



Close-out Report

Building capacity & collaboration to strengthen business leadership
and support business-government dialogue for enhanced policy
instruments in South Africa

July 2026



Acronym List

Acronym	Meaning
ACT-D	Assess, Commit, Transform and Disclose
BAG	Business Advisory Group
BBU	Biodiversity and Business Unit
BEES	Biodiversity, Ecosystems and Ecosystem Services
BfN	Business for Nature
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CIPC	Companies and Intellectual Property Commission
DBSA	Development Bank of Southern Africa
DFFE	Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment
DIROs	Dependencies, Impacts, Risks and Opportunities
ESG	Environmental, Social and Governance
EWT	Endangered Wildlife Trust
GBF	Global Biodiversity Framework
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
GRI	Global Reporting Initiative
IFRS	International Financial Reporting Standards
IPBES	Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
ISSB	International Sustainability Standards Board
JSE	Johannesburg Stock Exchange
LEAP	Locate, Evaluate, Assess and Prepare
NAA	Nature Action Accelerator
NBA	National Biodiversity Assessment
NBI	National Business Initiative
NBSAP	National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
PMP	Project Management Plan
SABS	South African Bureau of Standards
SANBI	South African National Biodiversity Institute
SASB	Sustainability Accounting Standards Board
SBTN	Science Based Targets Network
TNFD	Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosures

1 Introduction

South Africa is one of the world's most biologically diverse countries, but faces increasing environmental pressures including habitat loss, water insecurity, climate change, ecosystem degradation, pollution, invasive species, and biodiversity loss. These challenges present growing risks not only for ecosystems and society, but also for businesses, financial institutions, and broader society's long-term economic resilience. Recent findings from South Africa's National Biodiversity Assessment (NBA) 2025 show that almost half of the country's ecosystem types are threatened, with freshwater ecosystems, estuaries, rivers, and wetlands among the most vulnerable.

At the same time, the global biodiversity agenda is evolving rapidly through frameworks such as the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), which calls for stronger private-sector action on biodiversity assessment, disclosure, target-setting, and implementation. In response, South Africa is currently updating its National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) for 2026–2035 to align with the GBF and strengthen implementation through a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach. The draft NBSAP also places growing emphasis on biodiversity mainstreaming, monitoring, implementation support, innovative finance, and broader stakeholder participation.

In 2023 and 2024, the EWT's Biodiversity and Business Unit (BBU) facilitated the Business Advisory Group (BAG), as part of the Business Action and Advocacy for the Planet project, undertaken with Business for Nature. This initiative engaged companies across sectors to reflect on and advance their biodiversity strategies and contributions to the Global Biodiversity Framework. Through these engagements it became evident that businesses in South Africa face knowledge, capacity and skills gaps when it comes to biodiversity mainstreaming. In 2024 NBI actively engaged with government, civil society and its corporate members to brainstorm a nature-pathways transition enabling business action on nature, but the process recognised that corporate South Africa needs capacity-building support to trigger the appropriate business action.

The Nature Action Accelerator (NAA) was developed in partnership between the National Business Initiative (NBI), the Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT), and Business for Nature (BfN) to support South African businesses in moving from awareness towards practical integration of nature-related considerations into strategy, governance, operations, and disclosure processes. Modelled on the Assess, Commit, Transform and Disclose (ACT-D) framework, the programme provided practical, locally relevant capacity building through expert presentations, case studies, peer learning, and resource sharing in an on-line environment. The programme also sought to strengthen alignment between business action, national biodiversity priorities, and South Africa's broader GBF and NBSAP implementation ambitions.

The value of collaboration between business, government and civil society in advancing nature-positive action cannot be understated. The NAA highlighted the important role that organisations such as the EWT, NBI, Business for Nature, government stakeholders and the private sector can play in strengthening the credibility, reach and practical impact of

biodiversity mainstreaming initiatives in South Africa through coordinated partnerships and shared learning.

The post-programme survey found that 76% of respondents reported an improvement in their organisation's understanding of nature-related risks and opportunities, indicating that the Nature Action Accelerator successfully strengthened organisational knowledge and capability while building momentum for continued action and collaboration.

2. Objectives of the Project

2.1 Project Objectives

High-level objective

To strengthen business leadership through capacity building that enhances businesses' ability to engage with government on policy for greater nature action. In addition, support government in developing evidence-based and ambitious policy.

Expected outcomes

1. Business capacity is strengthened for greater leadership and action towards a nature-positive ambition.
2. Government action is supported by enhanced collaboration with business and non-business stakeholders.

The activities and deliverables as outlined in the Project Management Plan (PMP):

- Assess business awareness, capacity and readiness through a baseline survey;
- Design and deliver a tailored four-module Nature Action Accelerator programme responding to identified business needs;
- Strengthen business understanding of nature-related assessment, commitment, implementation and disclosure through the ACT-D framework;
- Facilitate peer learning and knowledge exchange through expert presentations, South African case studies and practical resources;
- Document participant feedback and evaluate changes in business awareness, ambition and intended action through a post-programme survey and impact assessment;
- Develop and implement communication activities to raise awareness of both the Nature Action Accelerator and related policy engagement processes;
- Document ongoing engagement with SANBI and other key stakeholders to demonstrate alignment between business capacity-building initiatives and broader biodiversity policy processes; and
- Compile a close-out report summarising programme outputs, outcomes, lessons learnt and recommendations for future implementation.

2.2 Amendments During Implementation

In respect of Outcome 1, some aspects of the programme were refined in response to participant feedback, baseline survey findings, speaker availability, and updates to the

project management plan. While the overall objectives and ACT-D structure remained unchanged, individual sessions and content were adapted to ensure the topics remained practical, relevant, and responsive to participant needs. Greater emphasis was placed on practical implementation support, South African case studies, local biodiversity datasets and decision-support tools, peer learning, and translating global biodiversity frameworks into practical business application. Flexibility in speaker expertise also allowed topics to be tailored and expanded where appropriate.

For example, although Nature-based solutions was initially identified in the baseline survey as a potential topic, it was ultimately not incorporated as a standalone topic in the final programme.

With regards to Outcome 2, two activities (see below) were also amended during implementation:

- **Activity 2.1** was revised from *engaging with SANBI through regular meetings to documenting and reporting ongoing engagement with SANBI and other key stakeholders influencing biodiversity policy and business engagement in South Africa*. This better reflected the project's role in supporting and capturing existing policy engagement processes rather than establishing a separate engagement mechanism.
- Concomitantly, **activity 2.2** was also revised from *implementing a communication plan coordinated with SANBI to delivering a communication plan for policy dialogues*, with the focus shifting from raising the visibility of Outcome 2 to raising the visibility of engagement in biodiversity policy dialogues. This broadened the communications objective beyond SANBI specifically, while continuing to support awareness of policy engagement activities and their relevance to business.

3. Key Outcomes and Activities

3.1 Summary of Main Activities Delivered

The Nature Action Accelerator was delivered as a four-part virtual capacity-building programme structured around the ACT-D framework: Assess, Commit, Transform and Disclose. The programme combined expert presentations, practical guidance, peer learning, South African case studies, and resource-sharing to support businesses in progressing along their nature and biodiversity journey.

The programme placed strong emphasis on practical implementation support, locally relevant examples, and translating global frameworks into actionable business approaches within the South African context.

3.2 Products Developed

Outcome 1 focused on delivering the capacity-building programme itself, while **Outcome 2** focused on strengthening the enabling environment through business engagement, policy alignment and communications.

The following products and outputs were developed as part of the programme:

Outcome 1: Nature Action Accelerator

1. Nature Action Accelerator baseline survey and analysis;
2. Nature Action Accelerator post-programme survey and analysis;
3. Four-module ACT-D capacity-building live webinars (each 2.5 hours long);
4. Post-session summary documents and resource packs containing:
 - a) Summaries of the sessions;
 - b) Links to tools, datasets, frameworks, and guidance resources;
 - c) Module slide decks and presentation materials;
 - d) Recordings of the sessions.

Outcome 2: Business Engagement Initiatives

The programme contributed to strengthening collaboration between business, government, and technical stakeholders, supporting broader biodiversity policy and implementation processes in South Africa. Key outputs included:

- Ongoing engagement with SANBI, DFFE, DBSA, GIZ, CBD, Business for Nature, and other stakeholders to strengthen alignment between corporate biodiversity action and South Africa's national biodiversity priorities.
- Continued engagement with SANBI on biodiversity and business-related matters, including discussions around the implementation of GBF Target 15, business readiness, and, where possible, the evolving National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP).
- Sharing of baseline survey findings and practical business perspectives to help improve understanding of business capacity, challenges, and opportunities relating to nature-positive action.
- Participation in national consultations, technical working groups, and multi-stakeholder platforms relating to biodiversity disclosure, sustainability reporting, biodiversity standards, and nature-related policy, including IFRS/ISSB consultations, SABS biodiversity standards, IPBES, the CIPC Sustainability Reporting Roundtable, and the Biodiversity and Business Forum.
- Ongoing engagement helping to strengthen alignment between emerging business practices, international frameworks, and South Africa's biodiversity priorities and GBF commitments.

Communications Outcomes (see relevant Annexure):

- Promotion of all four Nature Action Accelerator modules through LinkedIn, newsletters, direct email invitations and event pages.
- A communications plan aligned to the project timeline.
- LinkedIn posts, newsletters and website articles highlighting programme themes, biodiversity policy developments and nature-related business issues.
- Communications supporting broader Outcome 2 activities, including thought pieces on the IPBES Business and Biodiversity Assessment and the Draft SABS biodiversity standards, showcasing the EWT and CBD Biodiversity and Business Forum (BBF), the

CIPC Sustainability Reporting Roundtable, and other biodiversity policy engagements *(included in the Annexures)*.

- Ongoing knowledge sharing and stakeholder engagement across business, finance, government, standards-setting bodies and civil society organisations.
- A communications outputs report containing screenshots, web links, newsletters and social media posts *(included in the Annexures)*.

3.3 Participation Metrics

3.3.1 Registration report metrics (Modules 1–4)

The registration report metrics are based on programme registration data and therefore **represent registrations rather than confirmed attendance**. These figures, however, still provide a useful indication of the programme's reach and the diversity of stakeholder interest. There were:

- 482 registrations
- Approximately 240 organisations registered for the NAA (each counted only once)
- Many organisations that registered for all four modules.

3.3.2 Number of modules and number of participants for each module

Module	Number of Attendees
Module 1	98
Module 2	77
Module 3	105
Module 4	65

3.3.3 Participant roles and organisational functions

The percentages below represent the organisational functions of respondents to the post-programme survey. They provide an indication of the roles of participants who engaged with the Nature Action Accelerator programme.

Function	% of respondents
Sustainability	84%
ESG reporting	24%
Risk / Finance	20%
Compliance	16%
Site/project operations	16%
Procurement	12%
Operations / Supply chain	12%
Board / Executive	8%
Communications	4%
Investor Relations	4%

(The total percentages exceed 100% because respondents could select multiple functions.)

3.3.4 Number of participating organisations

158 organisations (each counted only once) participated across the four modules.

3.3.5 Number of business representatives engaged

Approximately 122 organisations (77%) were from the private sector, demonstrating strong engagement from South African businesses and industry. The balance comprises government and public-sector organisations, NGOs, research institutions, academic institutions and international organisations (see point 3.3.7 below).

3.3.6 Sector representation *(Indicated in image 1 below)*

The diversity reflects the cross-sector relevance of nature-related business risks and opportunities and demonstrates that biodiversity is increasingly being recognised beyond traditionally high-impact sectors. The programme attracted participants from a broad cross-section of sectors.

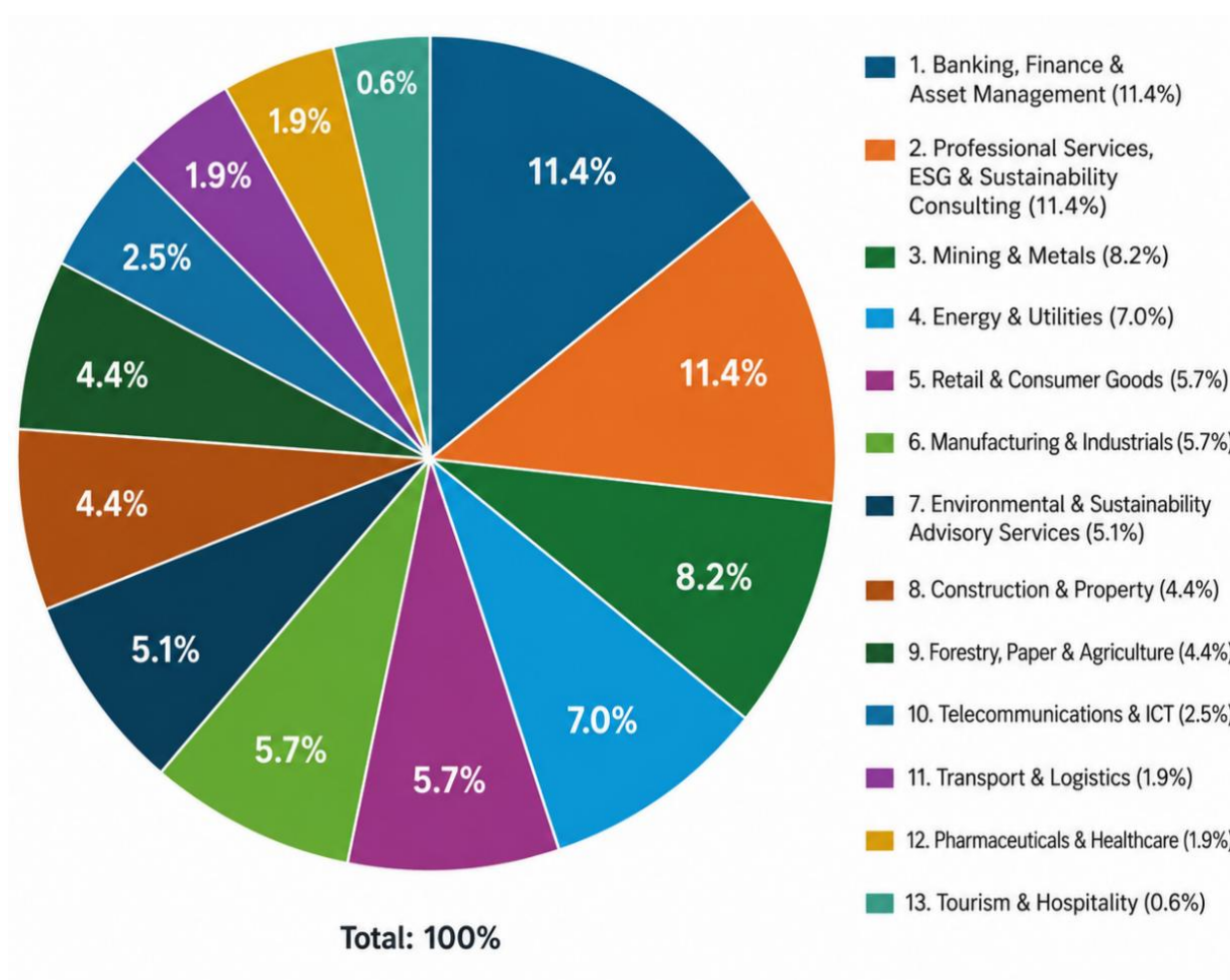


Image 1: Business Sector Representation – based on unique participating organisations

3.3.7 Number of government and institutional representatives involved

In addition to business participation, the programme engaged representatives from approximately:

- 21 government and public-sector organisations, including national and provincial government departments, public entities, regulators and development finance institutions.
- 15 NGOs, research institutions, academic institutions and international organisations, including conservation organisations, universities, industry initiatives and global framework organisations.
- Together, this represents 36 government and institutional organisations (23%), highlighting the programme's success in creating a multi-stakeholder platform for collaboration between business, government, academia and civil society.

4. Policy and Institutional Outcomes

The Nature Action Accelerator strengthened collaboration between business, government, technical experts, and civil society organisations working at the interface of biodiversity and sustainable development in South Africa. Through ongoing engagement processes, the programme helped create a practical platform for dialogue, knowledge exchange, and collaboration on biodiversity-related policy, disclosure, implementation, and capacity-building priorities.

A key component of the project was ongoing engagement with the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI), alongside broader interaction with government stakeholders and national policy processes. Engagements, technical consultations, workshops, and national dialogues helped strengthen alignment between business action and national biodiversity priorities.

The project also contributed towards strengthening awareness and understanding of emerging biodiversity-related disclosure, governance, and reporting developments in South Africa. By participating in technical platforms and consultations linked to IFRS and ISSB sustainability reporting discussions, SABS biodiversity standards processes, TNFD capacity-building initiatives, IPBES engagement processes, and sustainability reporting dialogues, the project contributed business and implementation perspectives into evolving biodiversity-related policy and standards discussions.

In addition, communication and stakeholder engagement activities played an important role in broadening awareness and strengthening participation across business, finance, government, standards-setting bodies, and sustainability practitioners. NBI and EWT amplified key project-related engagements through LinkedIn, newsletters, webpages, direct stakeholder engagement, and event communications to increase visibility and accessibility of biodiversity-related discussions and outcomes.

Collectively, these engagements:

- Strengthened alignment between corporate biodiversity action and national priorities;
- Supported business readiness for implementation of GBF Target 15;
- Enabled practical business perspectives to inform biodiversity policy, standards and disclosure discussions;
- Strengthened collaboration and trust between business, government and technical stakeholders; and
- Contributed towards positioning business as an increasingly credible and constructive partner in South Africa's biodiversity policy landscape.

Looking ahead, these relationships provide a strong foundation for continued collaboration between government, business and civil society. Opportunities include establishing an ongoing community of practice to support implementation of emerging biodiversity standards, including the SABS Biodiversity Mirror Committee and related ISO biodiversity standards processes, while continuing to facilitate knowledge exchange, policy dialogue and practical implementation support. Building on these collaborative platforms will help strengthen alignment between national biodiversity priorities and corporate action over the longer term.

5. Business Outcomes

5.1 Participant Reflections and Key Concepts Taken Forward

During each module, participants were asked to submit answers anonymously via mentimeter. Their responses to the question "*What is the one concept you're taking with you?*" provide qualitative evidence of the programme's impact and reinforce several key themes.

The most prominent concepts arising from the answers were:

- *Nature is a business issue*, with participants recognising that "*nature risk is business risk*" and acknowledging the dependence of business and the economy on healthy ecosystems.
- *Embedding nature into strategy and decision-making*, including materiality, governance, prioritisation, and integrating nature and biodiversity into core business systems.
- *Moving from awareness to implementation*, with participants highlighting that no matter if the task seems big or small, they should just 'start!'.
- *The mitigation hierarchy*, particularly the importance of avoidance, implementation, and applying the hierarchy to guide business decisions.
- *Practical tools and collaboration*, including the value of existing frameworks, biodiversity data, partnerships, and peer learning.

Overall, participant reflections indicate that the programme successfully shifted thinking beyond biodiversity awareness towards practical implementation, strategic integration, and nature-positive business action.

5.2 Post-Programme Survey Findings

The following findings are based on 25 responses received through the Nature Action Accelerator post-programme survey. While not all programme participants completed the survey, the responses provide valuable insight into participants' experiences, perceived programme value, organisational progress, and future support needs. Most notably, the post-programme survey demonstrated measurable progress, with 76% of respondents reporting an improvement in their organisation's understanding of nature-related risks and opportunities.

5.2.1 What participants valued most

Participants rated the speaker presentations and South African business case studies as the most valuable components of the Nature Action Accelerator, with both selected by 21 respondents (33%). Participants also placed strong value on the post-event summary documents and resource packs (14 respondents; 22%), demonstrating the importance of providing practical resources that could be revisited, applied and shared within organisations.

Networking opportunities were selected by 8 respondents (13%), suggesting that while peer engagement was valued, participants placed greater emphasis on the technical content and practical learning delivered through the programme. When asked which aspects of the programme added the greatest value, participants consistently prioritised practical, implementation-focused content.

The highest-ranked topics covered in the modules, in order, were:

1. *Understanding nature-related dependencies, impacts, risks and opportunities (DIROs), TNFD and LEAP*, with 11 respondents (44%) ranking this as their first choice and a further 4 respondents (16%) ranking it second.
2. *Embedding nature into strategy, governance and decision-making*, with 8 respondents (32%) ranking it as their first choice, 4 (16%) as their second choice, and 3 (12%) each as their third and fourth choices.
3. *Nature-positive implementation and operational action*, with 3 respondents (12%) selecting it as their first choice, 4 (16%) as their second choice, 4 (16%) as their third choice, and 3 (12%) as their fourth choice.
4. *Nature-related commitments and target-setting*, which was most commonly ranked as the second choice by 5 respondents (20%), followed by 4 respondents (16%) ranking it third.
5. *Nature performance monitoring, indicators and KPIs*, which featured more frequently in later rankings, with 4 respondents (16%) selecting it as their fourth choice and 3 (12%) ranking it second.

These findings demonstrate that participants particularly valued practical guidance that helped translate biodiversity concepts into business decision-making and implementation. Collectively, the rankings indicate a strong preference for content that supports organisations in moving beyond awareness towards practical application and operational integration of nature-related approaches.

5.2.2 What participants did as a result

The programme contributed to tangible organisational progress beyond awareness-raising. When asked to rank which areas their organisations had started, progressed or strengthened during the programme, participants most frequently identified the following, in prioritised order below:

1. Internal awareness, capacity building and leadership discussions (17 respondents);
2. Assessment of nature-related impacts, dependencies, risks and opportunities (13 respondents);
3. Nature-related commitments, targets and strategy development (12 respondents);
4. Alignment with TNFD, GRI, IFRS, JSE guidance and related frameworks (11 respondents);
5. Use of biodiversity data, ecosystem services and screening tools (10 respondents); and
6. Integration of biodiversity into governance, operations and business planning (10 respondents).

The programme also generated strong momentum for continued action. Eighty percent (20 of 25 respondents) indicated that their organisation is very likely (32%) or likely (48%) to take further action on nature over the next 6–12 months, while the remaining respondents indicated that further action is possible but not yet certain. No respondents indicated that they were unlikely to take further action.

5.2.3 What participants want next

Participants expressed a clear demand for continued capacity building to help move from understanding to implementation.

The highest priorities for future support, in ranked order were:

1. Sector-specific training (16 respondents);
2. Sector-specific guidance and case studies (15 respondents);
3. South African and African case studies (13 respondents);
4. Strategy and target-setting support (12 respondents);
5. Communities of practice and peer learning (12 respondents); and
6. Leadership briefings (11 respondents).

Participants also identified *Assess* and *Commit* as the ACT-D stages where they require the greatest additional support, followed by *Transform*, while *Disclose* was identified as requiring comparatively less support. This suggests that many organisations are still strengthening the foundations of their nature journey by improving their understanding of impacts, dependencies, risks and opportunities, and developing credible commitments and strategies before progressing to large-scale implementation and disclosure.

5.2.4 Overall finding

The findings demonstrate a strong appetite for continued engagement. Rather than seeking greater awareness of biodiversity issues, organisations are increasingly looking for practical,

locally relevant support to implement nature-positive action through sector-specific guidance, implementation pathways, leadership engagement, and ongoing peer learning. This provides a strong rationale for continued investment in collaborative business capacity-building initiatives in South Africa.

5.3 Baseline and Post-Programme Survey Comparison

The Nature Action Accelerator was intentionally designed using findings from the baseline survey, which identified the priority capacity-building needs of participating organisations. The post-programme survey provided an opportunity to assess whether the programme responded effectively to these needs and contributed to improved organisational understanding and readiness.

While the baseline and post-programme surveys were completed by overlapping, but not necessarily identical, groups of participants, comparison of the results provides a useful indication of how participating organisations perceived their stage in the nature journey over the course of the programme.

Comparison of the baseline and post-programme survey results indicates positive shifts in organisational understanding, confidence and readiness across several areas. The sections below compare responses to the questions that were asked in both surveys, highlighting changes in organisational maturity, understanding of biodiversity concepts, perceived organisational risk, capacity-building priorities and barriers to implementation.

5.3.1 Comparison of shared survey questions

a) Progress in organisational nature maturity

Comparison of the baseline and post-programme surveys suggests a gradual shift in how organisations perceive their stage in the nature journey. At the start of the programme, the majority of organisations identified themselves as either *Emerging* (37%) or *Progressing* (37%), with 10% considering themselves *Beginners* and 16% identifying as *Front-runners*. Following the programme, responses remained concentrated within the *Emerging* (48%) and *Progressing* (32%) categories. While the proportion of organisations identifying as *Beginners* increased slightly to 16%, the proportion identifying as *Front-runners* decreased to 4%.

Rather than indicating a decline in maturity, these results likely reflect a more realistic self-assessment following the programme. As participants developed a deeper understanding of nature-related concepts, governance, implementation, and disclosure, many gained a greater appreciation of what meaningful integration of biodiversity into business entails. This suggests that the programme not only built knowledge and capacity, but also helped organisations more accurately evaluate their own stage of maturity and identify the steps required to progress further.

b) Nature loss as a risk to your organisation

At the start of the programme, 81.8% (27 of 33 respondents) considered nature and biodiversity loss to pose either a *moderate* (33.3%) or *significant* (48.5%) risk to their

organisation. Following the programme, although the number of survey respondents differed (25 respondents), 76% (19 of 25 respondents) continued to identify nature loss as posing either a *moderate* (32%) or *significant* (44%) risk to their organisation. Only 4% viewed it as posing a *limited* risk, while 8% indicated *no risk* and 12% remained unsure.

c) Capacity building or support area priorities

At the outset, organisations identified *targets and strategy development*, *understanding and applying global frameworks*, and *embedding biodiversity into governance and business systems* as their highest-priority capacity-building needs. At the end of the programme, participants reported the greatest improvements in their *understanding of global frameworks and alignment*, followed by *targets and strategy development*, *leadership and organisational culture*.

d) Understanding of nature and biodiversity concepts

The post-programme results show improved understanding in 5 out of the 6 biodiversity concepts, including a considerable improvement in materiality assessment for nature. Collectively, the findings suggest that the programme successfully strengthened participants' understanding of both foundational nature concepts and their practical application within business strategy, governance, implementation, and disclosure, providing a stronger platform for organisations to progress along their nature journey.

The only area showing comparatively lower improvement was *national biodiversity legislation and policy*. Rather than indicating a decline in understanding, this likely reflects participants' increased appreciation of the complexity of South Africa's policy landscape. It also highlights an opportunity for future capacity building and stronger government-business engagement to improve understanding of national biodiversity policy and its practical application.

e) Comparison of organisational barriers before and after the programme

Comparison of the baseline and post-programme surveys indicates that the principal barriers to integrating nature into business remained broadly consistent, although the programme helped clarify where organisations continue to require practical support.

In both surveys, *competing organisational priorities, including climate, social and operational demands*, remained the most significant barrier. This suggests that many organisations continue to face challenges in prioritising nature alongside other strategic business objectives. Similarly, *an unclear business case*, *limited internal capacity or technical expertise*, and *lack of sector-specific guidance* remained among the most frequently identified barriers. These findings reinforce the continued need for practical implementation guidance, business-relevant case studies, and capacity building that supports organisations in embedding biodiversity into core business functions.

Some barriers appeared to become less prominent following the programme. In particular, *limited data or metrics for measurement and confusion around frameworks, standards and terminology* were identified less frequently in the post-programme survey, suggesting that the programme helped improve participants' understanding of available frameworks, tools, and approaches.

5.3.2 Overall summary for the comparative analyses

Comparison of the baseline and post-programme surveys demonstrates that the Nature Action Accelerator successfully responded to the priority needs identified by participating organisations. The programme strengthened participants' understanding of key biodiversity concepts, increased confidence in applying emerging frameworks and approaches, and reinforced recognition of nature loss as a strategic business risk.

The findings also show that there has been improved understanding and readiness and that organisations are progressing beyond awareness towards implementation. While knowledge and organisational confidence and capability improved across several areas, participants consistently identified an ongoing need for practical support to translate this understanding into action.

Overall, the programme contributed to increased organisational capacity, strengthened business readiness for nature-positive action, and reinforced the value of continued collaboration between business, government, technical experts, and civil society in supporting South Africa's biodiversity ambitions.

5.4 Other Benefits

The programme also created opportunities for businesses to learn directly from South African corporate case studies and implementation examples, helping participants better understand practical pathways for operationalising nature-related commitments and embedding biodiversity into business decision-making processes.

In addition, the programme strengthened relationships and collaboration between businesses, technical experts, government representatives, and civil society organisations. The cross-sector learning environment created through the programme helped facilitate knowledge exchange, relationship-building, and broader awareness of the importance of collaborative approaches to biodiversity mainstreaming and nature-positive business action in South Africa.

Importantly, the programme also highlighted a strong demand for continued capacity building. Participants consistently identified the need for ongoing support through sector-specific training, practical case studies, implementation workshops, communities of practice, leadership engagement and company-specific advisory support.

6. Challenges and Barriers

6.1 Policy and Regulatory Challenges

The biodiversity policy and corporate reporting landscape continues to evolve rapidly, creating both opportunities and challenges for business and policymakers. Participants highlighted difficulties in navigating multiple overlapping frameworks and initiatives, including TNFD, SBTN, IFRS Sustainability Disclosure Standards, climate-related reporting and broader ESG requirements. While these frameworks are complementary, many organisations remain uncertain about where to begin, how they align, and how they can be applied within the South African context.

The work under Outcome 2 highlighted broader policy and institutional challenges associated with translating emerging global biodiversity disclosure standards into practical national implementation. Through ongoing engagement with SANBI, the Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA), the IFRS Foundation's International Sustainability Standards Board (ISSB), and the South African Bureau of Standards (SABS), it became clear that there remains a need to strengthen alignment between international reporting requirements, national biodiversity priorities and the practical realities faced by South African businesses.

The EWT contributed to technical consultations on proposed updates to the ISSB's sector-specific Biodiversity, Ecosystems and Ecosystem Services (BEES) metrics and technical protocols, including submissions on the Metals and Mining Exposure Draft. Participation in South Africa's Sustainability Reporting Adoption Roadmap process and related technical roundtables also highlighted the importance of ensuring that biodiversity considerations are credibly reflected within emerging sustainability disclosure standards and their future adoption in South Africa.

These engagements reinforced the value of continued collaboration between government, standard setters, technical experts and the private sector to improve policy coherence, strengthen implementation guidance, and ensure that evolving biodiversity disclosure requirements remain both scientifically robust and practically applicable.

6.2 Business-Related Challenges

Baseline survey findings identified varying levels of biodiversity maturity, technical understanding, and organisational readiness across participating companies. This was anticipated during programme design, enabling the content to be structured to support organisations at different stages of their nature journey. Nevertheless, balancing introductory content with more advanced technical discussions remained an ongoing consideration throughout programme delivery.

Participants consistently highlighted that moving from awareness to implementation remains one of the greatest challenges. Common barriers included *limited biodiversity expertise, uncertainty around metrics and performance indicators, difficulty setting meaningful targets, and integrating biodiversity considerations into existing governance, operational, and business decision-making processes.*

The baseline survey also identified *uncertainty around biodiversity data, measurement approaches and the application of available frameworks and tools.* As noted in 5.3.1 (e), these barriers were reported less frequently in the post-programme survey, which is encouraging and suggests that the programme helped strengthen participants' understanding of available datasets, frameworks and decision-support tools. However, participants continued to emphasise the need for more practical guidance on applying

biodiversity data within site-level operations, risk assessments, monitoring programmes and disclosure processes. This indicates that while knowledge and confidence improved, further support is required to translate available data and tools into practical implementation

6.3 Coordination Challenges

Delivering a programme that remained relevant across multiple sectors, organisational roles, and varying levels of technical expertise required careful coordination and facilitation. Sessions were designed to remain practical and accessible while still providing sufficient technical depth for organisations already progressing along their nature journey.

The programme also sought to bring together expertise from business, government, civil society, and technical specialists. Coordinating presenters and ensuring logical progression across the four ACT-D modules required ongoing collaboration between the Endangered Wildlife Trust, National Business Initiative, Business for Nature, and guest speakers.

6.4 Other

Although the majority of participants were happy with the virtual format, some participants indicated that face-to-face engagement would have been valuable, particularly for networking, discussion, and peer learning opportunities.

While the programme was intentionally delivered virtually to maximise accessibility, enable participation from organisations across South Africa, and remain within the available project budget, future programmes could benefit from incorporating in-person or hybrid engagement opportunities where resources allow.

Despite this, the programme demonstrated strong interest from businesses in strengthening biodiversity capacity and reinforced the demand for practical, locally relevant support that helps organisations move beyond awareness towards implementation, performance measurement, and disclosure readiness.

7. Lessons Learned

7.1 What Worked Well

The Nature Action Accelerator demonstrated that businesses value practical, implementation-focused capacity building. Participants consistently rated speaker presentations, South African case studies, and practical tools and resources among the most valuable aspects of the programme. Topics relating to nature-related risks and dependencies (DIROs), embedding nature into strategy and governance, implementation, and target-setting were also ranked as the most beneficial, reinforcing the importance of translating global biodiversity frameworks into practical business application.

The ACT-D structure provided an effective framework for guiding organisations through a logical progression from understanding nature-related issues to implementation and disclosure. Participants also valued the combination of technical expertise, peer learning, and locally relevant examples, which helped demonstrate how nature-related concepts can be applied within the South African context.

7.2 What Could Be Strengthened

The programme reinforced that organisations remain at different stages of their nature journey. While the baseline survey identified this variation from the outset and informed programme design, balancing introductory content with more advanced technical discussions remained an ongoing consideration throughout delivery. The post-programme survey also highlighted that organisations continue to require support in translating awareness into implementation. Future programmes should place greater emphasis on practical implementation pathways, sector-specific guidance, strategy development, leadership engagement, and operational application, while continuing to build confidence in assessment, target-setting, and governance integration.

In addition, comparatively lower improvements in understanding national biodiversity legislation and policy suggest that future capacity building could place greater emphasis on communicating South Africa's biodiversity policy landscape and strengthening the connection between national policy processes and business implementation.

7.3 Key Enablers of Success

Several factors contributed to the success of the programme:

- A needs-based design informed by the baseline survey;
- Collaboration between EWT, NBI, Business for Nature, technical experts, businesses and government stakeholders;
- Leveraging existing business and government networks from both NBI and EWT;
- Practical South African case studies and locally relevant examples;
- High-quality speakers with complementary expertise across the ACT-D framework;
- Post-session summaries, resource packs and recordings that supported continued learning; and
- A collaborative learning environment that encouraged peer exchange and knowledge sharing.

7.4 Differences Across Sectors and Actor Types

While the programme was relevant across sectors, differences emerged in how organisations engaged with the content. Companies with direct operational dependencies on land and water generally focused on implementation, mitigation, and operational management, while financial institutions and service-based organisations showed greater interest in governance, disclosure, portfolio risk, and reporting frameworks. Despite these differences, participants across sectors consistently recognised nature and biodiversity as an increasingly important business issue and expressed a strong appetite for continued capacity building, practical implementation support, and opportunities to learn from peers.

8. Conclusion

The Nature Action Accelerator successfully strengthened business capacity, awareness, and confidence to engage with nature-related issues within the South African context. By combining practical learning, technical expertise, South African case studies, peer learning, and implementation-focused resources, the programme supported organisations in

progressing along the ACT-D pathway from understanding nature-related risks and opportunities towards integrating biodiversity into strategy, governance, implementation, and disclosure.

The programme responded directly to an identified need for practical business capacity building. The post-programme survey demonstrated tangible progress in organisational awareness, capability, and intended action, while also highlighting strong demand for continued support through sector-specific guidance, clear and implementable roadmaps, and communities of practice. The programme also reinforced the importance of collaboration between business, government, civil society, and technical experts in advancing South Africa's biodiversity ambitions. While businesses are increasingly recognising biodiversity as a strategic business issue, continued engagement and partnership will be essential to help organisations translate growing ambition into measurable, long-term action.

While many businesses are still at the emerging stage of their biodiversity journey, the Nature Action Accelerator demonstrated growing momentum, interest, and readiness to move beyond awareness towards implementation. The programme highlighted a clear appetite for continued collaboration, practical guidance, and implementation-focused support to help organisations translate ambition into meaningful, long-term and on-the-ground action, accountability, and measurable outcomes. In doing so, it provides a strong foundation for future phases of work and demonstrates the value of collaborative, locally relevant capacity building in supporting business contributions to South Africa's National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, implementation of the Global Biodiversity Framework, and the transition towards a nature-positive economy.

10. Annexures

We have included the following supporting materials for this final report:

1. Post Event Notifications for each module (*shared as emails*):
Each email includes the following:
 - Slide decks (*including the agenda's for each module, and speaker presentations*);
 - Recording links;
 - Resource Packs (*with useful links, tools, and other resources*).
2. Survey Summaries:
 - PDF - Baseline survey results (*including the main survey results analysis, a longer thematic analysis, and the format and delivery results analysis*)
 - [Link: Baseline survey summary](#)
 - [Link: Post-programme survey summary](#)
3. Communications Evidence of Outputs (PDF)
4. Communication Plan (PDF)