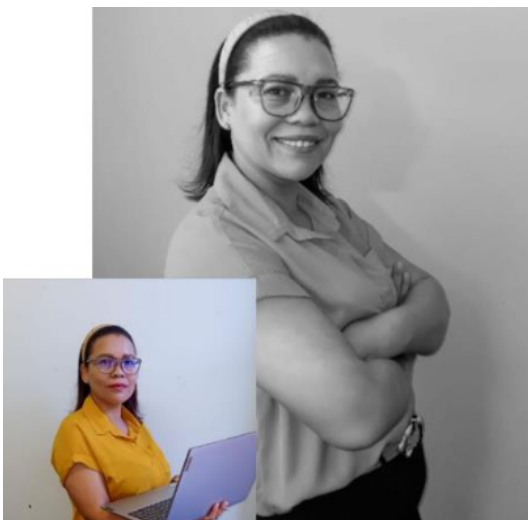




PROJECT NEWSLETTER

FROM WORDS TO ACTION: YOUR VOICE IS BUILDING A NEW NAMAKWA



Inside this week's edition:



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Reflections from the Workshops – raw voices from Richtersveld to Calvinia



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science, technology
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Department:
Science, Technology and Innovation
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



Innovation Champion

Spotlight



FROM THE FIELD: MY JOURNEY AS AN INNOVATION CHAMPION IN NAMAKWA

By Wendy Scheffers, hosted by Namakwa District Municipality

Working as an Innovation Champion for the IC4LED initiative has been both rewarding and eye-opening. I've had the privilege of engaging directly with businesses, communities, and stakeholders across the Namakwa District – travelling hundreds of kilometres, listening to real challenges, and uncovering real opportunities.

MY ROLE WITHIN THE MUNICIPALITY

I've supported LED/IDP meetings, IGR engagements, minutes, reports, stakeholder communication, and strategic planning – acting as a bridge between the municipality, district, university, and communities

REFLECTIONS ON THE WORKSHOPS

The bottom-up approach let people share their own ideas. "The people who live and work here know their challenges best." It was inspiring to hear their visions for the future. The workshops gave a platform to voices not always heard. One concern, though: low attendance of young people. As future leaders and innovators, our youth must become more actively involved in shaping their own future.

WHAT BUSINESSES TOLD ME:

Access to start-up capital remains a major barrier, with strict funding criteria and age limits excluding many aspiring entrepreneurs. Frequent water, electricity, and connectivity interruptions hurt daily operations, while local SMMEs need larger companies to offer opportunities instead of sourcing products and services from outside the district.

WHAT COMMUNITIES SAID:

Unemployment, poor roads, unreliable services, and a lack of higher education institutions are holding us back. That is why initiatives like IC4LED and the involvement of Sol Plaatje University matter so much.

LOOKING AHEAD:

We met our mapping targets. Now we turn ideas into action. I'm hopeful and grateful to be part of a team committed to a stronger, more innovative Namakwa.

Namakwa LED Strategy Formulation Workshops

(March 2026)



A REFLECTION:

The March 2026 workshops were the first public participation step in crafting an innovation-driven Local Economic Development (LED) strategy for Namakwa District. Under the IC4LED project, we aimed to move beyond top-down planning – bringing local voices from all seven local municipalities to co-identify challenges, opportunities, and practical interventions.

Across Port Nolloth (63), Springbok (61), Pofadder (59) and Calvinia (54), 237 people participated. After excluding our own research, facilitation and partner team (approx. 30) plus University & Innovation Champions (47), roughly 180–190 genuine local stakeholders – business owners, community members, municipal reps, government officials, civil society and safety sector representatives – engaged directly. This was a strong signal of local ownership.



The discussions were raw and honest. Participants partially agreed with our research but pointed out outdated statistics, missing sector data (tourism, health, crime), and lived realities that reports often miss. Key challenges repeated: poor roads, weak connectivity, water and electricity gaps, misaligned skills, and poor communication between government and communities. Yet opportunities shone through – renewable energy, mining beneficiation, agro-processing, tourism routes, and digital hubs.



Without these voices, the strategy would be a desk-exercise. The March workshops grounded our thinking in real constraints and local solutions. Going forward, we must urgently address transport barriers and actively urge participation – especially from remote wards – to ensure the final LED strategy truly belongs to Namakwa's people.

A call for help: overcoming distance and hardship together

A call for help: overcoming distance and hardship together

The March workshops showed enormous local commitment, but they also revealed a hard truth: Namakwa's vast distances and economic realities make attendance a genuine struggle. For someone in Lekkersing, Witbank or Onseepkans, getting to a venue means fuel costs, lost daily wages, and unreliable transport on poor roads. Several participants arrived late or left early – not from lack of will, but because the journey is simply too expensive and unpredictable. We learned that an invitation is not enough. We urgently ask public and local stakeholders to help – with shuttles, travel stipends, or hosting satellite sessions in deeper wards. Without this practical support, the voices that matter most will remain unheard, and our LED strategy will be incomplete.

Please step forward.



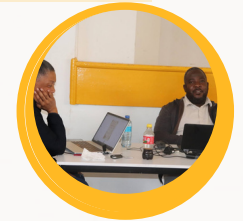
Reflections from the Workshops – raw voices from Richtersveld to Calvinia

(March 2026)



"Your stats that you've based your population on... we in group one have disagree that your stats is totally incorrect."

Group 1 Spokesperson, Pofadder



"While things may look good on paper, there is nothing tangible reaching the community."

Community Member, Calvinia



"Establishment of a satellite TVET institution with technical school... decentralize education system, innovation in education methods, innovation-driven curriculum."

Group 2 Spokesperson, Calvinia

"It takes anything from 18 to 24 months for a small scale mining activation... the red tape... the cost... Actually, it's counterproductive in terms of what the department wants to achieve."

Participant, Springbok.



"Fishing is a major economic driver but it is not properly represented in data... needs to be separated from agriculture and analyzed independently."

Participant, Richtersveld Municipality



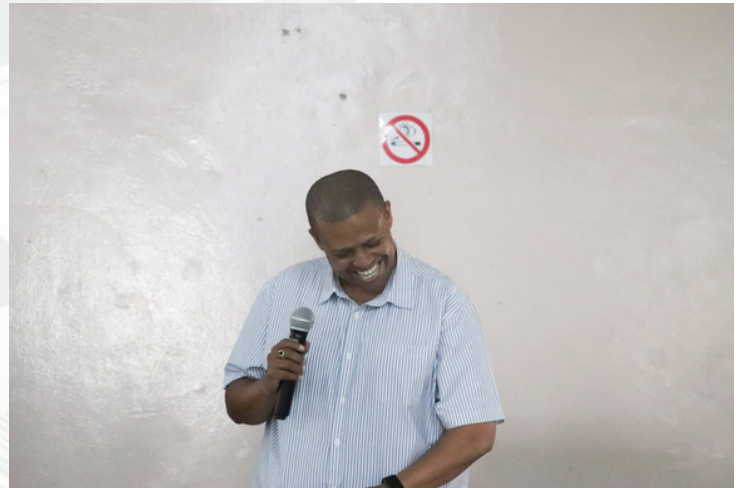
"There are many stakeholders who are not present today, especially those involved in community activities. This affects the discussions because key role players are missing."

Community Member, Calvinia



Stakeholders

in Action



Post - Workshops update

Following the March workshops, the drafting team developed a full LED strategy draft (framework, pillars, vision, programmes, and governance model) between 20 April and 19 May. On 22 May, Dr Dakora presented to the IDP Rep Forum for feedback. On 26 May, he presented to the Namakwa Municipal Council, where the Speaker indicated the draft would be adopted (resolution pending). Looking ahead: validation workshops are scheduled for 6-10 July 2026, with invitations being issued.

A MASSIVE THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS:

Department of Science, Technology and Innovation; Sol Plaatje University; Technology Innovation Agency; Department of Cooperative Governance; South African Local Government Association; Northern Cape Department of Economic Development and Tourism; and Development Bank of Southern Africa.

Now we need you – citizens, businesses, innovators, community groups, government.

Join the **Namakwa LED Strategy VALIDATION Workshops:**

Dates: 06 July (Port Nolloth) | 07 July (Springbok) | 08 July (Pofadder) | 10 July (Calvinia)

Time: 08:30–16:30

Confirm with Wendy by **22 June:** wendy.scheffers@spu.ac.za / 0795920158

Queries: Gerda – gerdavidh@namakwa-dm.gov.za / 0718702932

Look out for the next newsletter, and follow Namakwa DM on Facebook & WhatsApp (IC4LED Namakwa DM).

See you there!



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