2025 GKSDP (K2C Node) Implementor Network Meeting Report

Executive Summary

The 2025 GKSDP Network Meeting, convened by the Kruger to Canyons Biosphere Region in partnership with SANParks, Sabi Sand Pfunanani Trust and Timbavati Foundation on 25 November 2025, brought together **82 participants representing 59 organisations** working across the Greater Kruger landscape. This fourth annual gathering marked a critical inflection point in the network's evolution—moving from celebration of individual contributions toward intentional development of sustained collaborative infrastructure.

The meeting employed an innovative **Four Corners methodology** enabling structured peer learning across four themes: (1) Mandate & Methodology, (2) Success Stories & Scalability, (3) Challenge Transformation, and (4) Collaboration Readiness. This approach, explicitly praised by participants, created space for authentic dialogue about both successes and systemic challenges, normalizing vulnerability as catalyst for partnership rather than competitive disadvantage.

The five findings of the meeting can be summarised as follows:

1: Partnership Infrastructure	2: Paradigm Shift	3: Demonstrated Impact	4: Funding Architecture	5: Collaboration Maturity
• is Essential and Underfunded	• from Enforcement to Co-Creation is evident	• at Scale Requires Patient Capital	• Creates Systemic Constraints	• Requires Organisational Readiness

To convert potential collaborations into actual partnerships, the meeting established concrete mechanisms:

Five Thematic WhatsApp Groups with K2C moderators:

1. **Joint Fundraising Consortium** (Mike Grover) - Address financial sustainability collectively
2. **Shared Services Network** (Lauren Booth) - Logistics, equipment, expertise sharing
3. **Policy Advocacy Alliance** (Shoki Mafogo) - Collective voice for enabling environment
4. **Innovation Incubator** (Romy Antrobus Wuth) - Technology and methodology sharing
5. **Community Engagement Collective** (Vusi Tshabalala) - Coordinated stakeholder management

Three Infrastructure Priorities:

1. **One-page charters** per group (purpose, outputs, KPIs, governance, meeting cadence)
2. **Shared "Impact Data Room"** (metrics, case studies, MOUs, funding pipeline intelligence)
3. **Mid-year checkpoint** (June/July 2026) for progress review and accountability

Commitment Declaration: All participants signed K2C Biosphere Region map, creating symbolic and tangible acknowledgment of commitment to landscape-level collaboration and K2C's coordination role.

1. Introduction

The 2025 GKSDP (K2C Node) Network Meeting convened on Tuesday, 25 November 2025 from 08h30-16h00 at the Wits Rural Facility on the Orpen Road. This annual gathering brought together 82 participants representing 59 organisations working across the Greater Kruger landscape to network, share progress, and explore collaboration opportunities.

The meeting operated from a foundational recognition: diverse entities across the landscape—government departments, conservation agencies, private reserves, community-based organisations, research institutions, and social enterprises—all contribute to the shared vision of "improved well-being of all people living in the Greater Kruger landscape through enhancing the integrity of natural ecosystems." Rather than working in isolation, these organisations collectively create impact far greater than the sum of individual efforts.

The 2025 meeting was designed to celebrate these contributions while intentionally "interweaving" different approaches to build a picture of collective impact. The event created space for honest dialogue about successes and challenges, fostering an enabling environment for voluntary collaboration among implementers. This approach moves beyond traditional networking toward strategic partnership development grounded in shared purpose, mutual learning, and complementary capacities.

The meeting's significance was amplified by its alignment with the Government of Canada (GAC) Restoring African Rangelands Project, which emphasises collaborative landscape management, gender-responsive programming, and sustainable finance mechanisms. The network meeting served as both a platform for sharing lessons from this transboundary initiative and a mechanism for strengthening the collaborative infrastructure essential to landscape-level sustainability.

2. Background

2.1 Evolution of the Greater Kruger Strategic Development Programme (GKSDP) Implementers' Network Meetings (2019-2025)

The GKSDP Network Meetings have evolved significantly since the plan's development, reflecting growing sophistication in landscape-level collaboration:

2019-2021: Foundation Phase Development of the Greater Kruger Strategic Development Programme (GKSDP), led by SANParks with endorsement from national and provincial government. The GKSDP provided the first comprehensive strategic framework for integrated conservation and development across the Greater Kruger landscape, recognising that biodiversity conservation cannot be separated from the well-being of surrounding communities.

2022: Inaugural Network Meeting The first formal network meeting focused on reflection, sharing, and celebration of partner contributions. This initial gathering established the precedent for annual convening and identified the potential for more structured collaboration.

2023: Collective Action Focus The second meeting emphasised "collective action for collective impact to unlock collective finance." This thematic focus recognised that landscape-level outcomes require coordinated effort and that demonstrating collective impact could attract investment at scale beyond what individual organisations can access.

2024: Well-Being and Ecosystem Integrity The third meeting celebrated contributions toward the dual objectives of improved human well-being and enhanced ecosystem integrity. Analysis revealed significant quantifiable impact across environmental, social, and economic dimensions, validating the integrated approach to landscape management.

2025: Partnership Infrastructure and Collaboration Maturity The fourth meeting (documented in this report) represented a maturation of the network, moving from celebration of individual contributions toward explicit focus on partnership infrastructure, collaboration readiness, and transforming challenges into opportunities. The "Four Corners" methodology enabled deeper exploration of organisational approaches, proven interventions, systemic constraints, and collaboration capacity.

2.2 Key Findings from 2024 Network Meeting: Informing 2025 Focus

Analysis of the 2024 meeting revealed both achievements and critical gaps that shaped the design of the 2025 gathering:

Demonstrated Achievements:

- Significant quantifiable impact across environmental, social, and economic dimensions
- Strong integration of conservation with community benefits through sustainable development approaches
- Substantial progress in youth engagement and education, creating pipelines into conservation careers
- Notable success in human-wildlife conflict mitigation, demonstrating that coexistence is achievable
- Impressive scaling of economic development initiatives, with community enterprises reaching commercial viability

Critical Challenge: Financial Sustainability Financial sustainability emerged as the #1 challenge across all network partners, with consistent themes including:

- Limited long-term funding despite long-term commitments required for landscape transformation
- High operational and maintenance costs not covered by project-focused grant funding
- Heavy reliance on grant funding with limited diversification of revenue streams
- Resource constraints affecting transportation, equipment, and staffing capacity
- Short-term funding cycles misaligned with multi-year program needs

This finding directly informed the 2025 meeting's inclusion of Corner 3 (Challenge Transformation Workshop) to address funding architecture systemically rather than as individual organisational problems.

Key Opportunity: Untapped Collaboration Potential Participants identified significant potential for collaboration to address shared challenges, particularly in:

- Logistics and transportation (shared vehicles, coordinated field visits)
- Resource pooling to address equipment and infrastructure constraints
- Technology and innovation (shared platforms, joint M&E systems)
- Knowledge management and learning across organisations

This insight led to the 2025 meeting's emphasis on collaboration readiness (Corner 4) and strategic partnership matching rather than assuming all proximity-based collaboration is beneficial.

Strategic Implication for 2025: The 2024 findings validated that the network had moved beyond the question "Should we collaborate?" to the more sophisticated questions "How do we collaborate effectively?" and "What infrastructure enables sustained partnership?" The 2025 meeting was designed to address these maturity-level questions.

2.3 K2C Biosphere's Convening Role

The Kruger to Canyons Biosphere Region (K2C BR) has served as the convenor of the GKSDP (K2C Node) Network meetings since 2022. This convening function aligns organically with K2C's core mandate and organisational identity.

K2C BR Mandate: As a UNESCO-designated Man and Biosphere Reserve/Region—ranked #1 in Africa and #11 globally—K2C BR's mandate is to foster sustainable coexistence between people and nature through collaborative landscape management. The biosphere model explicitly requires demonstrating how conservation, livelihoods, and development can be mutually reinforcing rather than competing objectives.

Geographic Scope: K2C operates across 2.5 million hectares spanning Limpopo and Mpumalanga provinces, encompassing Kruger National Park, private reserves, communal lands, and urban areas. This geographic scope positions K2C at the intersection of diverse land uses, governance systems, and stakeholder interests.

Organisational Approach: K2C's operational model is built on "interweaving" rather than "integrating"—enabling diverse organisations to maintain their distinct identities and mandates while coordinating toward shared landscape objectives. This approach respects organisational autonomy while fostering strategic alignment, making K2C a credible neutral convener.

Why K2C as Convenor: Several factors make K2C well-suited to the network convening role:

1. **Social Capital:** K2C has established trust and relationships across government (all three spheres), private sector, civil society, and traditional authorities through 30 years of collaborative work
2. **Neutral Platform:** As a biosphere rather than an implementing NGO competing for the same funding, K2C can provide a neutral platform for honest dialogue about challenges and opportunities
3. **Coordination Infrastructure:** K2C maintains systems for knowledge management,

partnership coordination, and multi-stakeholder engagement that support network functions
4. **Alignment with GKSDP:** K2C's geographic footprint and thematic focus align closely with the GKSDP framework, creating natural synergies
5. **International Recognition:** K2C's UNESCO designation and participation in global biosphere networks provide access to international best practices in landscape-level collaboration

Resource Considerations: Importantly, K2C's convening role requires dedicated resources—staff time for planning, facilitation, logistics, and follow-up. The network meeting does not happen organically; it requires invested coordination infrastructure. K2C absorbs these costs as part of its landscape coordination mandate, though this represents opportunity cost that could be directed toward other programming.

Evolution of Convening Role: As the network matures from annual meetings toward ongoing collaboration, K2C's convening role may need to evolve. The 2025 meeting surfaced the critical question: "Who funds the learning, collaboration and support?" This suggests potential need for formalized network coordination beyond annual gatherings—a topic requiring strategic discussion among network partners and potential funders.

2.4 Linkage to GAC Restoring African Rangelands Project

The 2025 GKSDP Network Meeting was strategically aligned with the Government of Canada (GAC) Restoring African Rangelands Project, a $7.5 million initiative operating across the Greater Limpopo Transfrontier Conservation Area (GLTFCA) spanning Mozambique, South Africa, and Zimbabwe.

Strategic Alignment: The GAC project emphasises three core elements that align closely with the GKSDP Network's priorities:

- **Collaborative landscape management:** Multi-stakeholder partnerships across jurisdictional boundaries
- **Gender equity and women's economic participation:** Ensuring women benefit from and lead conservation initiatives
- **Sustainable finance mechanisms:** Developing diverse funding streams beyond traditional donor dependency

Meeting Integration: The GAC project was featured as a case study (Section 4.3) within the 2025 meeting, providing participants with:

- Concrete example of collaborative governance structures adaptable to local contexts
- Demonstration of sustainable finance models for catchment management and rangeland restoration
- Gender inclusion approaches applicable to community-based natural resource management
- Monitoring frameworks for demonstrating impact to funders and stakeholders
- Knowledge sharing mechanisms for amplifying local innovations regionally and globally

Network Benefit: By showcasing the GAC project's approaches to partnership structuring, thematic task teams, learning exchanges, and finance mechanism development, the network meeting enabled participants to learn from a transboundary initiative and consider applications in their own contexts. The project's emphasis on "interweaving" diverse stakeholders while maintaining distinct organisational identities resonated strongly with the network's own evolution.

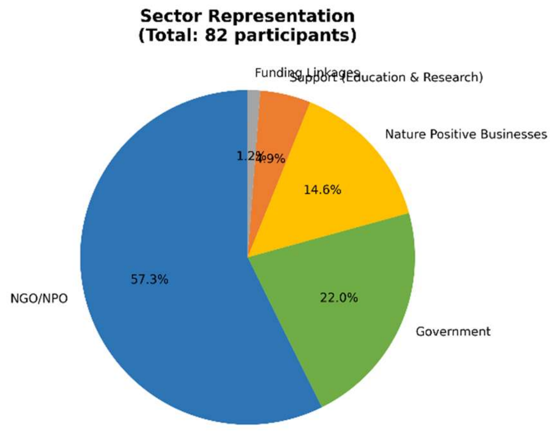
Gender Equity Connection: The GAC project's focus on women's participation directly connected to the network meeting's own gender equity achievements (55% female participation, 66% in NGO/NPO sector). The Resilient Women's Leadership Programme featured in the case study demonstrated pathways for advancing gender equity beyond numerical representation to genuine leadership development and influence.

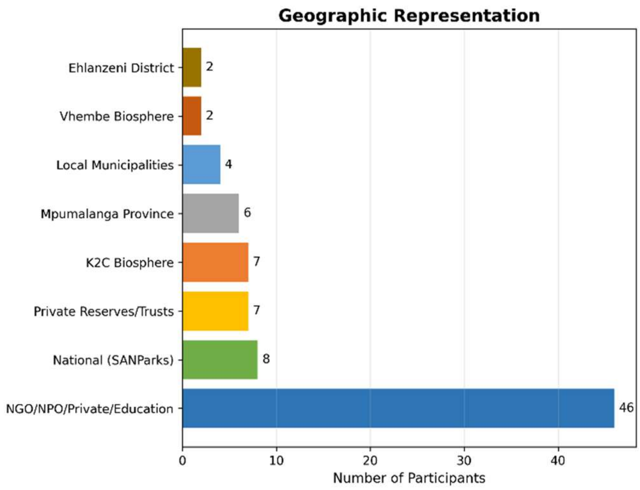
This linkage positioned the network meeting as both a learning platform (drawing lessons from the GAC project) and a demonstration site (showcasing K2C's convening role and the network's maturity in collaborative landscape management).

3. Participation Profile

The 2025 GKSDP (K2C Node) Network Meeting achieved strong representation across multiple sectors, government spheres, and geographic areas within the K2C Biosphere Region and beyond. Gender-disaggregated data demonstrates meaningful progress toward inclusive participation.

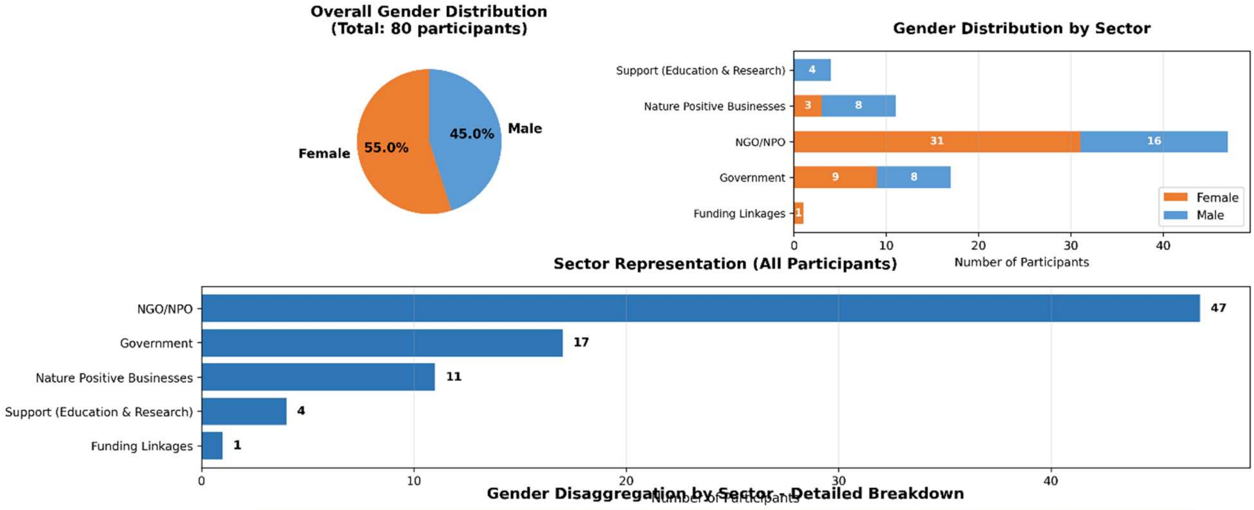
3.1 Overall Attendance





Total Participants: 82 individuals
Organisations Represented: 59 unique organisations
Gender Distribution:

- **Female:** 44 participants (55.0%)
- **Male:** 36 participants (45.0%)



Gender Disaggregation by Sector - Detailed Breakdown

Sector	Total	Female	Female %	Male	Male %
Nature Positive Businesses	11	3	27.3%	8	72.7%
NGO/NPO	47	31	66.0%	16	34.0%
Government	17	9	52.9%	8	47.1%
Funding Linkages	1	1	100.0%	0	0.0%
Support (Education & Research)	4	0	0.0%	4	100.0%
TOTAL	**80**	**44**	**55.0%**	**36**	**45.0%**

The meeting successfully brought together a diverse cross-section of stakeholders working on sustainable development, conservation, and community empowerment across the Greater Kruger landscape. The gender distribution, with female participants representing 55% of attendees, exceeds parity and demonstrates K2C's commitment to gender equity and social inclusion.

3.2 Sector Representation

Participation spanned five key sectors, with strong representation from civil society and government:

- **NGO/NPO:** 47 participants (58.8%)
- **Government:** 17 participants (21.3%)
- **Nature Positive Businesses:** 11 participants (13.8%)
- **Support (Education & Research):** 4 participants (5.0%)
- **Funding Linkages:** 1 participant (1.3%)

The dominant presence of NGO/NPO sector representatives (58.8%) reflects the strong civil society engagement in landscape-level conservation and community development initiatives. Government representation at 21.3% demonstrates meaningful institutional participation across multiple spheres of government.

3.3 Gender Disaggregation by Sector

Gender representation varied across sectors, revealing both achievements and opportunities for enhanced inclusion:

NGO/NPO Sector (47 participants):

- Female: 31 participants (66.0%)
- Male: 16 participants (34.0%)

The NGO/NPO sector demonstrated the strongest female representation, with women comprising two-thirds of participants. This reflects the sector's leadership in gender-responsive programming and women's economic empowerment initiatives.

Government Sector (17 participants):

- Female: 9 participants (52.9%)
- Male: 8 participants (47.1%)

Government sector participation achieved near gender parity, with a slight majority of female representatives. This balanced representation across local, provincial, and national government levels is encouraging for mainstreaming gender considerations in policy and implementation.

Nature Positive Businesses (11 participants):

- Female: 3 participants (27.3%)
- Male: 8 participants (72.7%)

The private sector showed lower female representation, indicating an opportunity for enhanced gender inclusion in nature-based business and private reserve management sectors.

Support (Education & Research) (4 participants):

- Female: 0 participants (0.0%)
- Male: 4 participants (100.0%)

The education and research sector had exclusively male representation at this meeting, highlighting a specific area for targeted outreach in future network gatherings.

Funding Linkages (1 participant):

- Female: 1 participant (100.0%)

3.4 Geographic Representation

Participants represented diverse geographic constituencies within and beyond the K2C Biosphere footprint:

Local Government:

- Bushbuckridge Local Municipality: 2 participants
- Collins Chabane Local Municipality: 1 participant
- Maruleng Local Municipality: 1 participant

District Government:

- Ehlanzeni District Municipality: 2 participants

Provincial Government:

- Mpumalanga Province (LEDET, MTPA): 6 participants

National Government:

- National (SANParks and affiliated entities): 8 participants

Biosphere Organisations:

- K2C Biosphere Region: 7 participants (due to its facilitating role)
- Vhembe Biosphere Reserve: 2 participants

Private Sector Conservation:

- Private Nature Reserves/Trusts (Timbavati, Thornybush, Sabi Sand, Singita): 7 participants

Civil Society & Private Sector:

- NGO/NPO/Private Sector/Education: 46 participants

This geographic distribution demonstrates the meeting's success in engaging stakeholders across all three spheres of government (local, provincial, and national), private conservation landholders, biosphere reserve management entities, and community-based organisations.

3.5 Key Participating Organisations

The meeting drew participation from a wide array of organisations working across the conservation and sustainable development spectrum. Organisations with multiple representatives included:

Five or more participants:

- Kruger to Canyons Biosphere Region (K2C): 7 participants, inclusive of facilitators

Three to four participants:

- South African National Parks (SANParks): 6 participants (across SANParks, SANParks KNP, and SANParks Biodiversity Social Projects)
- Limpopo Department of Economic Development, Environment and Tourism (LEDET): 3 participants

Two participants:

- Conservation South Africa, DAKTARI Bush School, Timbavati Foundation, Zanza Africa, Bushbuckridge Local Municipality, Thornybush Community, Mpumalanga Tourism and Parks Agency (MTPA), Sabi Sand Pfunanani Trust, Vhembe Biosphere Reserve, Hoedspruit Hub, Zingela Ulwazi Trust, Ehlanzeni District Municipality, Good Work Foundation, Conservation Alpha

The remaining 43 organisations were represented by single participants, demonstrating the breadth of stakeholder engagement across the landscape.

3.6 Significance of Participation Profile

The participation profile reflects several important characteristics of the GKSDP Network:

1. **Gender-responsive participation:** With 55% female representation overall, the meeting exceeded gender parity and demonstrated K2C's commitment to gender equity. This is particularly significant for GAC reporting and aligns with the Restoring African Rangelands Project's emphasis on women's participation in conservation and natural resource management.
2. **Sectoral variation in gender inclusion:** The 66% female representation in the NGO/NPO sector and 53% in government contrasts with 27% in nature-positive businesses and 0% in education/research, indicating targeted opportunities for future gender inclusion efforts in specific sectors.
3. **Multi-stakeholder engagement:** The presence of government, private sector, civil society, and academic institutions demonstrates the integrated approach required for landscape-level sustainable development.
4. **Multi-scalar governance:** Representation across local, district, provincial, and national government levels enables policy coherence and coordinated implementation.
5. **Public-private partnerships:** The balance between government entities, private conservation areas, and community-based organisations reflects the collaborative model essential to K2C's success.
6. **Geographic spread:** While concentrated in the K2C Biosphere Region, participation extended to neighbouring landscapes (Vhembe Biosphere Reserve) and organisations with broader mandates, facilitating knowledge exchange and potential replication of successful approaches.
7. **Capacity for implementation:** The diversity of implementing organisations—from large-scale conservation NGOs to community-based trusts—ensures that meeting outcomes can be translated into on-the-ground action across varied contexts.

3.7 Alignment with Project Objectives

The participation profile directly supports the GAC Restoring African Rangelands Project's emphasis on:

- **Greater participation and influence of women** in management and decision-making (Outcome 1)
- **Economic inclusion of women** in conservation finance mechanisms (Outcome 2)
- **Women's participation in regenerative agriculture** and capacity building (Outcome 3)
- **Access to and participation of women in economic opportunities** supporting restoration and PA management (Immediate Outcome 1310)

The 55% female participation rate and sector-specific gender data provide a solid foundation for gender-responsive network activities and demonstrate progress toward the project's gender equality objectives.

The Attendance Register is shared as **ANNEX A.**

4. Proceedings

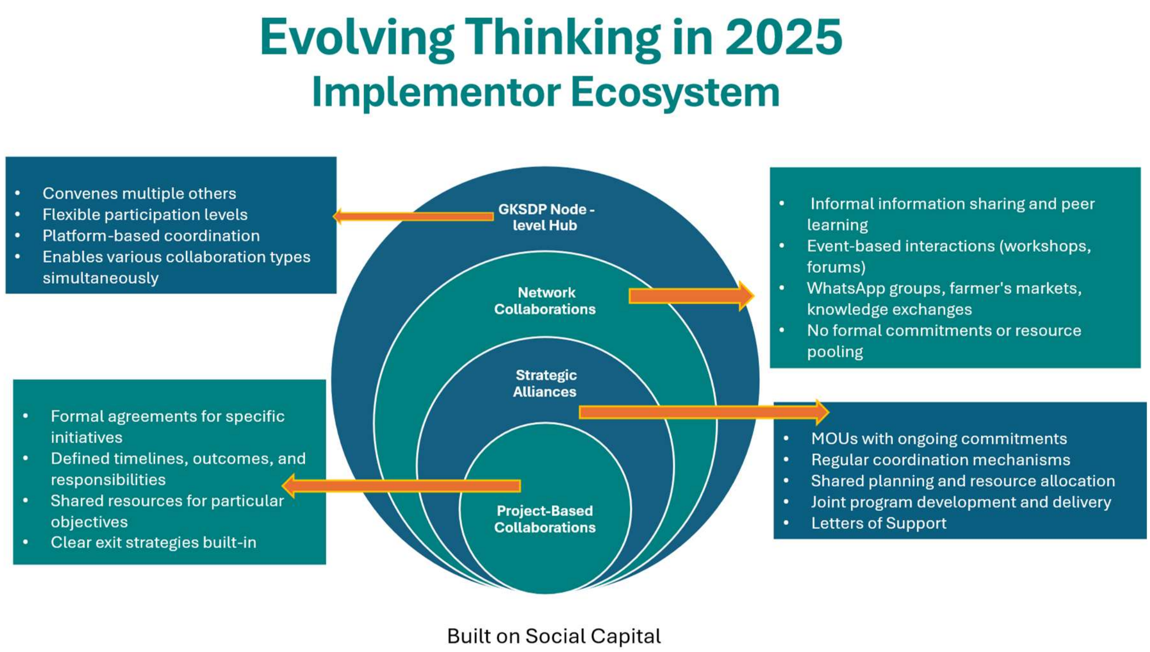
4.1 Agenda, Objectives and Rationale

The Meeting Agenda is shared as **ANNEX B.**

The Objectives of the 2025 GKSDP (K2C Node) Implementors Network Meeting were to:

1. **Enable co-learning networking pathways to concrete partnerships**
    - Move beyond introductions to actionable collaboration agreements
    - Create structured processes for partnership formation
2. **Co-create sustainable financing solutions for shared challenges**
    - Address the #1 challenge collectively rather than individually
    - Develop joint fundraising strategies and resource mobilization approaches
3. **Establish collaborative implementation mechanisms for 2025-2027**
    - Create clear frameworks for different types of partnerships
    - Develop monitoring and accountability systems for collaborations
4. **Build collective advocacy capacity for policy and funding influence**
    - Strengthen the network's voice with government and funders
    - Develop coordinated advocacy strategies

The Rationale for 2025 Meeting Design:



Strategic Shift: From Celebration to Action

The 2025 meeting represents a deliberate evolution from previous years:

Previous Focus: Networking, learning, celebrating contributions
2025 Focus: Strategic action through structured collaboration pathways

This shift directly responds to participants expressed needs for:

- Concrete partnership formation mechanisms
- Collaborative approaches to financial sustainability
- Practical resource-sharing frameworks
- Collective advocacy capacity

Evolving Understanding of the Implementor Ecosystem

The 2025 design recognises that the GKSDP Node-level Hub functions as a platform enabling multiple types of collaboration simultaneously:

1. **Network Collaborations** - Informal information sharing and peer learning (e.g., WhatsApp groups, workshops, knowledge exchanges)
2. **Project-Based Collaborations** - Formal agreements for specific initiatives with defined timelines and outcomes
3. **Strategic Alliances** - Ongoing MOUs with regular coordination mechanisms and shared planning

This layered approach allows organisations to engage at different levels based on their capacity and interests.

4.2 Opening & Welcome

The Facilitator, Mr Michael Grover, welcomed all the participants.

Marie-Tinka Uys, the CEO of the K2C Biosphere, set the scene by reflecting on the previous three year's network meetings and emphasising the evolution of these meetings.

She stated her hope that participants would engage deeply with each other's mandates, methodologies, successes, and challenges. Further, she said: "By this afternoon, we will transform that understanding into action—developing collaboration frameworks and establishing the foundations for joint work in 2025 and beyond."

She acknowledged that true partnership requires both courage and humility. Courage to commit limited resources to collective efforts. Humility to recognise that none can achieve landscape-scale transformation alone.

4.3 Case Study: Restoring African Rangelands Project

The facilitator introduced the Case Study presenter, Mr Piet Theron from Conservation International.

4.3.1 Project Overview

The Restoring African Rangelands Project was presented as a case study demonstrating transboundary collaborative approaches to landscape-scale conservation and community development within the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Conservation Area (GLTFCA). Funded by Global Affairs Canada, the project operated across three countries (South Africa, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe) from 2024-2025, focusing on improving the health of biodiversity and key ecosystems on which vulnerable people depend.

Ultimate Outcome: Improved health of biodiversity and key ecosystems on which vulnerable people in Mozambique, South Africa and Zimbabwe depend.

The project was implemented through a partnership approach involving Conservation International, Conservation South Africa (K2C Node lead), SANParks, Peace Parks Foundation, Frankfurt Zoological Society, Green Matter, Endangered Wildlife Trust, and EcoAdvisors, working collaboratively with government agencies in all three countries.

4.3.2 Key Lessons Learned

The presentation highlighted five critical lessons learned from implementing the Restoring African Rangelands Project:

1. Collaborative & Partnership Approach

The project demonstrated the power of co-designing interventions with complementary expertise across organisations.

A structured governance approach was established with:

- A Steering Committee meeting bi-monthly for project oversight
- A Project Management Committee (with country-specific partner groups) meeting bi-weekly
- Seven Thematic Task Teams meeting monthly, focusing on: Tourism, Sustainable Finance, Human-Wildlife Coexistence, Learning & Skills Development, Gender & Social Inclusion, Monitoring & Evaluation, and Corridors/Ecological Linkages

This structure enabled thematic integration, alignment, and output-driven results while maintaining clear lines of accountability and technical support across the transboundary landscape.

2. Financial and Human Resourcing

The project successfully built on the prior Greater Kruger Financing Strategy (GKFS) which invested $200,000 in foundational work. The GAC project invested $7.5 million to work with partners to build capacity and develop 3-5 sustainable finance mechanisms, with the ultimate target of attracting $40 million in sustainable finance.

Key mechanisms developed included:

- **Mozambique:** Limpopo Conservation Bond Programme (Peace Parks Foundation)
- **South Africa:** K2C Catchment Investment Programme, KNP Climate Smart Infrastructure Investment Strategy, and K2C Rangelands Restoration Carbon Project (Conservation International)
- **Zimbabwe:** Sengwe-Tshipise Corridor Investment Programme (agro-forestry focus)
- **Cross-cutting:** Tourism Investment Facility and policy research on water bonds, restoration bonds, and agricultural incentives

3. Learning and Knowledge Sharing

The project prioritised structured knowledge exchange through:

- **In-person learning exchanges:** Tourism (Pafuri-Sengwe Node), Land Restoration (K2C upper and lower catchments), Human-Wildlife Coexistence (Maputo National Park)

- **Virtual platforms:** Nature Finance Series (monthly sessions with investor participation), Capacity Building & Training events (100+ participants), Conservation Agreement Training
- **Documentation:** Two comprehensive Learning Exchange Reports were produced
- **Global knowledge contribution:** Three thematic areas were identified for global knowledge sharing: (1) Ecological Linkages and Wildlife Corridors for Land Restoration and Climate Resilience, (2) Finance Mechanisms for Protected Areas Management, and (3) Human-Wildlife Conflict at the Agriculture Interface

4. Gender and Social Inclusion

Gender Equity and Social Inclusion (GESI) was mainstreamed throughout the project using Conservation International's five-step framework:

1. Gather relevant social information
2. Identify benefits, risks and barriers
3. Develop appropriate solutions
4. Monitor and evaluate
5. Adapt and learn

A standout initiative was the Resilient Women's Leadership Programme (July 2025), which engaged 34 women from 10 organisations including SANParks, ZIMParks, and ANAC across two cohorts (Rising Leaders and Senior Leaders). The programme included virtual introductions, two-day in-person sessions, individual coaching, peer support circles, and ongoing mentoring. Participants described it as transformative and empowering, with peer networks expected to continue beyond the project.

5. Reporting and Alignment with GLTFCA Programmes

The project demonstrated rigorous alignment with the 10 GLTFCA Strategic Programmes, mapping all project outputs to relevant programme areas. Progress tracking was managed through Monday.com, providing real-time visibility of activity completion status across all outputs.

This systematic approach enabled:

- Clear demonstration of how project activities contributed to broader GLTFCA objectives
- Transparent reporting to funders (GAC) and stakeholders
- Identification of gaps and opportunities for future programming
- Evidence-based decision-making for resource allocation

4.3.3 Landscape-Level Approach

The case study emphasised the importance of a coordinated landscape approach combining:

- Blended finance solutions
- Coordinated landscape management
- Policy research and economic modelling
- Focused technical and financial support
- Landscape-level M&E framework
- Capacity and skills ecosystems
- Learning and knowledge sharing

This integrated approach aimed to improve alignment and capacity to implement conservation and sustainable development initiatives at scale across the 4.8-million-hectare GLTFCA landscape.

4.3.4 Sustainability Pathway

The project positioned itself as a "collaboration sprint" - moving from existing efforts that were mostly individual and site-based (2024), through intensive collaborative resourcing of key areas necessary for long-term sustainability (2025), toward a long-term funding and collaboration approach (2026-2030). The emphasis on building mechanisms, frameworks, and partnerships during the project period was designed to catalyse sustained impact beyond the project's lifecycle.

4.3.5 Relevance to the GKSDP Network

The Restoring African Rangelands Project case study provided network participants with:

- **Practical examples** of collaborative governance structures that can be adapted locally
- **Sustainable finance models** relevant to catchment management and rangeland restoration
- **Gender inclusion approaches** that can strengthen community-based natural resource management
- **Monitoring frameworks** that demonstrate impact to funders and stakeholders
- **Knowledge sharing mechanisms** that amplify local innovations to regional and global audiences

The presentation emphasised that many of the approaches, tools, and lessons learned are directly applicable to the work of the GKSDP Network members in the K2C Biosphere Region.

4.4 Four Corners Structured Interaction

The Facilitator introduced the Four Corners methodology, where participants were divided into smaller groups and move to a space where in-depth discussions were facilitated fostering active listening, information sharing and understanding diverse viewpoints through peer-to-peer discussions. The four corners were:

Corner	Purpose	Facilitator
Corner 1: Mandate & Methodology Clinic	Deep understanding of organisational approaches	Shoki Mafogo
Corner 2: Success Stories & Scalability Lab	*Purpose:* Identify proven interventions with replication potential	Romy Antrobus-Wuth
Corner 3: Challenge Transformation Workshop	*Purpose:* Convert challenges into collaboration opportunities	Vusi Tshabalala
Corner 4: Collaboration Readiness Assessment	*Purpose:* Clarify partnership capacity and preferences	Lauren Booth

4.4.1 Mandate and Methodology

Purpose: Deep understanding of organisational approaches

Corner 1 demonstrated that the GKSDP Network's strength lies not in uniformity of approach but in complementarity of mandates and methods. Organisations operate at different scales (from household to international), through different sectors (government, civil society, private, academic), addressing different facets of sustainability (species conservation, livelihoods, education, health, governance)—yet all contribute to the shared goal of a sustainable Greater Kruger landscape where people and nature thrive together.

The emphasis on partnership formalisation (MOUs, conservation agreements), sophisticated M&E systems, innovative finance mechanisms, and the conceptual shift from "integration" to "interweaving" suggests a network that is maturing from informal collaboration toward structured, evidence-based, financially sustainable landscape stewardship.

4.4.2 Success Stories and Scalability

Purpose: Identify proven interventions with replication potential

Corner 2 brought together 21 participants across three working groups to share success stories and identify the "magic ingredients" that enabled these successes—with particular attention to scalability and replication potential. The session generated a rich catalogue of proven interventions spanning conservation, education, enterprise development, health, infrastructure, and community empowerment.

Youth Pathways into Conservation

Several organisations demonstrated systematic approaches to creating youth pathways into conservation careers:

Careers in Conservation EXPO (Global Conservation Corps): An annual event exposing approximately 300 youth to career options in conservation, with participation from 10+ partners. The "magic ingredient" identified was understanding how communities work—including traditional authorities (TAs) in all processes, engaging parents and schools to create wide buy-in. The Mayor's endorsement of the event demonstrates institutional support, while the tagline "making conservation cool" reflects intentional rebranding of conservation as aspirational for youth.

Future Rangers Programme (Global Conservation Corps): An intensive programme engaging 150 students across 6 schools (3 high schools, 3 primary schools), with 15 matriculants entering apprenticeship programmes. The success principle articulated was "quality over quantity"—deep engagement with fewer students rather than superficial reach to many.

Outreach Programmes (Nourish): Early Childhood Development (Edu-Care) reaching 629 children in 5 villages; afterschool programme in 12 schools reaching 900+ children (Grades 5-7); field trips to Kruger National Park at a rate of 2 per month. This multi-layered approach creates a pipeline from early childhood through adolescence.

Enterprise Development and Market Access

Multiple initiatives demonstrated pathways from subsistence to sustainable enterprise:

Eco-Inclusive Entrepreneurship (Indalo Inclusive): First cohort of 8 enterprises, second cohort of 18. Of the initial 8, 5 are now supplying Timbavati lodges regularly. Income has improved 3-fold for participating businesses. The programme provides training, zero-interest loans, and solar systems to reduce electricity costs and promote green economy. The model has been replicated to Sabi Sand. Success factors identified: collaboration is essential given that each community is complex; lodges actively want local supply; resilience is created through sustained support.

CM Textiles Enterprise: A standout example of scale: secured tender to supply Kruger National Park curio shops with 16,000 bags per month. The enterprise was presented at the G20 Summit and the entrepreneur met with government ministers. This demonstrates the potential for community-based enterprises to reach commercial scale.

Orpen Hub Revival (Kulani Collective): Revitalization of Orpen hub as retail space for local crafters. R130,000 in goods sold by one crafter group, R120,000 by another. The organisation operates with 11 and 12 crafters in two groups, provides Youth4Youth interns (12) for retail work experience (2 have secured formal employment). Success factors: trust-building with crafters, stability, sustainable relationships, meticulous data/sales tracking. The hub creates permanent market access rather than depending on periodic markets.

Timbavati Supply Programme: Now in its third year of formalization, supporting 8 formal businesses, with 5 actively supplying lodges. One poultry farmer now earns R35,000 average income. Over 15 years, the Timbavati Foundation has provided 89 scholarships with an 80% employment rate, demonstrating long-term commitment to human capital development.

Landscape-Scale Environmental Interventions
K2C Biosphere Reserve Achievements: Presented as the 11th biosphere globally and 1st in Africa to achieve particular recognition.

Quantified achievements include:

- 22,167 ha cleared of alien invasive plants
- 25,000 ha declared as protected areas
- 27,000 ha under better management
- 100% human-wildlife conflict reduction in Phalaborwa community
- 24 eco-savings and credit groups established
- 120 facilitators trained (youth)
- 150 citizen science monitors trained
- 82 small-scale farmers supported
- 98 livestock farmers supported

The consistent theme articulated: "Partnership is the magic ingredient."

Clean Cookstoves Distribution (TASC): Successfully distributed 948,000 cookstoves across South Africa, with 430,000 within the K2C Biosphere Reserve, achieving 8.5 million tonnes of CO_2 emissions reduction. The project operates in 3 biospheres. Success attributed to three types of partnerships: implementing partners, methodological partners, and people on the ground.

Alien Invasive Plant Clearing and Waste Management (Nova Institute): 60+ people employed in waste services; 30 million kg of waste processed; air quality improvement documented; fruit tree planting with 60% survival rate over 10 years. The programme integrates early childhood development (engaging 100 school principals) and gets parents involved in both ECD and environmental management, demonstrating multi-objective integration.

Human-Wildlife Coexistence
Elephants Alive Gogo Programme: Shifted from conflict to coexistence through strategic inclusion of Gogos (grandmothers) and youth.

Achievements:
- 31 Gogo camps with 200 participants
- 65 Gogos assisting in elephant tracking
- 468 consultations at clinics
- Impact multiplier: 1 Gogo influences 18 other people

The programme provides employment and livelihoods while building partnerships to implement and monitor progress. This demonstrates how conservation can be delivered through trusted community members rather than external enforcement.

Cattle Ear-Tagging Programme (Endangered Wildlife Trust): Enables understanding of cattle movement into reserves, allowing intervention before lions kill livestock. Combined with lion collar data shared with Leverone farmers, this technological approach supports coexistence by providing early warning and enabling preventative action.

Environmental Monitors Programme (SANParks): Approximately 75 environmental monitors deployed along Kruger National Park boundaries. Initially launched through the GEF-6 programme across the Greater Kruger, the programme has expanded. This creates employment while strengthening monitoring capacity.

Health and Social Development
CHoiCe Trust Health Programmes: Operating in Mopani, Capricorn, and Vhembe districts:
- 2,500 adolescents living with HIV supported (ongoing)
- 110 households receiving agroecology training and support
- 3,500 water filters distributed (access to clean water)
- 35 palliative care patients supported (ongoing)

The integration of health with agroecology and water demonstrates holistic household resilience-building.

Sexual Reproductive Health Programme (Timbavati Foundation with Tshemba): Operating in 3 high schools, addressing teenage pregnancy prevention alongside other development interventions.

Infrastructure and Technology
Digital Learning Centres (Save the Sand/Londolozi): 5 existing centres with 2 more coming, scheduled with schools but open to anyone. Represents over 4 million Rand investment over

17 years. The longevity of commitment is notable.

Community Wi-Fi Hubs (Zanza Africa): Wi-Fi hotspots in traditional authorities for local communities. 1 operational, 2 more by year-end, 3 more in pipeline for early next year. The "magic ingredient" identified: money for infrastructure investment. However, equally emphasised: huge collaboration and relationship building with traditional authorities.

Numeracy Programme (Hoedspruit Hub): Domino-based numeracy improvement programme that is interactive and reduces screen time for children. Deployed across 20 schools with relationships in Sekororo and Bushbuckridge. 600 SEF (Social Enterprise Fellows) employed, 600 kids participating in NumiKnows. External partnerships have unlocked projects and training opportunities in K2C.

Research-Practice Integration

Science for Society Symposium (Wits Rural): Hosted successfully for 4 years, creating platforms for knowledge translation and knowledge brokering, linking researchers with stakeholders. Demonstrates institutionalization of research-practice dialogue.

Organisation for Tropical Studies Field Station: Sustainable building practices embedded; science produced influences management policies. Over 40 institutions have accessed or run courses in Kruger National Park. Success attributed to relationships, emphasizing that without funding, local students are displaced by international students.

AWARD Programmes: Multiple initiatives demonstrating research-into-practice.

- National Dam Siltation Plan: 420 dams with siltation management considerations, 4 skills programmes for Department of Water and Sanitation, e-learning platform development
- River Stewardship Programme with Catchment Management Agencies: electronic monitoring system
- Upper Groot Letaba Landscape Plan: trade agreement establishment
- Giyani Programme: embedding research into municipal structures
- Solar Business Labs: young people setting up small solar plants
- Bushbuckridge Farmers Association: formalized as NPO and trading platform

The e-learning platform was identified as a breakthrough for national-level scale. Success attributed to collaboration at landscape scale and integrating research into local government practice/policy.

Conservation Finance Innovation

Debt-for-Nature Swaps (Conservation Alpha/Confluence Capital): New initiative working with biospheres on funding opportunities, providing debt relief for organisations "drowning in debts," and assisting nature-positive enterprises to access investment. Requires demonstrated success and verified impact to attract funding.

Cross-Cutting Success Factors: The "Magic Ingredients"

Across all interventions, participants identified recurring success factors:

1. Partnerships as Non-Negotiable: Nearly every success story attributed achievement to

partnerships. K2C explicitly stated "Partnership is the magic ingredient." Multiple organisations emphasised that their work would be impossible without collaboration.
2. Trust and Transparency: Sabi Sand emphasised transparency and trust between organisation, partners, and stakeholders as the successful ingredient. Kulani Collective emphasised trust-building with crafters as foundational to market access success.
3. Community Entry Points: Working through traditional authorities, engaging parents and schools, building relationships with community structures rather than imposing external solutions.
4. Quality Over Quantity: Explicitly articulated by the Future Rangers programme but evident across interventions—deep engagement, long-term commitment, and measurable outcomes rather than superficial reach.
5. Empathy and Structure: Candice Grover (Ripple Effect) identified this combination as essential—empathy to understand context and community needs, combined with structure to ensure systematic, accountable implementation.
6. Perseverance and Not Giving Up: Mountain Environmental Watch emphasised this in their work bringing together antagonistic sectors (farmers and environmental advocates) around shared resource (water). Elephants Alive emphasised perseverance in human-wildlife coexistence work.
7. Collaboration with Organisations that have Social Capital: Plastics SA identified that collaborating with K2C—an organisation with established social capital in the landscape—was the "magic ingredient" enabling their work.
8. Clear Mandate and Champion: Conservation Alpha emphasised having a plan and strategy, a champion, clear mandate, capable implementers, resources, and patience. Demonstrated that an NGO can channel money to conservation effectively when partnering with mandate authorities.

Scalability Factors Identified
Participants articulated specific factors enabling scale:

- **Simplicity and Multi-language Accessibility:** Programmes designed to be understood and implemented in various languages and contexts
- **Affordability:** Cost structures that enable replication without massive funding
- **Mix of Technology and "Real Green":** Combining technological solutions with nature-based approaches
- **E-learning Platforms:** National-level scale becomes possible through digital delivery
- **Formalization:** Enterprises, associations, and programmes becoming formal entities (NPOs, trading platforms) enables sustainability and replication
- **Documentation and Tracking:** Meticulous record-keeping enabling evidence-based replication
- **Partner-Enabled Expansion:** Other partners expanding footprint of successful models

Examples Ready for Scaling
Several initiatives were identified as "ready to scale":
- Afterschool Herding Programme project
- Bushbuckridge waste beneficiation
- Catchment Investment Programme
- Conservation Agreements Framework (successfully implemented in 3 traditional

authorities, 17 villages; 9 more to be signed by December)

Synthesis
Corner 2 revealed a landscape rich with proven interventions that have moved beyond pilot phase to demonstrated impact. The quantified achievements—from 22,167 hectares cleared to 948,000 cookstoves distributed to 100% HWC reduction in specific areas—provide evidence of scale already achieved.

The recurring identification of "partnerships" as the magic ingredient, combined with specific operational principles (trust, transparency, empathy, structure, perseverance, quality focus), suggests that scalability is less about technical innovation and more about relational infrastructure and sustained commitment.

Notably, many "success stories" are 10-17 years in the making (digital learning centres, Timbavati Foundation scholarships, ECD centres), challenging the project-cycle mindset that expects quick wins. True sustainability appears to require patient capital, sustained relationships, and willingness to work through complexity rather than seeking shortcuts.

The diversity of interventions—from high-tech (wildlife collars, Wi-Fi hubs) to community-based (Gogo camps, crafter groups) to policy-level (national dam siltation plans)—demonstrates that landscape sustainability requires simultaneous work at multiple scales and through multiple modalities. No single intervention is sufficient; the ecosystem of complementary interventions creates resilience.

4.4.3 Challenges Transformation

Purpose: Convert challenges into collaboration opportunities

Corner 3 created a safe space for 21 participants across three working groups to surface genuine challenges facing organisations in the landscape and collaboratively identify transformative solutions. Rather than presenting polished success stories, this session encouraged vulnerability and honest problem-sharing—essential for moving from competition to collaboration. The session format intentionally reframed challenges not as failures but as collaboration opportunities.

Challenge Identification: Core Themes

Participants identified and voted on priority challenges, revealing recurring themes across the landscape:

Funding Architecture Challenges:

- Funding contraction and budget cuts
- Unrealistic funding expectations
- Short-term funding cycles versus long-term needs
- Restricted funding (can only be used according to donor specifications)
- Funders funding projects rather than people/core operations
- Insufficient funding for scaling despite expansion needs
- Co-funding requirements creating barriers
- Grant dependency versus sustainability expectations

Operational and Structural Challenges:

- Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) and impact reporting complexity
- Governance structure navigation (particularly for new landscape approaches like SANParks' "mega-living landscape")
- Silos versus integrated approaches
- Over-diversification (spreading too thin instead of maintaining focus)
- Lack of organisational structure for implementation
- Exit strategy planning for project sustainability
- Human resource constraints (particularly resource mobilisers)

Landscape-Level Coordination Challenges:

- Coordinating with local government
- Interweaving versus integrating
- Networking and knowledge sharing
- Different community engagement protocols creating confusion
- Lack of continuity and fluid hand-overs
- Partnership gaps in governance structures
- Undermining of local governance by funder models

Technical Challenges:

- Research and data management
- Data deficiency from trainees for tracking impact
- M&E tools useful for organisations but not user-friendly for participants
- Authentic impact measurement (particularly social impact)
- Poaching and wildlife crime
- Zoonotic diseases
- Fence maintenance affecting human-wildlife coexistence
- Animal poisoning and snaring
- Corridor disease management (e.g., FMD) causing community unrest

Economic and Livelihoods:

- Youth unemployment
- Monetizing solutions to attract funding
- Waste repurposing and management systems integration
- Restrictive location of operations limiting opportunities

Group 1: Funding Architecture—From Constraint to Collaboration

The first working group focused intensively on funding challenges, revealing common frustrations but also innovative approaches:

The Funding Dilemma Articulated:

SANParks Biodiversity Social Projects described funding contraction with unrealistic expectations: "Sometimes social impact is given priority over restoration impacts—wages more important than actual environmental restoration." This tension between community needs (employment) and conservation outcomes reflects a fundamental challenge in integrated programming.

Thornybush noted that expansion creates funding deficits: social impact needs grow faster than funding. GKEPF highlighted the sustainability paradox: "Grants usually fund you with the aim that you sustain it"—expecting organisations to become self-sufficient without providing transition support.

Vhembe identified the context gap: "Funding from abroad with no local context. Funding restrictions sometimes limit project success and community buy-in (i.e., building community borehole that funding excludes or vehicle)." This reveals how donor priorities may not align with community-identified needs, undermining local ownership.

Zingela Ulwazi Trust emphasised restricted funding: "Can only use it according to donor"—limiting flexibility to respond to emerging needs or opportunities.

Transformative Solutions: Building Trust Through Evidence
Rather than simply lamenting funding challenges, participants shared strategies that work:

Intentional Communication with Funders: DAKTARI emphasised developing an intentional communication strategy and inviting donors for site visits to communicate impact directly. Seeing rather than reading about impact creates deeper connection and understanding.

Impact-Focused Narrative: Vhembe Youth highlighted that "Impact and identifying need are key to communicate" when approaching potential funders. Leading with community-identified needs rather than organisational priorities reframes the conversation.

Showcasing Operations, Not Just Infrastructure: Cosatu Nxumalo noted that "Most funders are lodge guests but usually give them money for infrastructure but not operations. Showcasing operations helps draw in more funds." This reveals that funders often don't understand operational costs until they see program delivery.

Investor Model vs. Donor Model: Baotree (Dimitri) described establishing a business model where funders are treated as investors: "For donors to pay into operational costs requires building trust. You build trust by having efficient data that will give them evidence-driven impact." This shifts from charity mentality to investment mindset, emphasizing returns (impact) on investment.

Relationship-Based Funding: MTPA described a 25-year relationship with a philanthropist built on shared values: condition-based relationship requiring "no hunting" and community involvement. Long-term relationships enable unrestricted support but require alignment on core values.

Strategic Skills for Resource Mobilisation:
Participants identified critical capabilities:
Marketing and Communication: Thornybush Community emphasised being "in the right spaces—more accessible spaces result in more money. Marketing and communication are key skills or tools needed for resource mobilization."

Specialised Consultants: MTPA asserted the importance of "consultants who understand the market; it is easy for them to tap into those networks." This recognises that fundraising expertise is Specialised knowledge worth investing in.

Proposal Writing as Investment: Tonderai (Vhembe) noted that "some funding applications are restricted to networks and partnerships with certain entities like government and state entities like SANParks (GEF, TFCA, etc.). Proposal writing is a skill, and organisations need to invest in getting someone who can get more money—you need to spend money to get money."

Philanthropist Identification: Discussion included strategies like retreats with philanthropists and family office research—intentional relationship-building rather than passive waiting for funding.

Group 1: Collaboration Opportunities Despite Funding Dependency

The group acknowledged that "the platform for collaboration is there and is always project support," citing examples like SANParks BSP and CSA's Herding for Health programmes. However, funding structures can inhibit collaboration.

Competition for Unique Positioning: Dimitri noted that "unique selling point to attract funding limits collaboration because funders fund unique ideas." Organisations may hesitate to collaborate if it dilutes their distinctive value proposition to funders.

Competitive Grants Landscape: Tonderai observed that "grants space is very competitive; some collaborations are easier than others," giving the example of river monitoring from Blyde (K2C) to Limpopo River (Vhembe)—geographic continuity makes collaboration natural.

Funding Dependency vs. Positive Reinforcement: The group discussed how "funding dependency makes it hard to reward good behaviour or transition zone management." Lynn described rewarding Trygive community with feeding programmes, scout and cub clubs. GKEPF suggested framing this as "preventative measures" when applying for funds—reframing rewards as investment in prevention.

Group 2: From Monitoring Challenges to Practical Solutions

The second working group surfaced operational challenges and resource gaps, generating concrete collaboration commitments:

M&E and Impact Measurement Challenges:
Indalo Inclusive described data deficiency from trainees to track impact: "Developing M&E tools which some are useful for organisation but not user-friendly for users." This common challenge—tools designed for donor reporting rather than participant use—undermines community ownership of monitoring.

NOVA Institute shared their quality-of-life indicators for impact measurement, noting that "different types of funders" are relevant at different stages: "Early-stage planning like knowledge institutions (which is not that fundable) are key, while during implementation private and NGO partnerships are key." This stages-of-funding insight is valuable for strategic planning.

Conservation Alpha (David) emphasised the importance of "clearly outlining where you want to achieve at the beginning and working your way backwards"—theory of change approach to impact planning.

Global Conservation Corps shared their Vumba App for environmental education and M&E, demonstrating technology solutions for data collection.

Operational Challenges:
Makuleke identified proposal writing and co-funding challenges, describing "silos operation versus collaborative impact"—recognition that individual organisations working separately have less impact than coordinated efforts.

Elephants Alive articulated a core tension: "Funders are willing to fund project implementation but not project implementers. Will to collaborate is there but lack of funding, time or logistic resources is a gap." This reveals that collaboration requires investment—it's not free.

PlasticSA described the challenge of "collaborating with local municipality to make waste management systems more effective. How do we integrate PRO [Producer Responsibility Organisation] systems into municipality mandate." This highlights the complexity of integrating private sector environmental responsibility into public sector mandates.

Kishugu raised youth unemployment as a priority, suggesting cooperative effort in skills development.

Save the Sand shared their exit strategy learning: "Managed to come up with exit MOU for their ECD programme. Learned exit strategy that builds sustainability through mentorship from another ECD organisation which offers 2-year mentorship before exit to local ECDs." This demonstrates peer learning and knowledge transfer.

Global Conservation Corps acknowledged that "defining and sticking to goals not always possible—often need to steer away from initial goal because of identified gaps." This adaptive management reality challenges rigid log frame approaches.

Resource Gap Analysis Becomes Collaboration:
A powerful moment occurred when the group identified resource gaps and immediately matched them with available resources:

Skills Gap: Early Childhood Development - Sabi Sand identified need for "skills to capacitate founders and teachers of ECD institutions." Kishugu immediately responded that "they are available for that."

Skills Gap: Farming and Mentorship - Londolozi (Save the Sand) identified need for farming skills and mentorship. Immediately offered by Londolozi, Indalo, and Pfunanani.

The scribe noted: "Kishugu and ECD programme are ready to collaborate"—demonstrating how naming challenges can catalyse partnerships.

Available Resources Identified:

- MISH (Green Matter)
- Wild Hub (Tourism)
- Vumba (M&E technology)

Group 3: Governance, Integration, and the "Interweaving" Question

The third working group grappled with landscape-level coordination challenges—perhaps the most complex category:

Governance and Coordination Challenges:

SANParks identified "governance structure navigation for the mega-living landscape (MLL)" as a challenge, being "new in landscape" with "partnership gaps." This reflects SANParks' evolution toward collaborative landscape management and the learning curve involved.

SANParks also raised operational challenges: "Animal poisoning and snaring, corridor diseases (FMD) cause community unrest caused mostly by fence maintenance issues." These technical challenges have governance implications when community relationships are strained.

Candice Grover (Ripple Effect) described "lack of organisational structure, goal is there but lack of implementation structure (M&E plan etc.)"—vision without systems.

Timbavati Foundation identified "over-diversifying instead of maintaining focus (over-stretching self)"—the temptation to respond to all needs rather than focusing on core competencies.

AWARD raised a critical issue: "Undermining of local governance by funder model is affecting project success and endorsement. Lack of integration of Land Use Planning, incorporate SPLUMA [Spatial Planning and Land Use Management Act] in project planning." This reveals how donor-driven priorities can bypass or undermine formal governance structures.

OTS identified "authentic impact and integration" as key challenges—the difficulty of demonstrating genuine, lasting change rather than outputs.

Sabi Sand described "NPOs in circle, different community engagement protocols that affect Sabi Sand community relationship. SOP for community engagement is a gap." When multiple NGOs engage the same communities with different protocols, community confusion and NGO competition can result.

TASC noted "from commercial perspective, monetising solutions to attract funding is a challenge"—the difficulty of making conservation financially attractive.

Candice Grover raised continuity concerns: "Continuity even in understanding the landscape governance setting is lacking. Hand-over for GKSDP was not fluid." This institutional memory challenge affects landscape-level coordination.

Transformative Solutions: Documentation and Coordination

Question: Who understands and has documented the government institutionalization of this landscape?

AWARD responded that institutional landscape is mapped in Integrated Development Plans (IDPs), and organisational websites provide good foundations for studying government institutions.

GKSDP has "well-documented the government landscape."

K2C identified key relationships: "Transactional GKSDP (Marisa-Zodwa-Tshivhase)"—naming the people who carry institutional relationships.

The group suggested using Data-Driven Mapping for mapping collaborations from diversified sectors to build continuity.

The Interweaving Question: How Do We Bring It All Together?
This became the central synthesis question for the group:

Sabi Sand suggested having "a driving actor 'potentially K2C' also need for resources to back it up." However, Vusi (the scribe) asked a critical question: "Who funds the learning, collaboration and support?" This reveals that coordination itself requires funding—it's invisible infrastructure that enables visible outcomes.

SANParks Mega Living Landscape proposed a concrete approach: "Come up with 5 declarations with indicators, M&E plan to commit and review next year and for years to come. Measure of convergence with 1, 2, 3, 4 partners." This suggests formal commitments with measurable indicators of collaboration.

OTS suggested "effective business models: identify 30% of interest overlap, idea of independence needs to be shaken up a bit." This pragmatic approach—finding sufficient overlap without requiring 100% alignment—enables collaboration while respecting organisational autonomy.

OTS and Candice Grover proposed creating "best practice documents for new parties to align with in the Greater Kruger landscape"—codifying collaborative norms and expectations to reduce friction for newcomers.

Cross-Cutting Insights: Vulnerability as Strength

Corner 3 demonstrated that creating space for honest challenge-sharing generates trust and catalyses collaboration. When Sabi Sand named their ECD skills gap, Kishugu immediately offered support. When Londolozi identified farming mentorship needs, three organisations volunteered. These spontaneous partnerships emerged because the format normalized vulnerability.

The funding discussions revealed a shift from "donor-recipient" to "investor-investee" framing, with emphasis on evidence-driven impact, operational transparency, and long-term relationship-building. Organisations recognised that fundraising expertise is Specialised knowledge requiring investment.

The governance discussions surfaced tension between donor priorities and local governance structures, with AWARD's observation that "funder models undermine local governance" naming a systemic challenge. The proposed solutions—formal declarations with indicators, best practice documents, identifying overlap percentages—suggest movement toward explicit collaboration agreements rather than ad hoc coordination.

Perhaps most significantly, the group grappled honestly with the question "Who funds the learning, collaboration and support?"—recognising that coordination is work, requires resources, and is currently underfunded despite being essential infrastructure for landscape-level impact.

Synthesis: From Individual Challenges to Collective Solutions

Corner 3 demonstrated the power of reframing challenges as collaboration opportunities. Rather than each organisation struggling alone with funding, M&E, governance, or operational challenges, naming these challenges collectively revealed:

1. **Shared struggles** that can be addressed through peer learning and mutual support
2. **Complementary resources** where one organisation's strength addresses another's gap
3. **Systemic issues** (funder models, governance structures) requiring collective advocacy
4. **Immediate partnerships** catalysed by honest needs-sharing

The session validated that vulnerability—admitting what isn't working—is essential for moving from competition to collaboration. Organisations operating in the same landscape are not competitors but potential collaborators when challenges are framed as shared problems requiring collective solutions.

4.4.4 Collaboration

Purpose: Clarify partnership capacity and preferences
Output: "Partnership Profiles" for strategic matching

Corner 4 took a different approach from the other corners, focusing on the internal organisational factors that enable or constrain effective collaboration. Rather than sharing project examples or surface-level challenges, participants engaged in honest assessment of their collaboration readiness—what they can offer partners, what they need from partners, and what conditions enable productive partnerships. The session generated insights into the often-invisible factors that determine whether collaborations succeed or fail.

What Works: Success Factors for Collaboration

Participants identified key elements that enable successful partnerships:

Reliable Institutional Relationships: Vhembe Biosphere Reserve highlighted the importance of "LEDET: reliability in funding" and "strategic planning & implementation." Long-term, predictable institutional partnerships provide a stable foundation for programming, reducing the constant uncertainty of project-based funding cycles.

Like-Minded Partners and Relationship Building: The emphasis on "like-minded partners → relationship building" suggests that shared values and vision are prerequisites for deep collaboration. Partnerships built on transactional exchanges (funding for deliverables) are inherently more fragile than those grounded in shared purpose.

Formal Agreements Provide Security: Participants noted that "MOU provides security in co-gardening" (Sabi Sand) and "formal agreement = gives a better product." While relationships are built on trust, formalization through MOUs or other written agreements clarifies expectations, roles, and accountabilities—reducing ambiguity that can undermine partnerships.

Implementation Focus: Endangered Wildlife Trust was cited for success in "implementation of activities." The ability to move from planning to action—to actually deliver on commitments—builds credibility and attracts partners.

Social Capital and Leadership: The brief notation "Social capital" and "Leadership" (Chris, likely Conservation Alpha) points to intangible but essential assets. Organisations with established relationships in the landscape and strong leadership can broker partnerships and navigate complexity more effectively.

Accountability Systems: Zanza Africa emphasised "accountability" as a success factor. Clear systems for tracking commitments and following through build trust over time.

Flexibility for Multiple Parties: Plastics SA noted "room for flexible multiple parties"—the ability to adapt collaboration structures to accommodate diverse partners rather than requiring one-size-fits-all approaches.

What Doesn't Work: Barriers to Collaboration

Participants were equally forthright about factors that undermine partnerships:

Poor Governance and Accountability Gaps: The Vhembe group identified "no accountability from a project," "poor governance → project issues," and "corruption / lack of communication" as collaboration killers. When governance systems are weak or compromised, even well-intentioned partnerships fail.

Unmanaged and Unrealistic Expectations: Multiple groups emphasised "unmanaged expectations" and "unrealistic expectations brought by partners & organisations" as sources of partnership breakdown. This suggests a need for explicit expectation-setting conversations at partnership inception and regular check-ins to ensure alignment.

Transparency Issues: When partners operate opaquely—not sharing information, data, or decision-making processes—trust erodes. The notation "transparency issues" appeared alongside governance challenges, suggesting they're interconnected.

Competition for the Same Funding: Organisations working in the same landscape often find themselves "competing for the same funding." This structural reality can undermine collaboration even among organisations that share values and objectives. The funding architecture itself creates competition.

Time Management and Unrealistic Project Timelines: Practical operational challenges like "time management & project timelines" create friction in partnerships. When one partner consistently misses deadlines or underestimates time requirements, other partners absorb the consequences.

Poor Data Management: "Poor data sharing / clarity / sharing lessons" prevents collective learning and accountability. When organisations don't document and share what they're learning, the landscape miss opportunities to replicate success and avoid repeating mistakes.

Lack of Structural Framework: One group identified "lack of structural framework to collaborate" as a barrier "that can be improved." This suggests participants recognise that collaboration requires intentional design and infrastructure—it won't happen organically without investment in coordination systems.

Partnership Readiness Factors: What Organisations Need

Participants identified what their organisations require to be effective collaboration partners:

Human Resources: Multiple references to needing "human resources" highlight that collaboration is labour-intensive. Organisations stretched thin on staff struggle to participate meaningfully in partnerships, even when they want to.

Financial Resources: The notation "Resources (10% of organisation?)" suggests discussion about the proportion of organisational capacity that should/can be dedicated to partnership work. This recognises that collaboration has costs—staff time for meetings, coordination, joint planning—that must be budgeted.

Support for Households/Families: For community-based organisations, "households / families" as a need likely refers to ensuring that partnership work translates into tangible benefits for the communities being served. Partnerships that generate reports but not community impact undermine local support.

Power Dynamics in Partnerships

A significant portion of discussion addressed power dynamics—often the unspoken reality that shapes partnerships:

Journey Stage Matters: "Where in the journey are you → strategic planning" and "consolidating alpha → proper planning" suggest that partnerships work differently depending on organisational maturity and project phase. A grassroots startup partners differently than an established NGO.

Balancing Diplomacy: The notation "balancing diplomacy" acknowledges the delicate navigation required when partners have different levels of power, resources, or influence. Less powerful partners may feel unable to speak honestly about challenges or disagreements.

Formal Agreements Shift Power: "Depends on where you are in the formal agreement" and "formal agreement = gives a better product" suggest that written agreements can level power imbalances by making expectations explicit and creating accountability mechanisms accessible to all partners.

Expectations Shape Power Relations: When one partner sets expectations unilaterally rather than through dialogue, power imbalances deepen. The emphasis on "expectations" as both a success factor (when managed) and failure factor (when unmanaged) highlights this dynamic.

Building Trust and Choosing Partners

Finding the Right Partners: Mike noted that "finding the right people to collaborate with" is a challenge that can undermine collaboration. Not all partnerships make sense; forcing collaboration with misaligned partners wastes resources.

Trust as Foundation: Multiple groups emphasised "trust component" and "relationship building & trust to avoid duplication." Trust must be built before formal collaboration; MOUs codify trust but can't create it.

Sharing Successes: One success factor noted was "sharing successes"—celebrating wins together rather than hoarding credit builds mutual commitment.

Doing the Work: The simple notation "doing the work" emphasises that talk is cheap. Organisations earn partnership credibility through consistent delivery, not through eloquent proposals.

Not Giving Up: Under "resistant to collaborate," one factor was "not giving up." This acknowledgment that collaboration is hard and requires perseverance suggests that premature abandonment of partnerships is common.

Structural Requirements for Collaboration

Participants identified infrastructure needs for effective collaboration:

Someone to Do the Structural Work: "Having someone to do the structural work" and "having coordinators" recognise that coordination is a job, not something that happens in people's spare time. Landscapes need funded coordinator positions.

Big Administrators Developing Frameworks: "Having big administrators developing strategies and frameworks" suggests a role for well-resourced organisations to create collaboration infrastructure (templates, protocols, platforms) that smaller organisations can use.

Balance Between Purpose, Structure, and Implementation: The notation "balance between shared purpose, structure & implementation" captures essential tension. Too much emphasis on shared vision without structure leads to endless meetings with no action. Too much structure without shared purpose creates bureaucracy. Focus on implementation without vision or structure creates uncoordinated activity.

Diverse Collaborators: "Having diverse collaborators" as a factor to make a difference suggests that homogeneous partnerships (e.g., all conservation NGOs) are less effective than cross-sectoral collaborations bringing different perspectives and capabilities.

Resistance to Collaboration: When to Say No

The session included honest discussion of when collaboration isn't appropriate:

Finding Your Own Identity: Organisations need "finding your own identity" before collaborating. Partnerships work best when each partner knows its unique contribution; organisations still clarifying their mission and approach may need to develop independently first.

Avoiding Duplication Through Relationship: "Relationship building & trust to avoid duplication" suggests that good partnerships prevent organisations from stepping on each other's work. But this requires investing in relationship before launching programs.

Partnership on a Landscape: The notation "partnership on a landscape" may suggest that landscape-scale collaboration requires different approaches than organisation-to-organisation partnerships—more complex, involving more actors, requiring different coordination mechanisms.

Going Beyond Passion

The final notation—"Mike: going beyond passion"—offers a profound insight. Passion for conservation, community development, or social justice is essential but insufficient for effective collaboration. Partnerships require systems, discipline, accountability, and sometimes difficult conversations that passion alone won't sustain. Effective collaboration requires combining passion with professionalism, vision with structure, relationship with formality.

Synthesis: The Collaboration Readiness Spectrum

Corner 4 revealed that collaboration readiness exists on a spectrum:

Low Readiness is characterised by:

- Unclear organisational identity
- Weak governance systems
- Limited human/financial resources for partnership work
- Unrealistic expectations
- Poor data and communication systems
- Tendency to hoard credit
- Unwillingness to invest in coordination

High Readiness is characterised by:

- Clear mission and unique value proposition
- Strong governance and accountability systems
- Dedicated resources (human and financial) for partnership
- Realistic expectations co-created with partners
- Transparent data sharing and communication
- Willingness to share successes and credit
- Investment in coordination infrastructure
- Formal agreements that clarify roles and expectations
- Balance between shared purpose, structure, and implementation

The session validated that not all organisations are ready to collaborate at all times. Partnerships require organisational maturity, resource availability, and cultural commitment to transparency and accountability. Pushing collaboration when these prerequisites aren't met leads to failed partnerships that damage trust and waste resources.

The emphasis on formal agreements (MOUs) alongside relationship-building suggests that effective collaboration requires both soft skills (trust, communication, shared vision) and hard infrastructure (written agreements, coordination roles, M&E systems). Neither alone is sufficient.

The honest acknowledgment of power dynamics—that partnerships involve diplomacy, that organisational stage matters, that finding the right partners is challenging—reflects growing sophistication in the landscape. Rather than assuming all collaboration is good, participants distinguished between productive partnerships and forced collaborations that consume energy without generating impact.

Implications for Network Development

Corner 4's focus on collaboration readiness has important implications for the GKSDP Network:

1. **Not All Organisations Should Collaborate on Everything:** Strategic matching based on readiness, capacity, and mission alignment is more productive than blanket expectations of universal collaboration.
2. **Collaboration Infrastructure Needs Investment:** Coordination positions, communication systems, M&E frameworks, and formal agreements require dedicated funding—this invisible infrastructure enables visible collaboration.
3. **Power Dynamics Need Explicit Navigation:** Creating spaces for honest conversation about power imbalances, resource disparities, and organisational stage enables healthier partnerships.
4. **Formal and Informal Must Work Together:** MOUs without relationships are hollow; relationships without formal agreements are fragile. Both are needed.
5. **Collaboration is a Skill That Can Be Developed:** Organisations can move along the readiness spectrum by investing in governance, data systems, communication capacity, and partnership skills.

The session's emphasis on "finding the right people to collaborate with" and "going beyond passion" suggests the network is maturing from an early phase where collaboration is celebrated uncritically to a more sophisticated understanding that effective partnership requires careful design, honest assessment, and sustained investment. This maturity positions the GKSDP Network for deeper, more sustainable collaboration.

4.5 Data Presentation

The 2025 GKSDP Network Meeting generated five overarching findings that cut across all four corners and reveal the network's evolution, achievements, and critical needs for sustained landscape-level impact.

4.5.1 Partnership Infrastructure is the Invisible Foundation

Finding: Partnership has evolved from optional collaboration to the core operating model for landscape-level sustainability. However, effective partnership requires invested infrastructure—coordination positions, formal agreements, communication systems, M&E frameworks—that is currently underfunded despite being essential.

Evidence Across Corners:

- Corner 1: Organisations emphasised MOUs, conservation agreements, and partnership mapping as fundamental tools
- Corner 2: K2C and multiple organisations explicitly stated "Partnership is the magic ingredient"
- Corner 3: The critical question emerged: "Who funds the learning, collaboration and support?"
- Corner 4: Collaboration readiness assessment revealed that effective partnership requires dedicated human and financial resources (potentially 10% of organisational capacity)

Implication: The network has reached a maturity level where informal coordination is insufficient. Landscape sustainability requires funded coordination roles, formal partnership structures, and systems for knowledge sharing and joint M&E. This invisible infrastructure enables visible outcomes but remains chronically underfunded because it doesn't fit traditional project funding models.

4.5.2 Paradigm Shift from Enforcement to Co-Creation

Finding: Conservation across the Greater Kruger landscape is transforming from a "fortress" model (exclusionary protected areas) to a collaborative landscape approach where communities are partners in conservation rather than populations to be managed or excluded.

Evidence:

- SANParks articulated moving from exclusionary protected areas to "mega-living landscape" partnership approach, stating "we opened up partnership, putting down fences, open up for co-creation"
- Private reserves (Sabi Sand, Timbavati, Thornybush) described their work as "bringing communities and conservation together"
- LEDET recognised that policy reform must be informed by "practicality on ground" rather than imposed top-down
- K2C achieved 100% human-wildlife conflict reduction in Phaluabeni community through partnership approaches
- The "interweaving" concept provides operational framework: organisations maintain distinct identities while coordinating toward shared landscape objectives

Implication: This paradigm shift represents fundamental rethinking of conservation. Success is measured not by hectares fenced off but by communities engaged, livelihoods improved, and ecosystems restored through collaborative action. This shift requires different skills (facilitation, negotiation, co-creation) than traditional conservation enforcement.

4.5.3 Demonstrated Impact at Scale Validates Long-Term Approach

Finding: The network has moved beyond pilot projects to demonstrated impact at significant scale, providing evidence for replication. However, these successes typically required 10-17 years of sustained commitment, validating the need for patient capital over quick project cycles.

Quantified Achievements:

- 22,167 hectares cleared of alien invasive plants
- 948,000 clean cookstoves distributed across South Africa (430,000 in K2C), achieving 8.5 million tonnes CO_2 emissions reduction
- 100% human-wildlife conflict reduction in Phalaborwa community
- 300 women trained in permaculture, each mentoring 10 households (3,000 households total reach)
- R250,000+ in goods sold through community crafter groups
- 89 scholarships provided over 15 years with 80% employment rate
- 24 eco-savings and credit groups established
- 150 citizen science monitors trained

Temporal Pattern: Digital Learning Centres (17-year commitment), Timbavati Foundation scholarships (15 years), ECD centres (12+ years), two-year mentorships for measurable enterprise impact. Organisations consistently emphasised "quality over quantity"—deep engagement rather than superficial reach.

Implication: Meaningful landscape transformation cannot be achieved through standard 3–5-year project cycles. Donors and implementing organisations must align on patient capital approaches that enable sustained relationships, adaptive learning, and genuine community ownership. The network's quantified achievements provide evidence to justify long-term investment.

4.5.4 Funding Architecture Creates Systemic Constraints

Finding: Current donor funding models create systemic barriers to landscape sustainability: short-term cycles, restricted funding limiting flexibility, emphasis on projects over operational support, competition for resources undermining collaboration, and sustainability expectations without transition support.

Evidence from Challenge Transformation Workshop:

- "Funders fund projects, not people" - operational costs chronically underfunded
- "Funding from abroad with no local context" - donor priorities may not align with community needs
- "Grants fund you with aim that you sustain it" - sustainability expectations without transition support
- "Competing for the same funding" - funding architecture creates competition among organisations that should collaborate
- "You need to spend money to get money" - fundraising expertise requires investment

Emerging Innovations: Organisations are responding with finance innovation: debt-for-nature swaps, rhino bonds, sustainable bonds, blended finance combining concessional/commercial/donor capital, carbon markets linked to rangeland restoration, zero-interest loans for green enterprises, and fee-for-service models. Shift from "donor-recipient" to "investor-investee" framing emphasises evidence-driven impact and transparency.

Implication: While organisations are innovating to navigate funding constraints, systemic change in donor culture is needed. Funders must recognise that: (1) coordination and learning infrastructure requires operational funding, (2) restricted funding undermines community ownership, (3) short-term cycles prevent sustainability, and (4) funding structures that create competition undermine landscape-level collaboration. The emerging "investor model" requiring transparent data and demonstrated impact shows promise but requires culture shift among both funders and implementers.

4.5.5 Collaboration Maturity Requires Organisational Readiness

Finding: The network has matured from uncritical celebration of collaboration to sophisticated recognition that effective partnership requires organisational readiness, strategic matching, formal agreements alongside relationships, invested coordination infrastructure, and explicit navigation of power dynamics.

Collaboration Readiness Components:

- **Organisational prerequisites:** Clear identity and unique value proposition, strong governance and accountability systems, dedicated resources for partnership work, realistic expectations co-created with partners
- **Strategic matching:** "Not all organisations should collaborate on everything" - partnerships should align on mission, capacity, and readiness level
- **Formal + informal:** MOUs without relationships are hollow; relationships without formal agreements are fragile; both are needed
- **Power dynamics:** Explicit acknowledgment that partnerships involve power imbalances requiring diplomatic navigation; organisational stage matters; finding the right partners is challenging
- **"Going beyond passion":** Passion for conservation is essential but insufficient—effective collaboration requires systems, discipline, accountability, and sometimes difficult conversations

Evidence:

- Corner 3 demonstrated that naming challenges collectively reveals shared struggles, complementary resources, and systemic issues requiring advocacy
- Corner 4 identified factors that enable collaboration (trust, transparency, accountability, implementation track record) versus factors that undermine it (poor governance, unmanaged expectations, competition, weak data systems)
- Multiple organisations shared that collaboration is labour-intensive (potentially 10% of organisational capacity) and requires "someone to do the structural work"

Implication: The network should develop explicit collaboration readiness assessment tools and partnership matching processes rather than assuming all proximity-based collaboration is beneficial. Investment in organisational development (governance, M&E, communication systems) is investment in collaboration capacity. The question "Who funds the learning, collaboration and support?" must be answered—coordination itself needs dedicated funding.

4.6 Collaborative Solutions Laboratory

The Collaborative Solutions Laboratory served as the meeting's synthesis and action-planning session, enabling participants to validate the collaboration approach and identify concrete next steps based on data and feedback generated throughout the day's Four Corners sessions and group discussions.

4.6.1 Validating the Collaboration Model

The day generated approximately 280 potential new collaboration connections, demonstrating significant network density increase. However, participants recognized that these connections rely on regular convenings to re-energize and sustain collaborative relationships. With busy schedules and large work volumes, organisations acknowledged the critical need for a coordinating body to provide ongoing support between annual gatherings.

This recognition validates a key finding from Corner 3's Challenge Transformation Workshop: the question "Who funds the learning, collaboration and support?" must be answered. The network has reached a maturity level where informal coordination is insufficient—sustained collaboration requires invested infrastructure.

4.6.2 Priority Areas for Network Evolution

Through the Collaborative Solutions Laboratory discussions, participants identified five priority areas for improvement:

1. Time Architecture: The one-day format, while valuable, proved insufficient for both depth (Four Corners peer learning) and breadth (full network connection). Participants requested expansion to a 2-day event with differentiated programming for different Organisational categories or thematic interests.

2. Broader Participation: Strong call for including Traditional Authorities and community members as direct participants—not only as beneficiaries represented through intermediary organisations. Participants recognized that authentic landscape-level collaboration requires community voices at the table. K2C's involvement in multiple forums positions it well to facilitate this expanded participation.

3. Knowledge Sharing Mechanisms: Request for diverse, accessible platforms suited to different Organisational needs and capacities—from simple WhatsApp groups to sophisticated digital repositories. Recognition that knowledge sharing must work across varied technological contexts and Organisational sizes.

4. Continuity and Follow-Up (Critical Priority): Strongest emphasis on mechanisms to track commitments, report progress, and ensure accountability between meetings. Participants expressed concern that without follow-up systems, the network risks becoming a "talk shop" where annual meetings generate enthusiasm but limited sustained action. The feedback noting "3 years of analysis" requires intentional shift toward action orientation.

5. Coordination Infrastructure: Explicit recognition that network evolution requires a funded coordinator position. The infrastructure needed—meeting planning, communication systems, partnership support, knowledge management, accountability tracking—cannot be absorbed as add-on responsibilities. Professional coordination enables the network's bold evolution.

Practical Examples Inspiring Action

Representatives from Sabi Sand Pfunanani Trust and Timbavati Foundation shared practical examples of collaboration approaches that have worked in their contexts. These concrete illustrations, echoed and amplified by other organisations in a quick comments and question session, demonstrated that collaboration success is achievable and replicable. The peer-to-peer sharing generated momentum and validated that organisations can learn from and adapt each other's approaches.

4.6.3 Commitment to Network Continuity

The perceived intent of all participants to return to the 2026 event reflects recognition of the network's value and its evolution over the past four years. The 100% retention intent (among Mentimeter respondents) provides K2C with permission to implement bold format changes, including:

- Expansion to 2-day event
- Implementation of accountability mechanisms
- Addition of community and traditional authority participants
- Establishment of funded coordination infrastructure
- Experimentation with new knowledge sharing and partnership matching approaches

The social capital and trust established through four years of consistent, well-organized meetings enables confident evolution toward the next level of network maturity.

4.6.4 Interweaving of Overarching Findings

The Collaborative Solutions Laboratory reinforced the five overarching findings that emerged across all Four Corners sessions:

Finding 1: Partnership Infrastructure is Essential and Underfunded The explicit request for a funded coordinator position validates that partnership is not optional collaboration but core operating model requiring invested infrastructure—coordination positions, formal agreements, communication systems, M&E frameworks—that remains chronically underfunded despite being essential for visible outcomes.

Finding 2: Paradigm Shift from Enforcement to Co-Creation The call for Traditional Authority and community participation reflects the broader conservation transformation from "fortress" models to collaborative landscape approaches where communities are partners in conservation rather than populations to be managed.

Finding 3: Demonstrated Impact at Scale Requires Patient Capital Discussion acknowledged that the network's quantified achievements (22,167 ha cleared, 948,000 cookstoves, 100% HWC reduction in communities) typically required 10-17 years of sustained commitment, validating the need for patient capital over quick project cycles.

Finding 4: Funding Architecture Creates Systemic Constraints, but Blended Finance Innovations are Emerging Participants recognized that current donor models create barriers (short-term cycles, restricted funding, competition for resources) but also identified emerging innovations including debt-for-nature swaps, conservation bonds, blended finance mechanisms, and the shift toward "investor-investee" relationships emphasizing evidence-driven impact.

Finding 5: Collaboration Maturity Hinges on Organisational Readiness and Explicit Navigation of Power Dynamics The request for differentiated programming and skills mapping reflects recognition that "not all organisations should collaborate on everything"—effective partnership requires strategic matching based on readiness, capacity, and mission alignment, alongside explicit navigation of power imbalances.

4.7 Next Steps

The meeting concluded with concrete mechanisms to sustain momentum and convert potential collaborations into actionable partnerships. Two immediate initiatives—a commitment declaration and formation of thematic collaboration groups—created accountability structures and communication channels for ongoing coordination.

4.7.1 Signing of Commitment Declaration

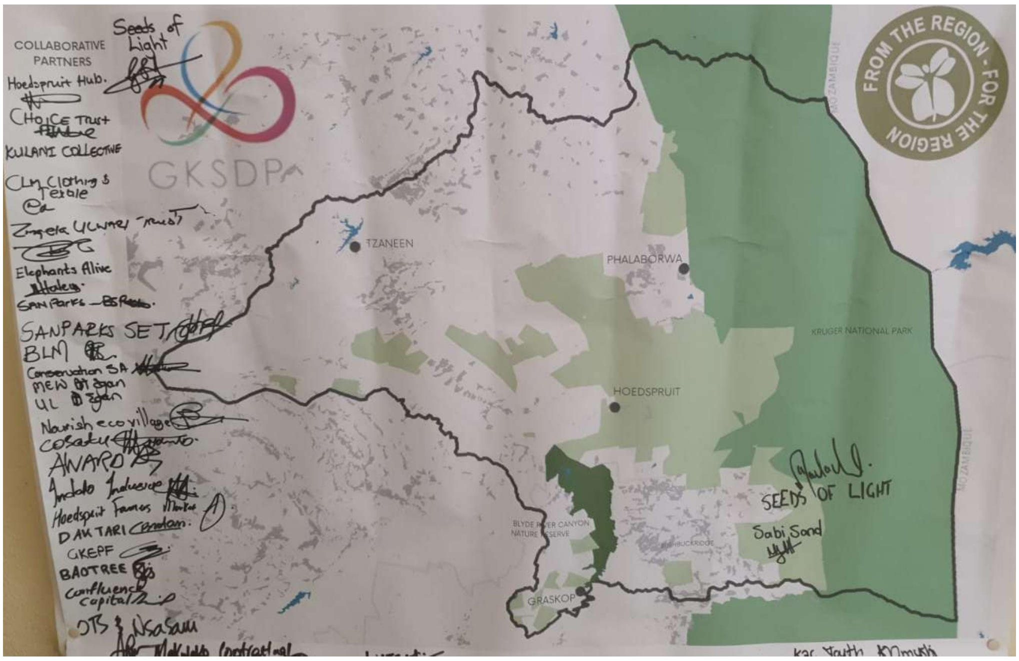
The initial intention was to draft a charter of collaboration solutions emerging from the Four Corners and Collaborative Solutions Laboratory sessions. However, time constraints prevented real-time collation and synthesis of the extensive information generated throughout the day.

In response, participants were invited to make a verbal commitment on behalf of their organisations, acknowledging:

1. The essential need for collaboration in the K2C Biosphere Reserve landscape
2. The opportunity for K2C BR to play a coordination role in supporting network partnerships

Symbolic Documentation: A map of the K2C Biosphere Reserve was presented with a signing column alongside it. Participants added their signatures to the map, creating a visual representation of collective commitment to landscape-level collaboration. This signing ceremony provided tangible acknowledgment of Organisational buy-in to the network's evolution, while allowing time for proper charter development based on thorough analysis of the day's outputs.

Strategic Significance: The verbal commitment approach, while necessitated by time constraints, proved appropriate given the network's maturity level. Rather than rushing to formalize commitments without adequate reflection, participants demonstrated willingness to commit in principle while enabling K2C to develop a more robust charter informed by comprehensive analysis of the meeting's outcomes. This approach respects Organisational decision-making processes while maintaining momentum.



4.7.2 Formation of Thematic WhatsApp Groups

To sustain collaboration momentum and provide immediate communication channels, participants were organized into five thematic WhatsApp groups aligned with priority collaboration areas identified throughout the day.

Guiding Principles: The groups were established based on strong participant desire for:

- **Resource and expertise pooling** to achieve common goals
- **Innovative approaches for sustainability**, including digital tools and carbon finance mechanisms
- **Community-centric development** ensuring local empowerment and inclusive participation
- **Policy alignment and advocacy** to create enabling environments for conservation and socio-economic growth
- **Networking and relationship building** as foundation for long-term impact

The overarching tone is optimistic and action-oriented, with emphasis on synergy, innovation, and shared responsibility to drive sustainable development in the K2C landscape.

Group Structure and Moderation: K2C allocated dedicated staff members as moderators for each group to maintain professional, relevant platforms and provide coordination support. As participants joined, they were asked to identify their information needs and collaboration expectations, which were incorporated into group descriptions.

Group 1: Joint Fundraising Consortium
Purpose: Addressing financial sustainability collectively
Focus Areas: Collaborate on fundraising strategies, share donor opportunities, and co-apply for grants to build sustainable revenue streams.
Rationale: Corner 3's Challenge Transformation Workshop identified funding architecture as a systemic constraint affecting all organisations. Pooling intelligence on donors, sharing proposal templates, and exploring consortium funding applications can strengthen individual Organisational sustainability while demonstrating collective impact to attract landscape-level investment.
Moderator: Mike Grover

Group 2: Shared Services Network
Purpose: Logistics, equipment, and expertise sharing
Focus Areas: Facilitate resource sharing, improve coordination, and create partnerships for capacity building and community empowerment.
Rationale: The 2024 Network Meeting identified logistics and equipment constraints as barriers across organisations. Coordinated transportation, shared equipment pools, and expertise exchange can improve operational efficiency while reducing costs. This group operationalizes the principle that organisations working in proximity should leverage complementary resources.
Moderator: Lauren Booth

Group 3: Policy Advocacy Alliance
Purpose: Collective voice for enabling environment
Focus Areas: Align policies and advocate for an enabling environment through collective action and harmonized frameworks.
Rationale: Multiple organisations identified challenges with policy barriers, lack of policy coordination, and need for advocacy on issues like funding architecture, land use planning integration (SPLUMA), and recognition of landscape-level approaches. Collective advocacy carries more weight than individual Organisational voices, particularly when engaging government across multiple spheres.
Moderator: Shoki Mafogo

Group 4: Innovation Incubator
Purpose: Technology and methodology sharing
Focus Areas: Exchange ideas and best practices to develop innovative, tech-driven solutions for conservation and community development.
Rationale: Organisations shared innovative approaches across the Four Corners—from Vumba App for M&E to cattle ear-tagging for HWC prediction, to digital learning centres, to electronic monitoring systems. This group creates space for cross-pollination of technological and methodological innovations, preventing duplication and accelerating adoption of proven approaches.
Moderator: Romy Antrobus Wuth

Group 5: Community Engagement Collective
Purpose: Coordinated stakeholder management for GKSDP
Focus Areas: Share insights, coordinate community projects, and foster collaboration for

impactful, inclusive engagement.
Rationale: Corner 3 identified that multiple NGOs engaging the same communities with different protocols creates confusion and potential competition. This group enables coordination of community engagement approaches, sharing of lessons learned, and development of complementary (rather than duplicative) programming. Particularly important as the network expands to include Traditional Authorities and community members as direct participants.
Moderator: Vusi Tshabalala

Platform Advantages and Limitations: WhatsApp groups provide accessible, immediate communication appropriate for South African context where smartphone penetration is high but internet connectivity varies. However, WhatsApp has limitations for structured knowledge management, document sharing, and searchability. These groups serve as interim coordination mechanisms while more robust collaboration infrastructure is developed.

4.7.3 Proposed Next Steps for Network Maturation

Building on the commitment declaration and thematic groups, the facilitator proposed three immediate priorities to formalize and deepen collaboration:

1. Publish One-Page Charters per Group
Develop concise charter for each of the five thematic groups specifying:

- **Purpose:** Clear statement of group objectives
- **Expected Outputs:** Tangible deliverables (shared resources, policy briefs, joint proposals, coordinated programs)
- **Key Performance Indicators (KPIs):** Metrics for tracking group impact (e.g., number of joint funding applications, resources shared, policies influenced, innovations adopted, community engagement protocols coordinated)
- **Governance:** Decision-making processes, membership criteria, conflict resolution mechanisms
- **Meeting Cadence:** Frequency of WhatsApp exchanges, virtual meetings, in-person gatherings

These charters transform informal groups into structured collaboration vehicles with clear accountability.

2. Launch Shared "Impact Data Room"
Create centralized digital repository with organized folders for:

- **Metrics:** Quantified outcomes from each Organisation (hectares restored, beneficiaries reached, employment created, etc.)
- **Case Studies:** Documentation of successful interventions, lessons learned, replication guides
- **Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs):** Repository of partnership templates, conservation agreements, collaboration frameworks that others can adapt
- **Pipeline Decks:** Shared database of funding opportunities, application deadlines, donor priorities, successful proposals (redacted as needed)

This "Impact Data Room" addresses multiple needs identified in the Mentimeter feedback:

knowledge sharing mechanisms, skills mapping between organisations, and efficient information capture. It operationalizes the network's collective intelligence.

3. Lock Mid-Year Checkpoint (June/July)
Schedule half-day virtual or in-person check-in for:

- **Public Progress Review:** Each thematic group reports on activities, outputs, challenges
- **Declarations Update:** Organisations that signed commitment declaration report on follow-through
- **Accountability Mechanisms:** Celebrate partnerships that moved from potential to actual; discuss barriers preventing collaboration conversion
- **Course Correction:** Adjust group priorities, governance structures, or coordination approaches based on learning

This mid-year checkpoint directly addresses the "continuity deficit" identified in participant feedback—the perception of "3 years of analysis" without sufficient follow-through. Regular check-ins between annual meetings signal shift from talk to action.

Implementation Pathway

Immediate (January-March 2026):

- K2C develops one-page charters through consultation with group moderators and key participants
- Establish "Impact Data Room" infrastructure (determine platform: Google Drive, SharePoint, custom portal)
- Group moderators facilitate initial substantive discussions, moving beyond introductions to actual collaboration proposals

Near-Term (April-June 2026):

- Launch Impact Data Room with initial content from participating organisations
- Groups identify 1-2 concrete collaborative actions to attempt before mid-year check-in
- K2C confirms mid-year checkpoint date, format, and agenda

Mid-Term (June-July 2026):

- Conduct mid-year checkpoint
- Assess which groups are functioning effectively and which need restructuring
- Document early wins and lessons learned
- Refine approach for second half of year

Annual (November 2026):

- 2026 GKSDP Network Meeting dedicates time to reporting on thematic group outcomes
- Celebrate successful collaborations
- Assess whether current structure serves network needs or requires evolution
- Make commitments for 2026-2027 collaboration cycle

Critical Success Factors

Based on the Four Corners insights and participant feedback, successful implementation of

next steps requires:
1. Funded Coordination: K2C's moderators need dedicated time allocation—coordination cannot be absorbed as add-on to existing workloads. This operationalizes the answer to "Who funds the learning, collaboration and support?"
2. Light-Touch Governance: Charter development should enable action, not create bureaucracy. Balance structure with flexibility, particularly in early stages when groups are finding their rhythm.
3. Early Wins: Each group should pursue at least one achievable collaboration in first six months to demonstrate value and build momentum. Success breeds participation.
4. Transparency and Communication: Regular communication about group activities, open invitations for participation, and celebration of wins keeps broader network engaged.
5. Iterative Adaptation: Willingness to restructure groups, change moderators, merge or split focus areas based on what's working. The current structure is hypothesis, not permanent architecture.

Alignment with Key Findings

The next steps directly operationalize the meeting's five overarching findings:

- **Finding 1 (Partnership Infrastructure):** The thematic groups, charters, Impact Data Room, and coordinator roles create the invested infrastructure that partnership requires
- **Finding 2 (Co-Creation Paradigm):** Community Engagement Collective creates mechanism for coordinated respectful stakeholder management
- **Finding 3 (Patient Capital):** Joint Fundraising Consortium enables collective case for long-term investment
- **Finding 4 (Funding Architecture):** Policy Advocacy Alliance provides vehicle for collective voice on systemic funding constraints
- **Finding 5 (Collaboration Maturity):** Group charters with KPIs and governance structures formalize Organisational readiness and explicit power navigation

From Potential to Actual: The Conversion Challenge

The meeting generated approximately 280 potential collaboration connections. The thematic groups, commitment declaration, and proposed infrastructure provide mechanisms to convert potential to actual. However, conversion requires:

- **Individual follow-through:** Organisations must prioritize group participation despite competing demands
- **Coordination support:** K2C's moderators must actively facilitate, not just passively administer
- **Accountability culture:** Mid-year checkpoints and annual reviews must celebrate successes while honestly discussing challenges
- **Patience with process:** Collaboration takes time; groups may need 6-12 months to find effective rhythm

The network's 100% retention intent and demonstrated value over four years provide strong foundation for this next phase of maturation. The question is no longer whether collaboration is valuable, but how to structure and sustain it effectively.

4.8 Feedback

4.8.1 Quantitative Feedback (Mentimeter Results)

Real-time participant feedback was captured through Mentimeter, providing immediate validation of the meeting's impact and actionable insights for future network development. The survey addressed four key questions, with response rates of approximately 50-52% of participants (42+ responses from 82 attendees).

Biggest Takeaway: Collaboration as Core Operating Model

Participants were asked: **"What is your biggest takeaway from today?"**

The responses revealed overwhelming consensus around collaboration and partnership:
Frequency Analysis:
- "Collaboration" appeared 31 times
- "Partnership(s)" appeared 11 times
- "Networking" appeared 17 times
- **Combined: 85-90% of responses emphasised collaboration/partnership/networking themes**

Representative Responses:
- "Collaboration makes magic"
- "For greater impact, collaborations have to be intentional and coordinated"
- "Collaboration is crucial BUT requires a set of skills"
- "We have common challenges—Organisations are open for collaboration"
- "Four corner methodology was very useful"
- "Peer to peer interaction was brilliant and valuable! More of this"

Key Insight: Participants demonstrated sophistication beyond simply valuing collaboration—they recognized it requires skills, intentionality, and coordination. The qualifier "but requires a set of skills" shows the network has moved from rhetorical commitment to practical understanding of what enables effective partnership.

The emphasis on shared challenges as collaboration enablers validates Corner 3's Challenge Transformation Workshop approach. Vulnerability became a catalyst for partnership rather than a competitive disadvantage.

Collaboration Generation: Network Density Increasing

Participants reported: **"How many new potential collaborations did you connect with today?"**

Results:
- Most common responses: 2-4 new collaborations per participant
- Range: 2-15 new collaborations identified
- Average: 3.5 new collaborations per participant

Network Effect Calculation: If 82 participants each made approximately 3-4 new collaboration connections: **~280 potential new collaboration relationships formed**

Analysis: The clustering around 2-4 collaborations suggests quality over quantity—participants made focused, strategic connections rather than collecting business cards superficially. The Four Corners methodology successfully enabled meaningful relationship-building with a manageable number of potential partners.

The presence of outliers (10-15 collaborations reported by some participants) suggests exceptional value for those new to the network or in boundary-spanning roles.

Critical Question: What follow-up mechanisms will convert these 280 potential collaborations into actual partnerships?

Improvement Opportunities: From Analysis to Action

Participants identified areas for improvement through: **"What can we do better?"**

Responses clustered into six themes:

Theme 1: Time & Format (Most Frequent)

- Multiple requests to extend to 2-day event
- Desire for group rotation to network with more participants
- Request for more peer interaction time
- "Long day with a paced (although very valuable) programme, focus on less with more value—quality over quantity"

Theme 2: Broader Participation

- Invite traditional authorities and community members as direct participants
- More government departments and private sector representation
- Recognition that landscape-level collaboration should include communities directly, not only through intermediary organisations

Theme 3: Knowledge Sharing Mechanisms

- Skills mapping between organisations
- Short presentations from select organisations
- Electronic capture of insights to support scribes
- Sharing of presentation slides and resources

Theme 4: Continuity & Follow-Up (Critical Finding)

- "Track some of the GKSDP resolutions from previous meetings"
- "Middle of the year follow ups"
- "Move from decisions to actions"
- "More solutions focused next year since the last 3 years have been analysis years"

This theme represents the most concerning feedback—participants perceive insufficient follow-through between meetings and lack of accountability for commitments. The network risks becoming a "talk shop" without action between annual gatherings.

Theme 5: Venue & Logistics

- Consider venue rotation for accessibility
- November timing creates weather challenges
- Practical needs: water, indoor space options

Theme 6: Positive Affirmation Even within improvement suggestions, participants expressed appreciation:

- "Such a wonderful initiative, and a great day! So well organised, thank you!"
- "Facilitators were amazing. Thank you!"
- "You do a wonderful work. Thank you"

Commitment to Return: Perfect Retention Intent

The final question asked: **"Will we see you next year?"**

Results:

- YES: 42 responses (100%)
- Maybe: 0 responses (0%)

Interpretation: Perfect retention intent represents extraordinary validation. Every respondent committed to returning, indicating:

1. High value perception—participants found sufficient value to commit another full day
2. Unmet need—the network fills a gap not met elsewhere
3. Growing network effects—as density increases, participation value increases
4. Social capital—relationships formed create pull to return

Strategic Implication: With 100% retention intent, K2C has permission to:

- Expand the event to 2 days
- Implement accountability mechanisms (participants will return even if held accountable)
- Charge participation fees if needed to fund coordination
- Experiment with format innovations

The trust and social capital established allows for bold evolution of the network model.

Synthesis: Five Key Findings from Participant Feedback

1. Collaboration Validated as Core Operating Model 85-90% of takeaway responses emphasized collaboration, demonstrating the network has achieved cultural shift where partnership is default, not exception.

2. Network Density Increasing Rapidly ~280 potential new collaboration relationships formed in one day, with average 3-4 focused, strategic connections per participant rather than superficial networking.

3. Peer Learning Valued Over Hierarchical Presentation Four Corners methodology explicitly praised. Participants want MORE peer interaction, validating shift from expert-driven to peer-driven learning.

4. Continuity Deficit is Critical Gap Participants perceive "3 years of analysis" without sufficient action/follow-through. This finding directly addresses Corner 3's question: "Who funds the learning, collaboration and support?" Annual meetings alone are insufficient—ongoing coordination infrastructure is needed.

5. Perfect Retention Creates Platform for Evolution 100% commitment to return gives K2C permission to evolve the model toward 2-day format, broader participation, accountability mechanisms, and action orientation.

4.8.2 Implications for Network Development

The Mentimeter results validate the meeting's design while surfacing a critical development need: mechanisms for sustained coordination between annual gatherings. The network has successfully demonstrated value through annual meetings, creating demand for ongoing support to convert potential collaborations into actual partnerships and to track accountability for commitments.

This aligns with the broader finding from the Four Corners sessions that partnership infrastructure—including coordination positions, communication systems, and M&E frameworks—requires dedicated funding despite being chronically underfunded because it doesn't fit traditional project funding models.

5. Conclusion

5.1 Reflection on Objectives Achievement

The 2025 GKSDP Network Meeting successfully achieved its core objectives of networking, knowledge sharing, and collaborative partnership development while generating strategic insights that position the network for its next phase of maturation.

5.1.1 Networking Objective: Exceeded

Target: Enable organisations working across the Greater Kruger landscape to connect, share information, and identify collaboration opportunities.

Achievement:

- **280 potential new collaboration relationships** formed across 82 participants
- Average **3-4 strategic partnerships** identified per participant
- **100% retention intent** demonstrating value recognition
- **Five thematic groups** established to sustain connections beyond annual gathering

The networking objective was not only met but transformed. Rather than superficial business card exchanges, the Four Corners methodology catalysed focused, strategic relationship-building. Participants made manageable commitments to 2-4 collaborations they can realistically pursue—demonstrating quality over quantity. The formation of thematic WhatsApp groups with dedicated K2C moderators ensures that networking continues as sustained engagement rather than episodic annual interaction.

5.1.2 Knowledge Sharing Objective: Exceeded

Target: Create platform for organisations to share methodologies, successes, challenges, and lessons learned.

Achievement:

- **59 Organisations** shared mandates, methodologies, and collaboration approaches (Corner 1)
- **Quantified impact documented:** 22,167 ha cleared, 948,000 cookstoves, 100% HWC

reduction in communities (Corner 2)
- **Honest challenge-sharing** normalized vulnerability and identified systemic barriers (Corner 3)
- **Collaboration readiness factors** and power dynamics explicitly discussed (Corner 4)
- **85-90% of participants** cited collaboration/partnership as primary takeaway
- **Four Corners methodology explicitly praised** as effective peer learning format

The knowledge sharing objective evolved from information exchange to genuine learning culture. The Four Corners approach—validated by participants as superior to traditional presentations—created space for authentic dialogue about what works, what doesn't, and why. The proposed Impact Data Room and group charters formalize ongoing knowledge management, transforming episodic sharing into systematic learning infrastructure.

5.1.3 Collaboration Development Objective: Exceeded

Target: Identify and catalyse collaborative partnerships to address shared challenges and opportunities.

Achievement:

- **Immediate partnerships catalysed:** Sabi Sand (ECD skills need) + Kishugu (capacity available); Londolozi (farming mentorship need) + three organisations volunteered
- **Systemic challenges identified as collaboration opportunities:** Funding architecture, M&E complexity, governance coordination
- **Five thematic groups** provide mechanisms for converting potential to actual partnerships
- **Commitment declaration** with symbolic signing created accountability foundation
- **"Interweaving" concept** articulated and validated as operational framework

The collaboration objective was achieved through both immediate partnership formation and structural mechanism creation. The network moved beyond ad hoc collaboration toward intentional partnership design with explicit discussion of readiness factors, power dynamics, and governance requirements. The question "Who funds the learning, collaboration and support?" was answered collectively: coordination infrastructure requires dedicated resources.

5.1.4 Strategic Insight Generation: Unanticipated Achievement

Beyond stated objectives, the meeting generated five overarching findings that provide evidence base for strategic planning:

1. Partnership infrastructure is essential and underfunded
2. Paradigm shift from enforcement to co-creation is underway
3. Demonstrated impact at scale requires patient capital (10-17 years)
4. Funding architecture creates systemic constraints requiring innovation
5. Collaboration maturity hinges on Organisational readiness

These findings represent collective intelligence of 59 organisations synthesized through structured dialogue. They provide foundation for donor conversations, policy advocacy, and network evolution strategy.

5.2 Forward-Looking Statements

5.2.1 Network Evolution Pathway

The 2025 meeting marks an inflection point in the network's evolution. Having successfully established annual convening as valued tradition, the network is ready to mature from celebration toward sustained collaborative ecosystem. This evolution requires:

Short-Term (2026):

- Development of one-page charters for five thematic groups (by March)
- Establishment of Impact Data Room infrastructure (by June)
- Mid-year checkpoint to assess progress and course-correct (June/July)
- Conversion of 20-30% of potential collaborations (56-84 actual partnerships)
- 2026 annual meeting expanded to two days with broader participation

Medium-Term (2026-2027):

- Funded coordinator position to support sustained network coordination
- Formalized charter with Organisational commitments and accountability mechanisms
- Demonstrated outcomes from thematic groups (joint proposals, shared resources, policy engagement, innovation adoption, coordinated community engagement)
- Network establishing collective voice influencing policy on systemic issues

Long-Term (2027+):

- Network operating as self-sustaining collaborative ecosystem
- Evidence of sustained collaboration culture (partnerships continuing 2+ years)
- Recognition as model for landscape-level collaboration in MAB network
- Influence on funding architecture through collective advocacy
- Direct Traditional Authority and community participation as full partners

5.2.2 Critical Success Factors

Network evolution success depends on:

1. Coordination Infrastructure Investment: K2C's convening role requires dedicated resources—this work cannot be absorbed as add-on to existing programming. The question "Who funds the learning, collaboration and support?" must transition from rhetorical to budgeted.

2. Organisational Follow-Through: The 280 potential collaborations represent hypothesis, not achievement. Success requires individual organisations prioritizing group participation, following through on commitments, and allocating staff time despite competing demands.

3. Accountability with Trust: Implementing tracking mechanisms and progress reporting while maintaining the trust and openness that enabled honest dialogue in Corner 3. Accountability should celebrate successes and discuss challenges constructively, not become punitive.

4. Early Wins Strategy: Each thematic group achieving 1-2 concrete collaborations in first six months will demonstrate value and build momentum. Success breeds participation.

5. Iterative Adaptation: Willingness to restructure groups, change moderators, merge or split focus areas based on what's working. Current structure is hypothesis requiring testing.

5.2.3 Opportunities for Impact

The network is positioned to influence landscape sustainability through:

Collective Advocacy: Policy Advocacy Alliance providing vehicle for network voice on funding architecture reform, land use planning integration (SPLUMA), and recognition of landscape-level approaches in government policy.

Finance Innovation Acceleration: Joint Fundraising Consortium enabling adoption of sustainable finance mechanisms (debt-for-nature swaps, conservation bonds, carbon markets, fee-for-service models) at pace impossible for individual organisations.

Knowledge Amplification: Impact Data Room and peer learning exchanges enabling rapid dissemination of proven approaches across 59 organisations, preventing duplication and accelerating impact.

Gender Equity Mainstreaming: Women-led multiplication models and influence multipliers demonstrating that gender equity is not compliance checkbox but strategic pathway to scalability.

Youth Pipeline Development: Systematic programs creating pathways from early childhood through employment, addressing youth unemployment while ensuring intergenerational conservation.

5.2.4 Risks and Mitigation

The network's evolution faces predictable risks:

Risk of Momentum Loss: Annual meetings generate enthusiasm that dissipates without sustained engagement. *Mitigation:* Mid-year checkpoints, active group moderation, early wins strategy, transparent communication about progress.

Risk of Coordination Burden: K2C's convening role becoming unsustainable without dedicated funding. *Mitigation:* Advocacy for coordinator position, exploration of membership fees or philanthropic support, documentation of coordination value for resource mobilization.

Risk of "Talk Shop" Perception: Networks becoming forums for discussion without action. *Mitigation:* Rigorous accountability mechanisms, concrete metrics (joint applications, resources shared, policies influenced), celebration of partnerships moving from potential to actual.

Risk of Power Imbalances: Well-resourced organisations dominating while grassroots voices marginalized. *Mitigation:* Explicit governance in charters, rotating leadership, ensuring Traditional Authority and community voices in relevant groups, facilitation supporting equitable participation.

Risk of Competing Demands: Organisational workloads crowding out network participation. *Mitigation:* Demonstrate value through quick wins, maintain flexibility in engagement expectations, recognize that not all organisations should participate in all groups.

5.3 Acknowledgements

5.3.1 Participating Organisations

Deep gratitude to the 59 organisations and 82 individuals who invested their time, expertise, and vulnerability in the 2025 GKSDP Network Meeting. Your willingness to share both successes and challenges, to learn from peers, and to commit to sustained collaboration demonstrates the leadership required for landscape-level sustainability. Your collective intelligence—synthesized through structured dialogue—provides foundation for the network's continued evolution.

5.3.2 Government Partners

Special recognition to representatives from LEDET, MTPA, Ehlanzeni District Municipality, Mbombela Local Municipality, Bushbuckridge Local Municipality, Thaba Chweu Local Municipality, and SANParks for your participation across all three spheres of government. Your engagement validates the importance of multi-scalar governance for landscape sustainability and demonstrates government commitment to collaborative approaches.

5.3.3 Facilitators and Scribes

Sincere appreciation to the facilitation team for designing and implementing the Four Corners methodology that participants explicitly praised. To our dedicated scribes—Shoki Mafogo, Romy Antrobus Wuth, Vusi Tshabalala, and Lauren Booth—thank you for capturing the richness of discussions that enabled this comprehensive documentation. Your notes provided essential foundation for analysis and synthesis.

5.3.4 GAC Restoring African Rangelands Project

Acknowledgement to the Government of Canada and Conservation International for the GAC Restoring African Rangelands Project investment that enabled K2C to convene this network meeting and develop supporting infrastructure. The project's emphasis on collaborative governance, gender equity, and sustainable finance directly informed the meeting's design and outcomes.

5.3.5 K2C Team

Recognition to the K2C Biosphere team for logistics coordination, venue preparation, moderation commitment, and sustained network coordination work. Your professionalism enabled participants to focus on substantive collaboration rather than operational concerns. The 100% retention intent reflects not only meeting content value but the quality of execution.

5.3.6 Wits Rural Facility

Gratitude to the Wits Rural Facility for hosting and providing venue that enabled both indoor sessions and outdoor Four Corners activities. While participants noted weather considerations for November timing, the facility's capacity for diverse formats supported the meeting's innovative methodology.

5.3.7 Private Sector Partners

Appreciation to private reserves, conservation enterprises, and businesses represented in the Nature-Positive Businesses sector (15% of participation). Your engagement demonstrates that conservation and enterprise can be mutually reinforcing, and your perspectives on sustainable finance and operational efficiency enriched network discussions.

5.3.8 Community-Based Organisations

Special recognition to grassroots organisations working directly with communities—your grounded perspectives on what enables/constrains collaboration, your honest sharing of operational challenges, and your examples of women's multiplication models and community-led approaches provided essential reality-checking for network discussions.

5.3.9 Organising Committee and Facilitator

SANParks, Sabi Sand Pfunanani Trust and Timbavati Foundation supported by Mike Grover (facilitator) and Johann Nortje played an enormous role in conceptualising and running the Network Meeting.

5.4 Closing Reflection

The 2025 GKSDP Network Meeting demonstrated that the Greater Kruger landscape is home to extraordinary human capital—59 organisations representing diverse mandates, approaches, and capacities, yet united by shared commitment to landscape sustainability. The meeting revealed sophisticated understanding of what collaboration requires: not just goodwill but intentional design, invested infrastructure, explicit navigation of power dynamics, and sustained coordination support.

The network has moved decisively beyond the question "Should we collaborate?" to the more sophisticated question "How do we collaborate effectively?" This maturation is evidenced by:

- Recognition that collaboration requires skills, not just proximity
- Request for formal mechanisms and accountability, not just annual celebration
- Understanding that funding architecture itself creates competition undermining partnership
- Willingness to discuss power dynamics and Organisational readiness explicitly
- Acknowledgment that coordination is work requiring dedicated resources

The paradigm shift from fortress conservation to collaborative landscape management—articulated by SANParks, demonstrated by private reserves, operationalized by community-based organisations, and supported by government across three spheres—represents fundamental rethinking of conservation. The network is living proof that this shift is not theoretical aspiration but practical reality generating measurable outcomes: 22,167 hectares restored, 948,000 households with clean cookstoves, 100% human-wildlife conflict reduction in communities, 300 women each training 10 households.

The "interweaving" concept—organisations maintaining distinct identities while coordinating toward shared landscape objectives—provides operational framework that respects Organisational autonomy while fostering strategic alignment. This conceptual clarity enables more effective collaboration than simplistic "integration" that can erase Organisational identity.

The question "Who funds the learning, collaboration and support?"—surfaced in Corner 3 and echoed throughout the meeting—has been collectively answered: someone must, because the network has demonstrated its value and participants are ready for sustained coordination infrastructure. The 100% retention intent, 280 potential collaborations, and explicit requests for accountability mechanisms provide mandate for K2C to seek dedicated coordinator funding.

As the network moves forward, the five thematic groups, commitment declaration, and proposed infrastructure (charters, Impact Data Room, mid-year checkpoint) provide mechanisms to convert potential collaborations into actual partnerships. Success will be measured not by annual meeting attendance but by joint funding applications submitted, resources shared, policies influenced, innovations adopted, and community engagement protocols coordinated.

The 2025 meeting created foundation for the network's next phase: from annual celebration to sustained collaborative ecosystem, from rhetorical commitment to accountable action, from individual Organisational success to collective landscape impact. The journey continues, guided by the collective wisdom that emerged through honest dialogue: partnership is not optional—it is the operating system for landscape sustainability.

The Greater Kruger landscape's future depends not on any single Organisation but on the strength of the collaborative infrastructure that enables 59 organisations to work as coherent force for sustainability. The 2025 GKSDP Network Meeting demonstrated that this infrastructure exists, is maturing, and—with sustained investment—can generate landscape transformation at scale.

Annexures

- Annex A: Participant List
- Annex B: Meeting Agenda
- Annex C: Commitment Declaration (signed version)
- Annex D: Detailed Mentimeter Results
- Annex E: Photos/Visual Documentation