for use by other German cities and, over time, expanded and refined to suit a broader range of urban contexts. The exercise has been tested in peer-learning settings with other cities participating in the EU Cities Mission and further applied in tailored support engagements with Spanish cities.

2.2.7 Methods and Case studies

The collection of [methods and case studies](#) offers a repository of real-world examples to support cities in advancing inclusive citizen and stakeholder engagement across all phases of the Climate Transition Map. Organised according to the six key stages (Build a Strong Mandate, Understand the System, Co-Create the Portfolio, Take Action, Learn and Reflect, and Make it the New Normal) these resources provides cities with practical illustrations of participatory approaches from diverse contexts.

These materials were initially used by City Advisors to guide cities in navigating and utilising the available resources on the portal. With the additional support of City Specialists focused on citizen engagement, tailored bundles of resources were subsequently developed. These individually curated bundles provided targeted support and guidance to cities, responding to specific requests for assistance and enhancing the relevance of the resources to the existing challenge of the cities.

2.3 Engagement Strategy Digital tools

2.3.1 Overview

The Engagement Strategy Digital tools (previously called the Ecosystem Activation tools) are composed of the Engagement Priority Identifier (previously called the Ecosystem Check-Up) and the Engagement Strategy Enhancer (previously called the Activation Pathfinder), both tools available online in the NZC portal.

Designed by Demsoc in collaboration with WP8 and T8.4 partners, the digital tools aim to contribute to a service model “that can pull together a coherent, interdependent, interconnected, and interoperable set of WP8 services” (Ayiwe et al., 2023). The objective is to help cities identify relevant NZC digital resources and services on citizen and urban stakeholder engagement, “no matter where they are in their user journey. Whether they are unaware of their needs, uncertain about what to do, or in the process of their climate transition, these tools can help clarify their positionality and take appropriate action” (Ayiwe et al., 2023).



Figure 2: Screenshot of the Engagement Strategy Digital tools page on the NZC portal

Available via the NZC portal, these tools function like a self-assessment questionnaire. After completion, the user is directed to relevant tools and resources available on the portal.

2.3.1.1 Engagement Priority Identifier

The Engagement Priority Identifier is a “diagnostic tool that helps cities identify their citizen and stakeholder engagement needs, find a corresponding service to use which can respond to that need, and offer complimentary services which can be used to enhance the city’s effectiveness at addressing that need” (NetZeroCities, 2023). Based on the user’s responses, different resources are recommended.

Introduction

City details

Problem areas

Interview

Results

Identify your Engagement Priorities

Take a short (10 min) assessment.

The information you give won't be shared unless you choose to do so.

Your results will include:

- Possible causes of problem areas.
- Recommendations on what to do next.

About this Engagement Priority Identifier

- ✓ Created and validated by citizen and stakeholder engagement experts

Back Next

Identify your Engagement Priorities

Take a short (10 min) assessment.

The information you give won't be shared unless you choose to do so.

Your results will include:

- Possible causes of problem areas.
- Recommendations on what to do next.

About this Engagement Priority Identifier

- ✓ Created and validated by citizen and stakeholder engagement experts

Back Next

Figure 3: Screenshots of the Engagement Priority Identifier

Users are directed through the following questions:

- **Who is this diagnostic for? (single choice)**
 - ☐ My own city
 - ☐ A city I advise
- **Please select all the issues that apply to your city. (multiple choice)**
 - ☐ Short termism
 - ☐ Institutional distrust
 - ☐ Governance limitation



- Lack of representation for the most vulnerable
- Uninterested or resistant citizens and stakeholders
- Disconnected citizens and/or stakeholders
- Not sure where or how to begin engaging citizens and urban stakeholders
- Lack of shared understanding among citizens and stakeholders
- Navigating complex, multi-stakeholder issues and decisions
- **Interview (select all that apply)**
 - I need more examples of citizen and stakeholder engagement methods to try.
 - I am looking for more information on how a particular engagement method worked in another city.
 - I am curious to learn about other engagement approaches, more generally.
- **Interview (scale)**
 - To what degree is there disagreement amongst stakeholders about what the future of our city should be? (Zero disagreement = 0, Complete disagreement = 10)
 - To what extent is there trust between the municipality, stakeholders, and citizens? (Zero trust = 0, Complete trust = 10)
 - To what degree is there polarisation amongst your population? (Zero polarisation = 0, Total polarisation = 10)
 - Approximately, how much experience designing a citizen and/or stakeholder engagement experience do you have? (Zero experience = 0, Expert level experience = 10)
 - To what extent do you have a shared plan with partners for what engaging our citizens and stakeholders should like? (Haven't started creating a plan = 0, Have a shared plan = 10)
 - When considering whether to design an engage process for/with citizens and stakeholders, would you describe yourselves as... (Unmotivated and unprepared = 0, Motivated and prepared = 10)
 - To what degree have you identified which citizens and stakeholders would be important to work with to achieve climate neutrality? (Identified none = 0, Identified all = 10)
 - To what degree have you analysed how to leverage the different resources and powers that are distributed amongst citizens and stakeholders in your local ecosystem? (Zero leverageable resources have been analysed = 0, All leverageable resources have been analysed = 10)
 - To what degree have you interacted or engaged with citizens and stakeholders who might be able to help us achieve climate neutrality? (Interacted or engaged with zero of the citizens and stakeholders = 0, Interacted or engaged with all the citizens and stakeholders = 10)
 - How much buy-in for climate action do you have from citizens and stakeholders? (Zero buy-in = 0, Complete buy-in = 10)
 - To what degree can you reach and mobilise all populations, including harder to reach populations in your city? (Can't reach or mobilise any hard to reach populations = 0, Can reach and mobilise all hard to reach to populations = 10)

- To what extent are there disconnects between influential citizens and stakeholders in your city? (No disconnects between influential citizens and stakeholders = 0, Total disconnection between influential citizens and stakeholders = 10)
- To what extent are the same actors/voices present in our citizen and stakeholder engagement processes? (Never; we constantly have new people and voices = 0, Always; we consistently have the same people and voices involved in our processes = 10)
- To what degree do citizens trust you to involve them in Climate Actions? (They do not trust us = 0, They totally trust us = 10)
- To what have past efforts to bring diverse actors together to collaborate resulted in successful or productive outputs? (Rarely; Generally, our collaborations amongst diverse participants are unsuccessful = 0, Always; All our collaborations amongst diverse participants are successful = 10)
- To what extent are you familiar with the role engaging citizens and stakeholders can play in advancing long-term climate action? (Not familiar = 0, Familiar = 10)
- To what extent are you familiar with how it would help (why it matters) to spend time designing an engagement process for/with citizens and stakeholders? (Not familiar = 0, Familiar = 10)
- To what extent are you familiar with how to map citizens and stakeholders in our local ecosystem? (Not familiar = 0, Familiar = 10)
- To what extent are you familiar with the role trust and trusted actors can play to advance long-term climate action? (Not familiar = 0, Familiar = 10)
- To what extent are you familiar with the role a shared and co-created vision can play to advance long-term climate action? (Not familiar = 0, Familiar = 10)

Depending on the inputs entered by the user, different combinations of services and resources are presented on the final page:

Take advantage of the following services.

Based on the problems you've selected and the responses to the interview questions you provided, it seems you may have the following needs for support.

Each need has already been listed in priority according to your answers, but you can start by responding to whichever you feel is most fitting for you now.

Corresponding products and services are also named, which you can use to most effectively respond to each need. If you are curious about how to pair your services in a complementary way please consider using the Engagement Strategy Enhancer .

[Why these recommendations?](#)

Possible Needs

Strong evidence

Need to identify, analyse, and/or engage citizens and stakeholders in order to advance climate agenda.

Proposed Service: [Civic Environment Mapping Service - Canvases & Guide](#)

Moderate evidence

Need to logistically connect (with) trust-proxies and influential community actors in order to advance climate agenda.

Proposed Service: [NetZeroCommunities](#)

2.3.1.2 Engagement Strategy Enhancer

The Engagement Strategy Enhancer is a “user experience optimisation tool that enables users to make the most of the services provided by the NetZeroCities mission” (Ayiwe et al., 2023). After filling out a



What follows are screenshots showing the Engagement Strategy Enhancer Identifier through its different steps.

Where is your city's work currently focused on the Climate Transition Map journey?

- ☐ Building a Strong Mandate
- ☐ Understanding the System
- ☐ Co-Designing a Portfolio
- ☐ Taking Action
- ☐ Learning & Reflecting
- ☐ Making it the New Normal

The diagram illustrates the Climate Transition Map journey as a circular process. It is divided into six main stages, each represented by a colored segment in a circular flow. The stages are: BUILD A STRONG MANDATE (dark blue), UNDERSTAND THE SYSTEM (dark blue), CO-DESIGN A PORTFOLIO (dark blue), TAKE ACTION (dark blue), LEARN & REFLECT (dark blue), and MAKE IT THE NEW NORMAL (dark blue). The center of the map is labeled 'A LOCAL CLIMATE TRANSITION' and 'ACTIVATE AN INCLUSIVE ECOSYSTEM FOR CHANGE'. The outer ring is labeled 'PURPOSE', 'PROCESS', and 'PLAN'. The inner ring is labeled 'MISSION LABEL', 'CCC', and '2030 CLIMATE COMMITMENTS, ACTION PLAN & INVESTMENT PLAN'.

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Which of the NZC Citizen and Stakeholder Engagement Services are you already using or planning to use?

If you haven't found a starting place yet, try using the [Engagement Priority Identifier](#)

- ☐ Engagement Building Blocks
- ☐ Civic Environment Mapping
- ☐ NetZeroCommunities
- ☐ Spaces for Encounter
- ☐ Activating Ecosystems for Change, Capability Building Module

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To what extent would you like your use of NZC Citizen and Stakeholder Engagement services to be facilitated with an expert?

Zero Facilitation

We would like to use the service on our own.

Service Introduction

Facilitator introduces how to use service.

Accompaniment

Facilitator introduces and clarifies during use.

Coaching

Facilitator introduces and coaches throughout use.

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Try these combinations of services.

Based on the phase of the Climate Transition you are currently focused on, the services you're already using or plan to use, and your desired level of accompaniment, we would recommend using the following services to enhance the effectiveness of your current work.

We recommend you connect with an expert to help facilitate you use of the services.

To help you Co-Designing a Portfolio, use these services to enhance the impacts of: NetZeroCommunities and Spaces for Encounter

NetZeroCommunities

Knowledge Repository Resources

The knowledge repository can provide a range of methodologies and case studies that have been successful in supporting the design of a portfolio of projects to deploy. For example, it can provide resources on financing mechanisms, stakeholder engagement strategies, and innovation frameworks.

[Access the service directly by clicking here](#)

Figure 4a: Screenshots of the Engagement Strategy Enhancer

Depending on the inputs entered by the user, different combinations of services and resources are presented on the final page.

2.3.2 Creation and delivery

The tools were developed through a participatory design process involving WP8 partners, including co-creation, integration and validation of the tools with specific co-creation workshops with WP6-10 service designer partners and open-house sessions opened to all NZC consortium. This process included the design and testing of the tools; the synthesis of the user journey, service blueprint, and diagnostic decision tree; the design of wireframes, mock-ups, and the back-end logic system. For more information about the design process, you can review [D8.6 Service Model for Citizens and Stakeholders Participation \(Initial Version\)](#)

Once a Minimum Viable Product was developed, it was integrated into the portal as interactive PDFs in the Knowledge Repository, still with its former name "[Ecosystem Activation Tools](#)".

After a series of interactions with the portal team, the communication team and the NZC WP8 design team, the name of the tool was changed to Engagement Strategy Tools, and it was softly launched on the 14 of March 2024, as a webtool service fully integrated in the portal. To promote the newly launched tool among the portal users and consortium members, the Communication team sent a Newsletter to all portal users introducing the Engagement Strategy Tools on the 14 of March 2024.



Dear Mission Cities,

In this email, we are delighted to provide you with resources aimed at fostering citizen and stakeholder engagement within your city.

Discover the NetZeroCities Engagement Strategy Tools

We are pleased to announce the launch of the [Engagement Strategy Tools](#) on the [NetZeroCities Portal](#). These innovative tools have been carefully crafted to empower you to enhance citizen and stakeholder engagement.

These tools aim to assist you in identifying your specific citizen and stakeholder engagement needs, and direct you towards the most suitable NetZeroCities services to improve your engagement processes.

Figure 5: Screenshot of the Newsletter sent to cities by the communication team

In order to promote the use of the webtool among consortium partners, a series of trainings of the tool were organised individually to each CSG, as well as a training dedicated to NZC Partners. The tools were also presented at coordination meetings and ad-hoc training was also made available to cities and consortium partners.

The screenshot shows a web application interface for the Net Zero Cities project. On the left is a navigation menu with links: Introduction, City details, Problem areas, Interview (highlighted), and Results. The main content area is titled 'Interview' and contains three questions, each with a horizontal scale from 0 to 10. The first question is 'To what degree is there disagreement amongst stakeholders about what the future of our city should be?' with 'Zero disagreement' at 0 and 'Complete disagreement' at 10. The second question is 'To what extent is there trust between the municipality, stakeholders, and citizens?' with 'Zero trust' at 0 and 'Complete trust' at 10. The third question is 'To what degree is there polarisation amongst your population?' with a scale from 0 to 10.

Figure 6b: Screenshot of the training dedicated to consortium partners

The tools were used by CA's, City Specialists and CSO's to provide support to cities, but also by city users themselves. Besides this, CSO's organised several meetings at the CSG level to test and get insights from the engagement tools to support their cities between March and July 2024.

3 Analytics

This section presents data and analytics on the various tools, including portal usage metrics such as resource views, extracted from the NZC portal's internal analytics system. It also incorporates data from Hotjar, an analytics tool that tracks user behaviour on websites. Hotjar provides insights such as the number of sessions, average time spent on the page, click activity, and visual heatmaps of user interaction.

3.1 CE resources and tools

To support users in navigating the NZC portal, thematic landing pages were developed to compile all relevant resources under each key area. The landing page dedicated to citizen and urban stakeholder participation brings together a curated collection of materials, making it easier for users to access content on this theme. It includes: (1) an overview, (2) an introduction to the need for a participative transition, (3) a collection of articles, (4) tools, (5) case studies and methods, and (6) NZC deliverables related to citizen and urban stakeholder engagement.

Resource name	Type	Created	Updated	Views	Unique views
Citizens and urban stakeholders	Article	6/16/2024	2/6/2025	569	435

Table 1: Metrics for citizens and urban stakeholders landing page, as of February 12, 2025

An analysis of the top 10 most viewed resources tagged with "citizen engagement" shows that these include resources that are explicitly focused on citizen engagement (*Citizen Participation Platforms*, *Companion Guide for Civic Environment Mapping*, *Civic Environment Mapping Service*) as well as resources that deal with broader themes such as urban planning, energy transition, and systems innovation, and have citizen engagement as a supporting component. The tag is used quite generously in the portal, so a large number of resources are including a citizen engagement component, even though it is not the primary topic of the resource.

Resource name	Type	Created	Updated	Views	Unique views
1. Citizen Participation Platforms	Factsheet	14/09/2022	15/11/2023	3814	2458
2. Stockholm Climate City Contract	Climate City Contract	07/12/2023	05/02/2025	2723	1424
3. Companion guide for Civic environment mapping	Document	05/06/2023	14/06/2023	2567	1437
4. Solar PV implementation in Spain (past and future)	Article	15/12/2022	31/05/2023	2362	1493
5. Civic Environment Mapping Service – Canvases & Guide	Article	24/03/2023	23/01/2024	2164	941
6. JRC Collection	Article	26/05/2023	25/08/2023	1681	917
7. NZC Civic Environment Mapping Tool	Document	24/03/2023	28/04/2023	1667	865
8. Capacity building and engagement with municipalities to identify and co-create circular solutions and roadmaps	Factsheet	13/09/2022	06/03/2023	1661	950
9. Systemic Design Toolkit Guide – Design tools to tackle complexity	Document	03/04/2023	03/04/2023	1459	784
10. The Carbon-neutral Helsinki 2035 Action Plan	Document	24/10/2022	24/10/2022	1334	873

Table 2: Top 10 most viewed resources tagged with "citizen engagement", as of February 12, 2025

Table 3 provides an overview of usage data for citizen engagement resources featured in Section 2. The resources with the most unique views include the *Companion Guide for Civic Environment Mapping* (1,437 unique views), the *Civic Environment Mapping Service* article (941), and the *NZC Civic Environment Mapping Tool* (865).

Resource name	Type	Created	Updated	Views	Unique views
Engagement Building Blocks	Article	24/01/2024	24/01/2024	762	452
Engagement Building Blocks - Instructions	Document	24/01/2024	24/01/2024	414	303



Engagement Building Blocks - Glossary	Document	24/01/2024	24/01/2024	411	294
Engagement Building Blocks - Printable Cards	Document	24/01/2024	24/01/2024	388	266
Civic Environment Mapping Service	Article	24/03/2023	23/01/2024	2164	941
NZC Civic Engagement Mapping Tool	Document	24/03/2023	28/04/2023	1667	865
Companion guide for Civic Environment Mapping	Document	05/06/2023	14/06/2023	2567	1437
Strategies for designing Spaces for Encounter	Document	08/03/2023	08/03/2023	This resource is provided as a linked PDF. As it is not hosted directly within the knowledge repository, usage data such as view counts is not available.	
Scaffolding Emergence Canvas	Canvas	04/09/2024	04/09/2024	100	93
Day to Day Lifecycle: Infrastructuring Democracy	Canvas	04/09/2024	04/09/2024	115	110

Table 3: Views on citizen engagement resources, as of February 12, 2025

Due to the portal's broad tagging system, many resources carry multiple tags, and those tagged with "citizen engagement" may only address it as one theme among several. Additionally, differences in publication dates mean some resources have had significantly more time to accumulate views, making direct comparisons across the dataset less reliable.

3.2 Engagement Strategy Tools

The data in this section pertains to the URL <https://netzerocities.app/engagementGuidanceTools>. A key limitation is that this URL remains the same across both tools and throughout the progression of the questionnaire. As a result, it is not possible to disaggregate data by tool or to identify user drop-off points at different stages.

Furthermore, the various interaction maps reflect only one static page view, which limits the depth and accuracy of insights that can be drawn from this data. However, a few broad conclusions can still be drawn.

For the NZC portal, the earliest available data from Hotjar covers the 12 months preceding the date on which Hotjar is accessed. As of the time of writing of this section (June 4, 2025), the selected reporting period spans from June 4, 2024 to May 31, 2025.

3.2.1 Page overview

General statistics for the URL <https://netzerocities.app/engagementGuidanceTools> include:



- 491 sessions
- 5.3 clicks
- 2:46m average time on page
- 86% average scroll depth

“Sessions” refers to instances where Hotjar records a user’s interaction with the portal. Due to the limitations of the consortium’s current Hotjar subscription, only a subset of total visits is captured, as the tool records a limited number of sessions. As a result, the data and heatmaps presented in the following sections offer only a partial view of user behaviour.

3.2.2 All clicks map

The all clicks map shows the places where users click, with the most popular points marked in red. The concentration of clicks suggests that users are engaging with the elements on the top left of the page, as well as the links to the various resources listed. The noticeably lower click rates on resources further down the page may indicate that users tend to disengage after viewing the top few items. This pattern could suggest the need to streamline content presentation or explore ways to sustain user attention throughout the page.

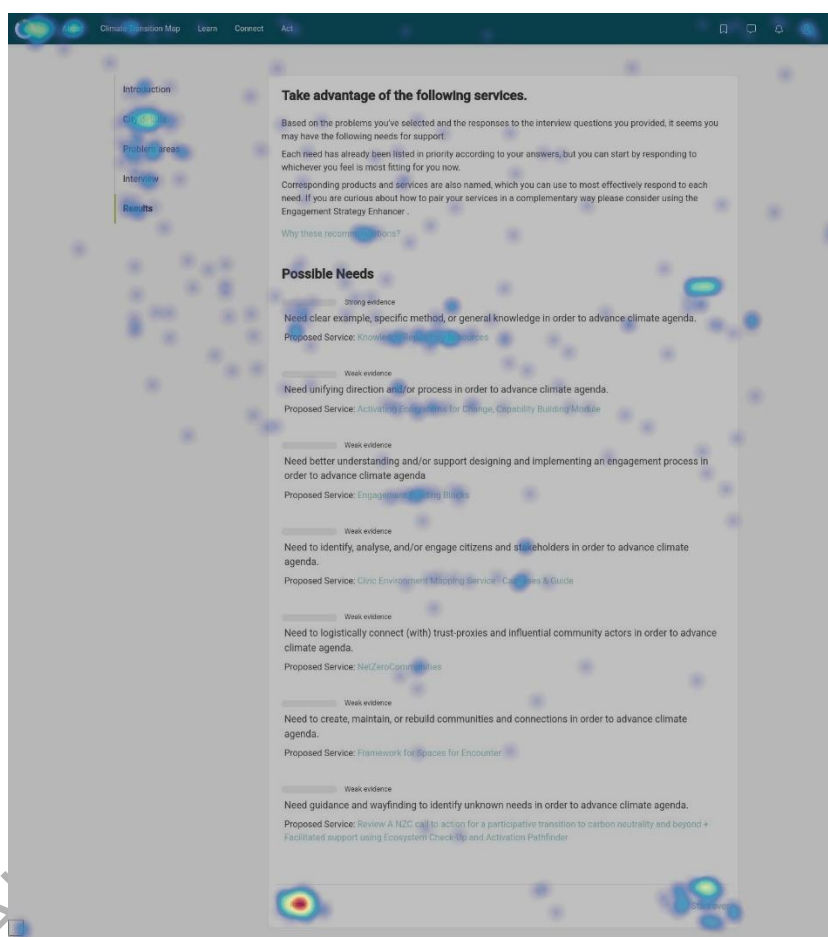


Figure 7: All clicks map

3.2.3 Move map

Hotjar uses the mouse movement of the users that had a session recorded, in order to generate a visual representation of the areas where they moved the mouse over. The “hotter” the area, the more often users moved their mouse to that page, and the “colder” the area, the less. Mouse movement is concentrated in the same zones as the click map, reinforcing that attention is focused on the upper and central parts of the page (the resources that are listed first).

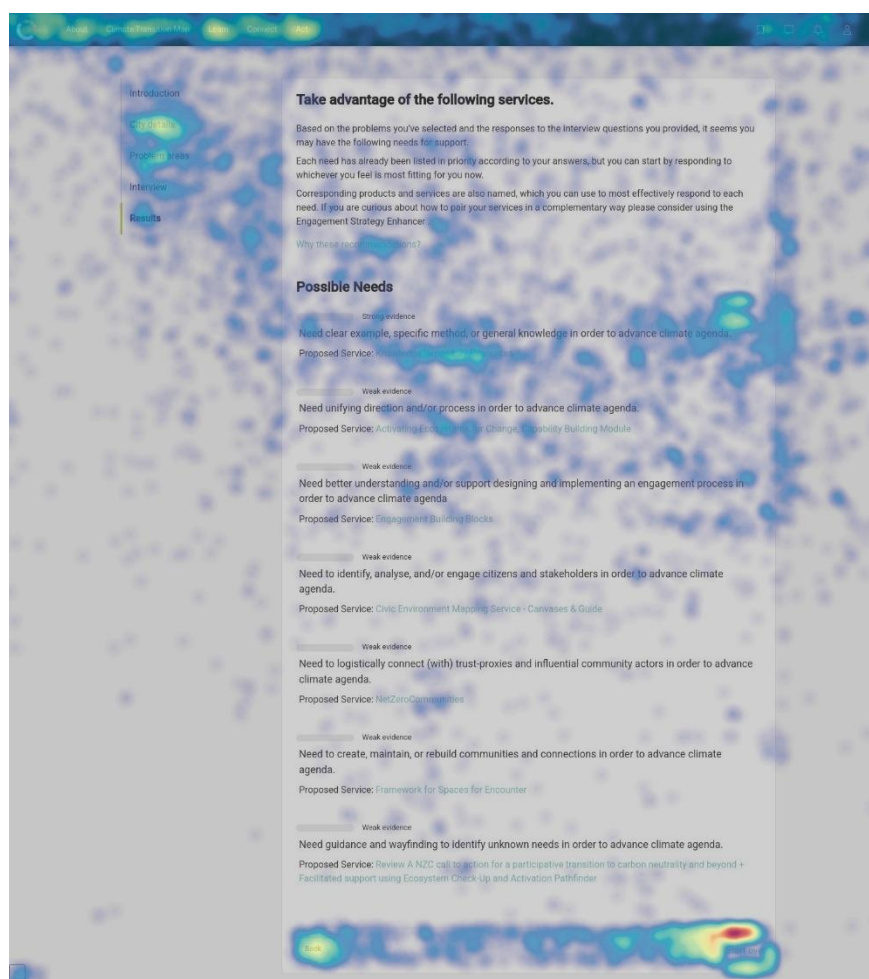


Figure 8: Move map

4 Questionnaire results of the Engagement Strategy Tools

This section presents the results of the questionnaires associated with the two Engagement Strategy Tools, along with a corresponding analysis of the responses. The time period selected for this analysis is February 2024 to May 2025, based on the earliest available data.

4.1 Engagement Priority Identifier

Refer to section 2.3.1.1 for the list of questions users are directed through.

A total of 188 completions were recorded from February 2024 to May 2025. Notably, over 50 completions occurred in both Q1 and Q2 of 2024, suggesting that the tool may have benefited from initial launch activities and related communications. However, it remains unclear how many of these early completions were generated through internal testing or by consortium members exploring the tool, which may affect the interpretation of uptake during this period. Although this limitation hinders the ability to draw meaningful conclusions from the data, an analysis was still done as some insights can still be derived.

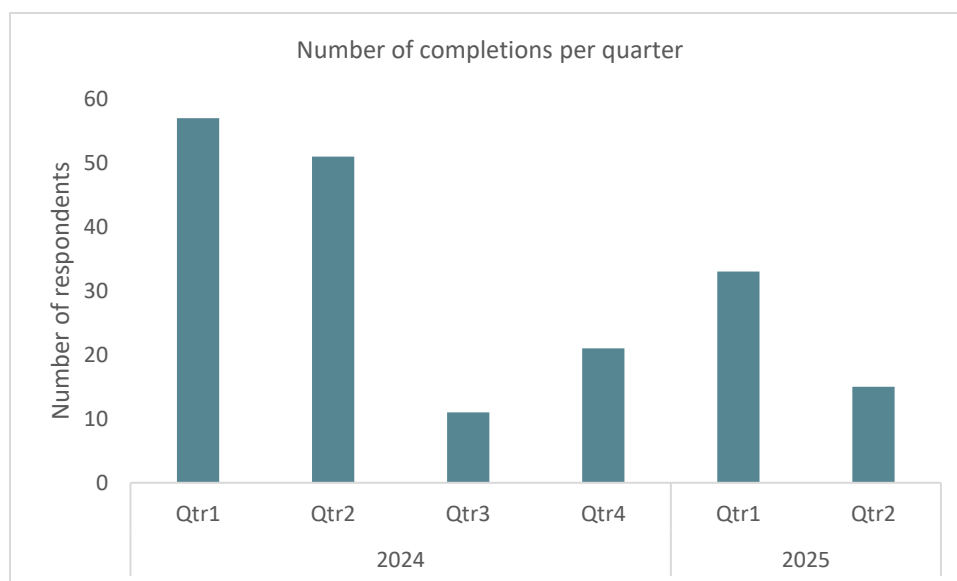


Figure 9: Number of completions per quarter

Portal users are categorised into different user types:

- CA's: individuals supporting cities in the development and implementation of their CCCs
- City user: municipal staff or representatives involved in their city's transition process
- Consortium user: members of the NZC, SGA1, and/or SGA2 consortium
- CoP or local partner user: members of the Community of Practice or affiliated support organisations
- Public authority user: individuals working in government entities
- Super admin: internal role designation for users with administrative access to the platform; typically, consortium members involved in portal-related tasks

The user breakdown indicates that the majority of respondents were consortium users and CoP/local partner users, followed by city users, super admins, CA's, and public authority users. Although the tool was originally designed with CA's, CSO's, and city users as the primary target audience, these groups represent a smaller share of overall users. The higher uptake among consortium and CoP/local partner users suggests a potential gap in awareness, accessibility, or perceived relevance of the tool among the city-facing actors it was intended to support.

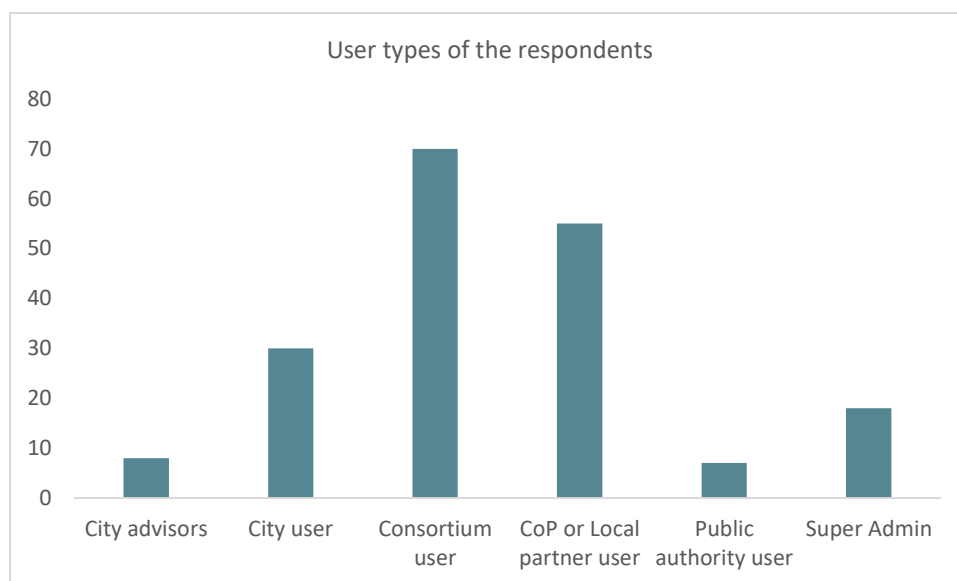


Figure 10: Breakdown of user types of the respondents

For the multiple-choice questions, a greater number of respondents generally selected affirmative options, indicating that users of the tool do have specific needs related to engagement approaches. This is expected, as those without such needs are unlikely to engage with the tool in the first place.

Responses	"I am curious to learn about engagement approaches, generally."	"I am looking for more information on how a particular engagement method worked in another city."	"I need more examples of citizen and stakeholder engagement methods to try."
Yes	88	100	109
No	54	42	33

Table 4: Breakdown of responses to multiple-choice questions

The collected questionnaire responses contained varying proportions of empty responses, ranging from 0% to approximately 35%. As a result, the analysis was conducted using different sample sizes for each question. This variation is due to the questionnaire's design: depending on the issues selected by the respondent at the start, different follow-up questions are presented, which are rated on a scale from 1 to 10. Additionally, it is expected that a number of responses were submitted during the development phase of the questionnaire solely for testing purposes, therefore, these may not reflect true participant input and could slightly affect the overall data quality.

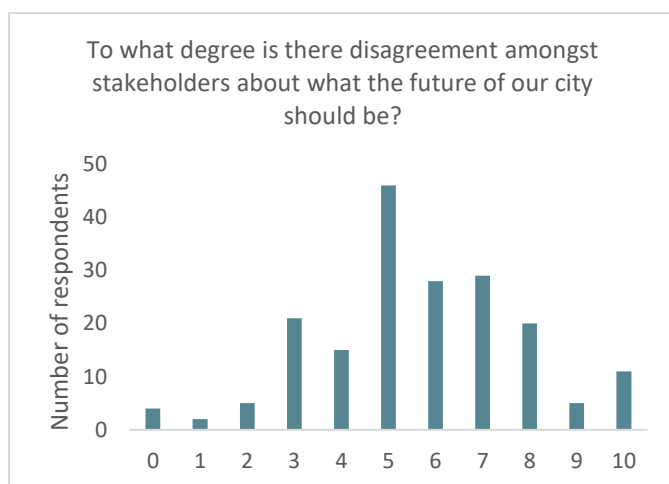


Figure 11: Degree of Stakeholder Disagreement on the City's Future (0 = no disagreement, 10 = complete disagreement)

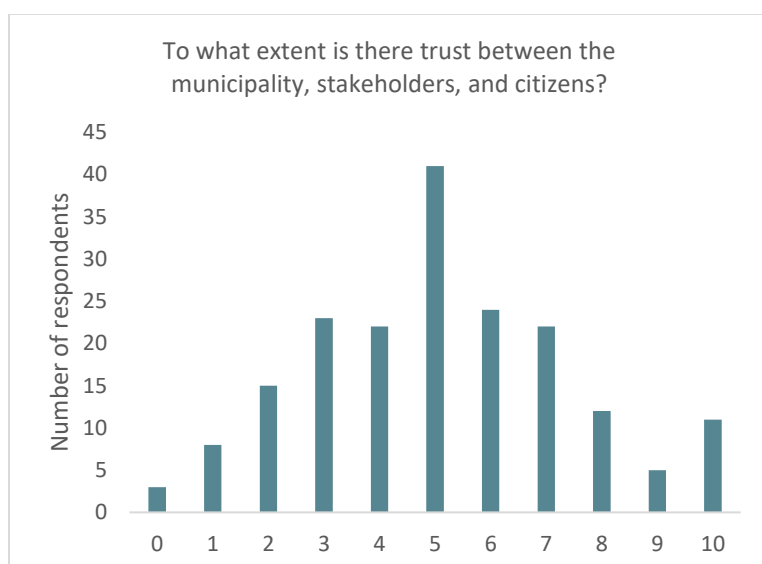


Figure 12: Level of Trust Between the Municipality, Stakeholders, and Citizens (0 = no trust, 10 = complete trust)

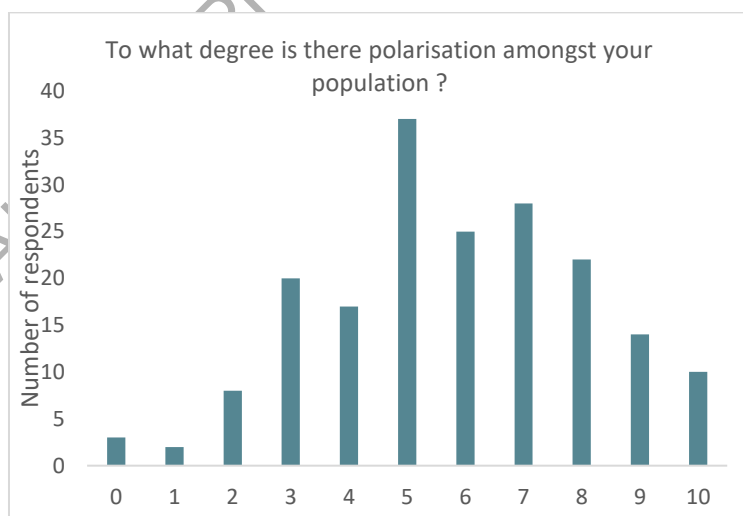


Figure 13: Degree of Polarisation Amongst the Population (0 = no polarisation, 10 = total polarisation)

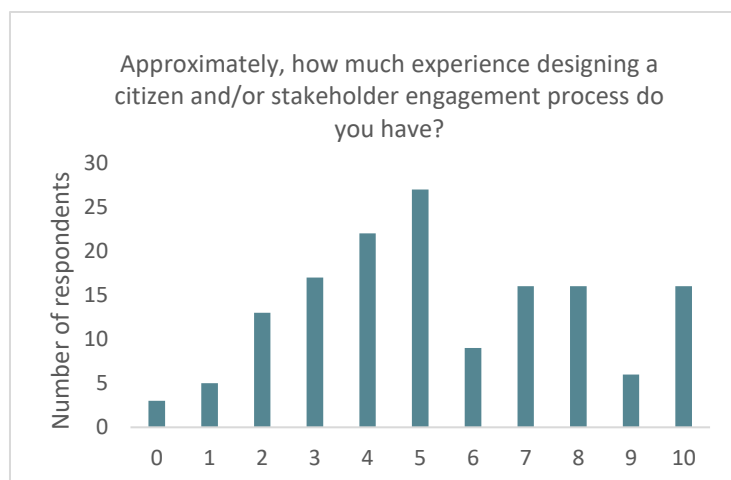


Figure 14: Extent to Which Relevant Citizens and Stakeholders Have Been Identified (0 = identified none, 10 = identified all)



Figure 15: Extent of Analysis on Leverageable Resources and Powers Among Citizens and Stakeholders (0 = none analysed, 10 = all analysed)



Figure 16: Readiness and Motivation to Design an Engagement Process (0 = unmotivated and unprepared, 10 = motivated and prepared)

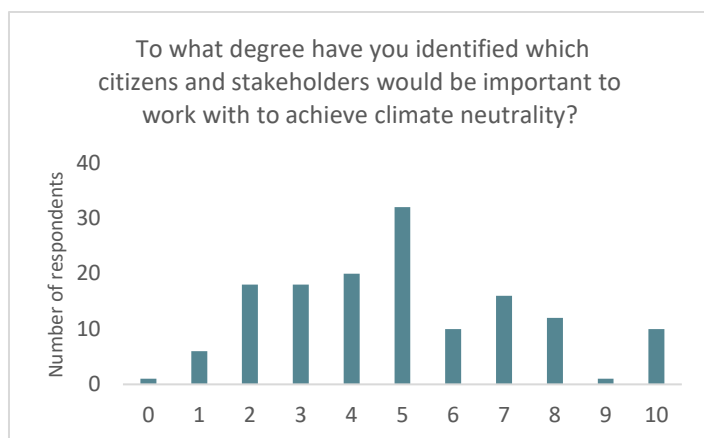


Figure 17: Extent to Which Relevant Citizens and Stakeholders Have Been Identified (0 = identified none, 10 = identified all)

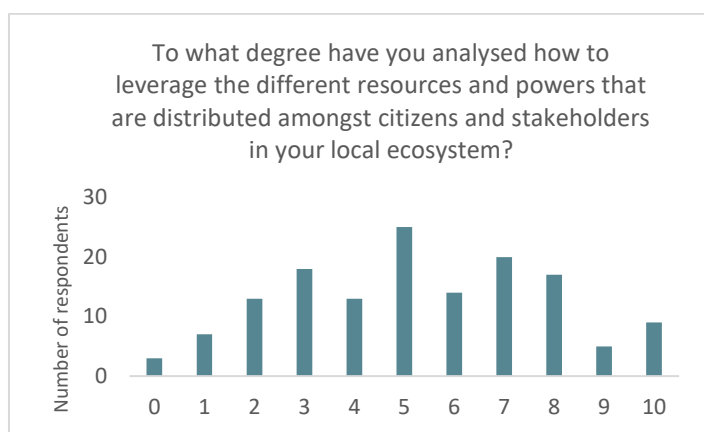


Figure 18: Extent of Analysis on Leverageable Resources and Powers Among Citizens and Stakeholders (0 = none analysed, 10 = all analysed)

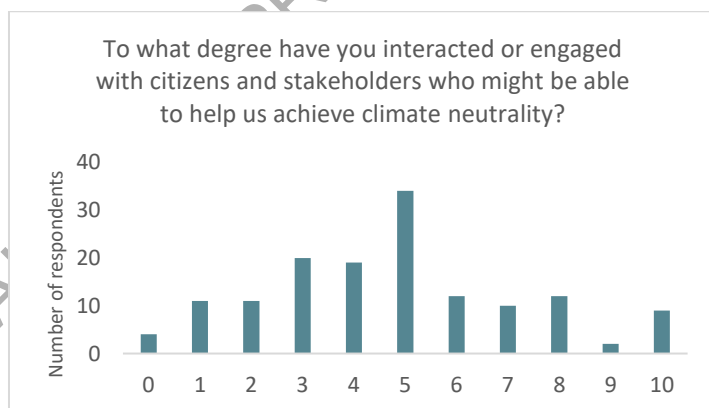


Figure 19: Extent of Interaction or Engagement with Key Citizens and Stakeholders (0 = engaged with none, 10 = engaged with all)

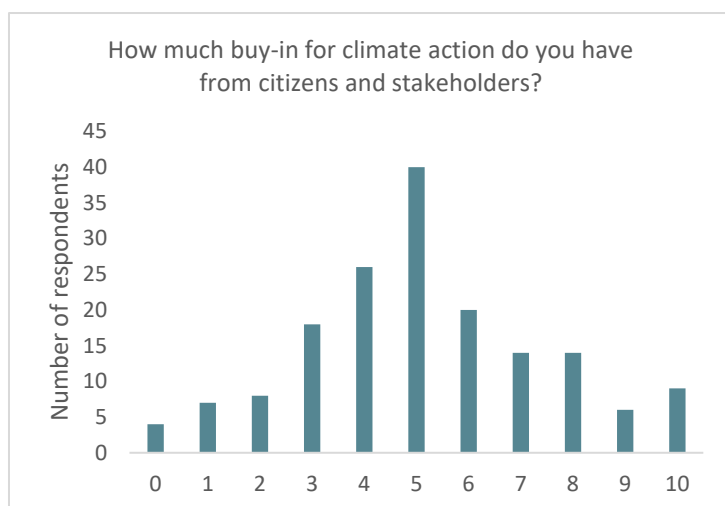


Figure 20: Level of Buy-In for Climate Action from Citizens and Stakeholders (0 = no buy-in, 10 = complete buy-in)

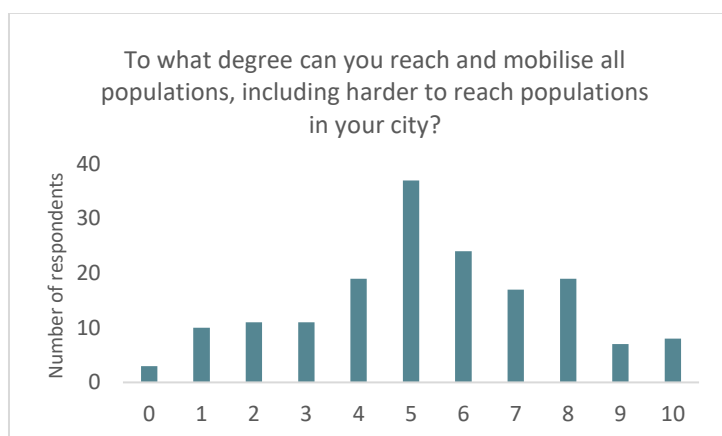


Figure 21: Ability to Reach and Mobilise All Populations, Including Harder-to-Reach Groups (0 = cannot reach any, 10 = can reach all)

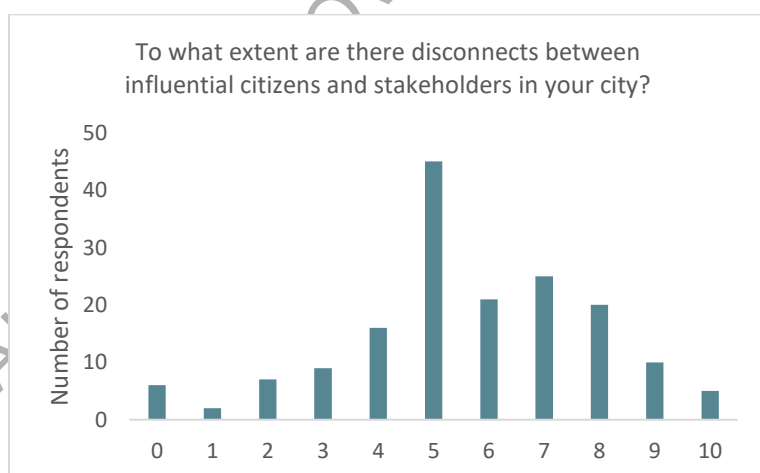


Figure 22: Extent of Disconnects Between Influential Citizens and Stakeholders (0 = no disconnects, 10 = total disconnection)

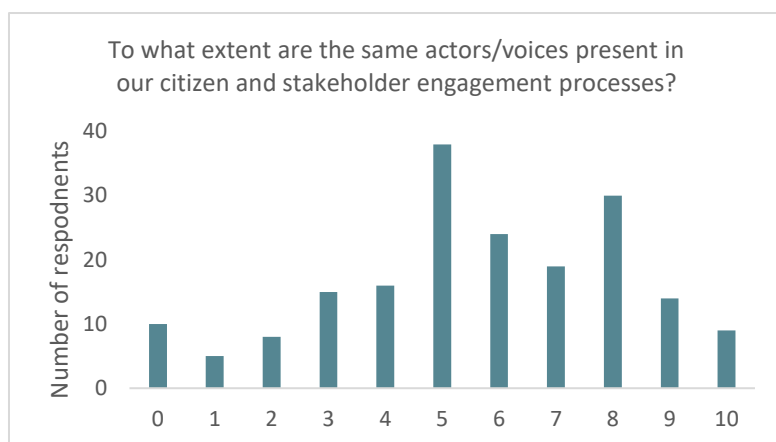


Figure 23: Frequency of the Same Actors/Voices in Engagement Processes (0 = never the same, 10 = always the same)



Figure 24: Level of Trust Citizens Have in the Municipality to Involve Them in Climate Actions (0 = no trust, 10 = total trust)

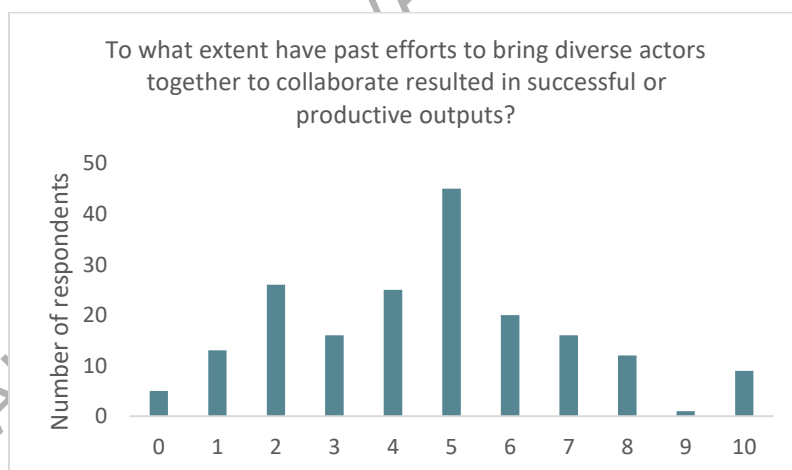


Figure 25: Success of Past Efforts to Collaborate with Diverse Actors (0 = rarely successful, 10 = always successful)

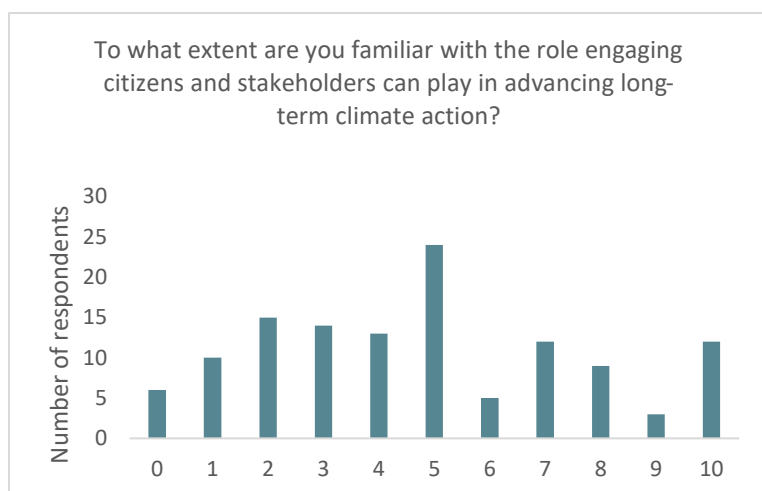


Figure 26: Familiarity with the Role of Citizen and Stakeholder Engagement in Climate Action (0 = not familiar, 10 = very familiar)



Figure 27: Familiarity with the Value of Designing Engagement Processes (0 = not familiar, 10 = very familiar)



Figure 28: Familiarity with How to Map Citizens and Stakeholders in the Local Ecosystem (0 = not familiar, 10 = very familiar)

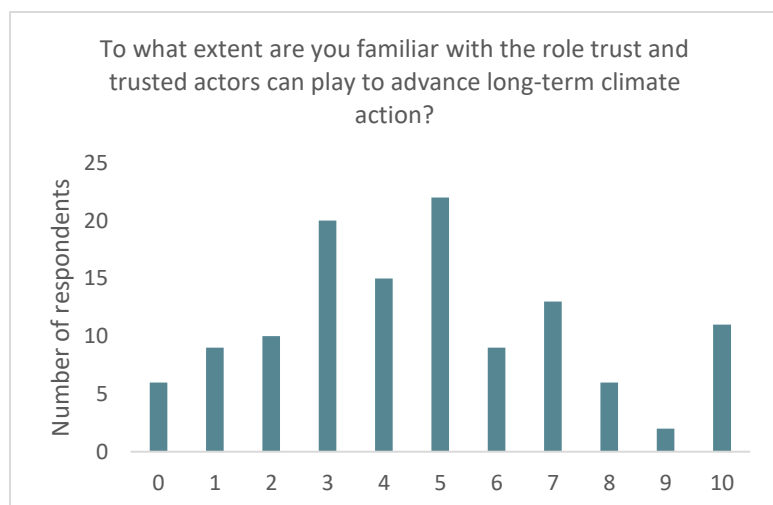


Figure 29: Familiarity with the Role of Trust and Trusted Actors in Advancing Climate Action (0 = not familiar, 10 = very familiar)

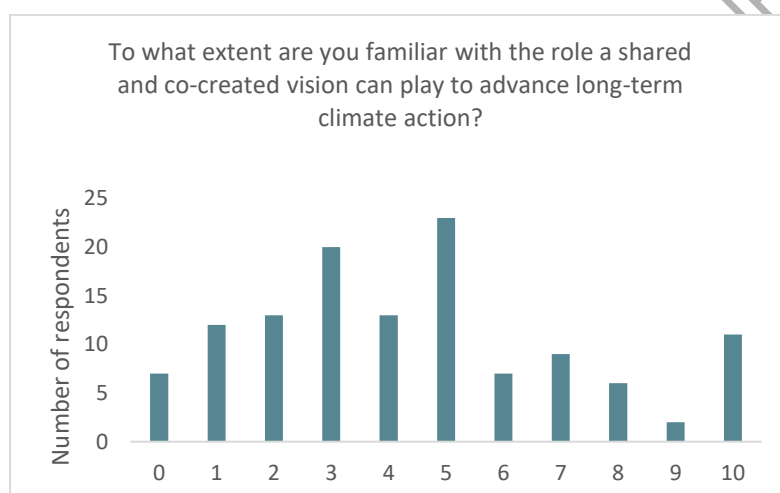


Figure 30: Familiarity with the Role of a Shared and Co-Created Vision in Advancing Climate Action (0 = not familiar, 10 = very familiar)

Overall, the data gathered from the Engagement Priority Identifier provides a useful, though limited, snapshot of user perceptions and engagement needs. Responses to the rating-scale questions tended to cluster around the midpoint of the scale, with 5 being the most frequently selected score. This pattern suggests that users generally avoided extreme responses, reflecting moderate or uncertain perceptions across a range of topics. While the tool was originally designed for CA's and city users, these groups represented a smaller proportion of respondents, pointing to a potential gap in awareness of the tool, or alignment with their needs. Additionally, the likelihood of internal testing responses may affect the reliability of the dataset.

4.2 Engagement Strategy Enhancer

4.2.1 Structure of the questionnaire

Users are directed through the following questions:



- **Where is your city's work currently focused on the Climate Transition Map Journey? (single choice)**
 - Building a Strong Mandate
 - Understanding the System
 - Co-Designing a Portfolio
 - Taking Action
 - Learning & Reflecting
 - Making it the New Normal
- **Which of the NZC Citizen and Stakeholder Engagement Services are you already using or planning to use? (multiple choice)**
 - Engagement Building Blocks
 - Civic Environment Mapping
 - NetZeroCommunities
 - Spaces for Encounter
 - Activating Ecosystems for Change, Capability Building Module
- **To what extent would you like your use of NZC Citizen and Stakeholder Engagement services to be facilitated with an expert? (single choice)**
 - Zero Facilitation: We would like to use the service on our own.
 - Service Introduction: Facilitator introduces how to use service.
 - Accompaniment: Facilitator introduces and clarifies during use.
 - Coaching: Facilitator introduces and coaches throughout use.

4.2.2 Data and analysis

While the data captures all completed questionnaires, including those submitted by users outside the cities we worked with for feedback, we have opted to analyse a subset of the data to ensure we focus on information gathered immediately following the internal testing.

A total of 116 completed responses were recorded for the Engagement Priority Identifier questionnaire during the period from February 2024 to May 2025. Notably, more than half of the total completions occurred in Q1 and Q2 of 2024 (77 responses), suggesting that the tool may have benefited from initial launch activities and related communications.

The smaller number of completions in Q3 and Q4 of 2024, and Q1 and Q2 of 2025, may be explained by the fact that cities who participated in Window 2 (6-15 September 2023) and Window 3 (6-15 March 2024) of the Climate City Contract (CCC) submission did not have access to these tools during preparation of their CCC. Only cities that participated in Window 4 (4-16 September 2024) would have had access, and even so, their CCC may have already been close to completion when the tools were made available.

Month and year	Number completions	of
February 2024	25	
March 2024	14	
April 2024	15	



May 2024	10
June 2024	13
July 2024	2
August 2024	1
September 2024	4
October 2024	4
November 2024	6
December 2024	1
January 2025	3
February 2025	8
March 2025	5
April 2025	1
May 2025	4

Table 5: Breakdown of completions by month and year

The user breakdown indicates that the majority of respondents were consortium users and CoP/local partner users, followed by super admins, city users, public authority users, and CA's. Although the tool was originally designed with CA's and city users as the primary target audience, these groups represent a smaller share of overall users. The higher uptake among consortium and CoP/local partner users suggests a potential gap in awareness, accessibility, or perceived relevance of the tool among the city-facing actors it was intended to support.

User type	Number of completions
CA	3
City user	11
Consortium user	40
CoP or local partner user	30
Public authority user	4
Super admin	28

Table 6: Breakdown of completions by user type

In terms of the stages of the Climate Transition Map Journey, responses are distributed across all five phases, with the highest concentration in *Taking Action*. The second and third most selected stages are *Building a Strong Mandate* and *Co-Designing a Portfolio*. This suggests that the tool is useful to users, no matter the stage they are at. However, it is possible that some of these responses came from users who are not CA's or city representatives and may have selected the first available option by default in order to proceed through the questionnaire.

Where is your city's work currently focused on the Climate Transition Map Journey? (single choice)	Number of responses
Building a Strong Mandate	29
Co-Designing a Portfolio	17
Learning & Reflecting	10
Making it the New Normal	10
Taking Action	37
Understanding the System	13



Table 7: Respondent distribution by Climate Transition Map Journey stage

In terms of respondent preferences for the level of facilitation, the responses indicate a wide range of preferences regarding the level of expert facilitation for using NZC Citizen and Stakeholder Engagement services. The most selected option was *Zero Facilitation* (42 respondents), suggesting a significant portion of users prefer to engage with the services independently. However, a combined total of 74 respondents expressed a desire for some level of expert support—whether through a basic service introduction (33), coaching (21), or full accompaniment (20). This suggests that while many users feel confident navigating the tools alone, a substantial number still value guided support, particularly at early or more involved stages of use.

To what extent would you like your use of NZC Citizen and Stakeholder Engagement services to be facilitated with an expert? (single choice)	Number of responses
Accompaniment	20
Coaching	21
Service Introduction	33
Zero Facilitation	42

Table 8: Respondent preferences for level of facilitation

In summary, while the data from the Engagement Priority Identifier questionnaire offers a preliminary understanding of user profiles, engagement needs, and facilitation preferences, these insights should be interpreted with caution due to the limitations in verifying the authenticity of responses. The disproportionate representation of consortium and partner users, as well as the early clustering of completions, suggests that actual city-level usage may be lower than the numbers imply.

Nevertheless, the findings point to diverse needs across the Climate Transition Map journey and varied preferences for support, underscoring the importance of tailoring engagement services to different levels of experience and readiness. Future efforts should focus on increasing uptake among intended city users, clarifying the tool's purpose, and ensuring it is embedded within broader support structures that include both self-guided and facilitated pathways.

5 Qualitative feedback

5.1 Method

In collaboration with the Domain Working Group (DWG) on Citizen Engagement, eight interviews were conducted between November 2024 and January 2025 with CA's, CSO's, and city representatives. The limited number of interviews is explained by the need to conduct interviews after the Engagement Strategy Tools were launched, the preparatory work of creating the interview guide and contacting potential interviewees, and finally, of the availability of DWG members and interviewees.

As such, the insights presented here may not fully reflect the diversity of perspectives among all CA's and support specialists. Furthermore, those who agreed to be interviewed may already have a particular interest in citizen engagement or a willingness to contribute because they had specific experiences or reflections to share. The feedback summarised below is based on interviewers' notes and has been anonymised.

The aim was to identify gaps and opportunities within the NZC citizen engagement offer. These interviews provided valuable insights into the current use and perception of existing resources, tools, and services.



Interview guide:

- 1. Needs: What is the most pressing topic for you right now in relation to citizen engagement that could benefit your process? (This question is only for cities)
- 2. What works: What formats of resources do you find most effective (e.g., knowledge repository articles, case studies, videos, webinars)? Why?
- 3. Utilization: Have you used the citizen engagement resources available on the NZC portal? If so, which and how frequently?
- 4. Gaps: Are there specific citizen engagement tools or methodologies that you need but are currently missing from the offer of NZC?
- 5. Learning journey: Would it be useful for you to be able to streamline your question on the portal, so you get fed the relevant resources in line with your query?
- 6. DWG on Citizen Engagement Future role: Think about a moment where specialist support worked well – tell me about it. Thinking about this experience, how do you think the DWG can support you best?

For the purposes of this deliverable, the analysis focuses primarily on the responses to questions 2, 3 and 5.

5.2 Insights

The interviews provided several recurring insights into the use and perception of NZC's citizen engagement resources.

Tools in use, suggestions, and emerging needs: None of the interviewees explicitly mentioned the Engagement Strategy Tools. This absence may suggest limited visibility of the digital tools, or that their name may not be familiar to interviewees. However, specific Citizen Engagement tools were referenced. The Civic Engagement Mapping Canvas was noted as having been used by several cities, often effectively. The Engagement Building Blocks tool was also mentioned, though less frequently. These references suggest that while some tools are being integrated into practice, their use remains inconsistent. Additionally, one interviewee commented that “the resources were not targeted enough—for cities with lots of experience in participation, the resources were too superficial.” These insights highlight the opportunity to strengthen tool uptake through improved visibility, tailored content, and more targeted facilitation.

Need for addressing overload and usability challenges with the NZC portal: Interviewees previously identified content overload and navigation issues as key challenges with the NZC portal. Comments like “There is too much content” and “The filtering is confusing” reflected a need for better organisation and searchability. Since then, the introduction of a new menu has helped address these concerns, with navigation now more intuitive and user-friendly. **Need for curated and contextualised guidance:** Interviewees expressed a clear need for more curated and targeted materials, for example, “a list of must-haves of best practices, videos, resources.” The importance of translation and localisation was also highlighted, especially to support cities in non-English-speaking regions. One participant suggested that AI could help address language barriers. Several CA's proposed the use of a chatbot or other interactive filtering mechanism. As one put it, “A chatbot would also be useful—anything interactive is appreciated,” although another cautioned, “Would a chatbot help? It may help—but [I'm] worried that a technological solution will solve this. We should support the city to do it—they won't do it alone.”

Preference for in-person and tailored support: Interviewees consistently emphasised that live, human support (such as coaching, seasonal schools, and informal peer exchanges) is more effective than relying solely on digital resources. This type of support allows guidance to be tailored to each city's specific context and needs. One CA remarked, “Best support is informal/coaching, utilizing my personal knowledge.” Furthermore, cities were reported to prefer “more tailored support directly from the CA,” reinforcing the importance of relationship-based assistance over generic content.



6 Lessons learned and recommendations

The implementation of the Engagement Strategy Tools, along with the broader citizen engagement service offer, has provided valuable insights into how digital tools, advisory structures, and learning resources can support cities in advancing inclusive climate transitions. While the tools present a solid starting point, both quantitative data and qualitative feedback highlight several areas for improvement, including visibility, usability, and alignment with the actual needs of cities.

The Engagement Strategy Digital Tools were designed to serve as entry points into NZC's citizen engagement resources available in the NZC Portal. They provide a curated list of digital materials based on a user's self-assessed situation, needs, and level of familiarity with citizen engagement. However, uptake has remained limited, especially among city representatives and CA's, who were the primary intended users.

Feedback from interviews revealed that while the Engagement Strategy Digital Tools were not mentioned explicitly, several of the resources they direct users to were. This suggests that many users may already be familiar with the key CE tools and therefore do not rely on the Engagement Strategy Digital Tools as intermediaries. For experienced users, these tools may offer limited added value.

- **Improve visibility and communication:** The Engagement Strategy Digital Tools were not mentioned in any of the interviews, which suggests that their name may not be familiar to the interviewees. They should be more actively promoted, in particular towards cities that have not gone through the CCC submission process yet and towards non-Mission cities; making them more visible on the NZC portal could also help increase awareness and use.
- **Keep linked resources updated:** The effectiveness of these digital tools depends heavily on the quality and relevance of the resources they link to and are available in the NZC Portal. Regular updates are essential to ensure that curated lists reflect new existing materials available in the portal, exclude outdated ones, and meet the changing needs of cities at different stages of experience.
- **Embed the tools into support routines:** The tools should not be used in isolation. Their outputs could provide a useful starting point for discussions during coaching or planning sessions with cities. Integrating them into the regular workflows of CA's or other experts would help demonstrate their value and encourage more consistent use.
- **Analytics and monitoring limitations:** Because both Engagement Strategy Digital Tools share a single URL available in the portal, it was not possible to track user journeys or drop-off points for each tool individually using digital analytics tools such as Hotjar. For future monitoring, assigning distinct URLs to each digital tool would enable more detailed and actionable insights into user behaviour.

In addition to these tool-specific points, the interviews and user data reveal broader systemic challenges. Digital tools are only one part of the support system, and their impact is closely tied to how they are positioned, supported, and connected to the wider NZC framework.

- **Ensure human support remains central:** Digital tools should be viewed as complements to human facilitation rather than as stand-alone solutions. Informal coaching, seasonal schools, and peer learning opportunities remain essential components of the support model.
- **Improve portal organisation and navigation:** More than half of the interviewees indicated that the NZC portal contains an overwhelming number of resources, which are difficult to navigate. Content should be better organised, for example by topic, user type, or transition journey stage. Introducing a chatbot or a guided search function could also help users identify what they need more efficiently. In addition, adding a translation function could allow more cities to better engage with the resources.
- **Strengthen integration across thematic work packages:** Citizen engagement is not a stand-alone issue. It intersects with other key areas such as governance, mobility, energy, and



finance. The Citizen Engagement tools and resources should be better connected with other NZC work packages through shared toolkits, thematic entry points, and consistent tagging. This would help cities understand how engagement contributes to broader climate goals. This topic is further detailed in *D8.9 Learning report on implementation of transversal and systemic innovation*.

In conclusion, the Engagement Strategy Digital Tools offer potential as wayfinding aids within NZC's citizen engagement resource offer. However, unlocking their full value requires a more supportive ecosystem. This includes clearer communication, more intuitive navigation, well-maintained and curated digital content, and better integration into both human support services and cross-cutting project activities. The digital tools should be more actively promoted, in particular towards cities that have not gone through the CCC submission process yet and towards non-Mission cities.



7 Conclusion

This deliverable has reviewed the implementation and performance of the citizen engagement service model introduced in D8.6, with a focus on the Engagement Strategy Digital Tools and the broader portfolio of citizen engagement resources available on the NZC portal. The NZC service model for citizen and stakeholder participation offers a foundation for fostering inclusive, actionable engagement strategies at the city level. While early tool use was uneven, the learning derived from feedback and analytics has directly informed improvements to content delivery, resource visibility, and human support mechanisms.

What emerges from this deliverable is a detailed path towards strategic iteration. The tools, frameworks, and learnings documented here are not stand-alone products but living components of a growing ecosystem. As NetZeroCities transitions toward its next phase, these resources and the knowledge gained through their deployment can help shape the programme's offering and approach towards participation, trust-building, and citizen-centred climate action.

Investing in Curation and Maintenance:

To ensure continued relevance, coherence and user accessibility, future work should prioritise tool alignment with key programme milestones, integrate analytics and user tracking and feedback, natively into city onboarding workflows, and maintain regular curation of tools with feedback loops built into platform usage. With these measures, the NZC service model has the potential to support an evolving, resilient culture of participation across Europe's mission-minded cities as these models expand to support cities beyond the mission.

- Embed tools into human-led support channels:** A relevant avenue for increased impact lies in embedding these tools more deeply within the advisory, coaching, and peer exchange formats already trusted by city practitioners. Rather than relying solely on light touch digital accompaniment through the portal, the usability of the tools could be actively introduced and contextualised during direct interactions, through training, workshops, facilitated sessions, and onboarding processes led by the human-centered tailored support provided by the NZC platform, which connects with the work undertaken in SGA1 WP2 T2.3, T2.5 and T2.6.
- Maximising impact through visibility and usability monitoring:** To continue supporting cities in accessing and using digital tools, building on recent improvements to the portal's structure and navigation is key. Connecting updated spaces across the portal in a consolidated and organised way—such as menus, resources, groups, and events—and continuous refinements to search, categorisation, would further support usability. Promotion through tailored communications, city support emails, and direct linkages to ongoing pilot activities would also increase visibility.
- Differentiate maturity levels:** Develop a tailored or modular approach that better differentiates digital tools based on cities' existing levels of engagement capacity and capability. While some cities require foundational guidance, others are looking for more advanced strategies, case-based learning, or systems-level insights. This would allow for better targeting and more relevant support. The scalability and replication potential of the digital services and tools provided through the portal on citizens and stakeholder engagement could be further connected to the work done in SGA1 T2.4.
- Allocate additional resources:** The value of these tools and services will require greater resource commitment, both technical and human. Maintaining a high-quality engagement infrastructure will need continued iteration, through an ongoing process that requires dedicated time, expertise, and resources. This includes investing in human facilitation and continued collaboration with cities to ensure that engagement practices are truly responsive to local needs. This has partially been acknowledged and resourced in the subsequent grants under the NZC platform.



While citizen and stakeholder engagement tools remain a valuable asset, their potential can only be unlocked through a more integrated and resourced approach, one that balances digital infrastructure with human-centered support. Doing so will better position the platform to support cities in building inclusive, democratic, and resilient climate transitions.

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