

Hubs of Convergence

2024 Annual Report



The Hubs of Convergence initiative endeavours to co-create "physical spaces where the University meets the community to engage on common platforms to find solutions to problems that affect our immediate communities."

- Vice Chancellor, Prof Sibongile Muthwa



Table of Content

4	Hubs of Convergence (HoC) 2024 Report Introduction	
5	Engagement Office – 2024 International Highlights Summary	
7	First Quarter Highlights: January - March	
11	Second Quarter Highlights: April - June	
15	Third Quarter Highlights: July - September	
18	Fourth Quarter Highlights: October - December	
22	Impact and Outcomes Across hubs	

Table of Content

22

New Stakeholder Collaborations for 2024

22

Reflections and Recommendations for 2025

23

Conclusion

Nelson Mandela University Hubs of Convergence (HoC) 2024 Report Introduction

This report is a compilation of the Nelson Mandela University Hubs of Convergence and Strategic Projects work for 2024. The report is a summary of all programmatic work and events within the various hubs (8 in total) that focus on responding to grand societal challenges faced by both the Nelson Mandela University and Gqeberha communities towards building a transformative university in service of communities, through engagements towards sustainable solutions.



[View HOC Website](#)

Engagement Office – 2024 International Highlights Summary

In 2024, the Nelson Mandela University Engagement Office advanced its global engagement strategy through a series of impactful international collaborations and knowledge exchange initiatives.

Nigeria – West Africa Hub Convening

On 14 and 15 March 2024, Dr. Bruce Damons joined a broader institutional delegation in Lagos, Nigeria, for the inaugural West Africa Hub Convening hosted by Pan-Atlantic University. During the event, themed "Building an Ecosystem of Excellence for Research, Leadership, and Graduate Employability," Dr. Damons participated in a panel discussion highlighting the University's Hubs of Convergence as a model for mutually beneficial university-community partnerships. The convening strengthened the University's African networks and reinforced its vision for transformative engagement across the continent.

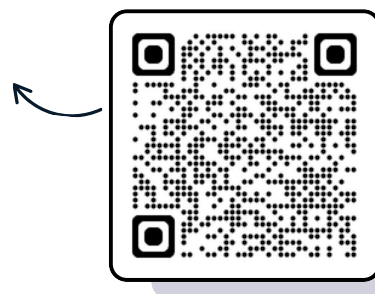


West Africa Hub Convening.

South Africa – Brazil Seminar on Inequities

From 18 to 20 March 2024, the Engagement Office hosted an International Scientific Seminar titled "Gender, Sexuality, and Race Inequities in South Africa and Brazil." This trilateral academic exchange involved São Paulo State University, Stellenbosch University, and the University of the Western Cape. The seminar included community visits to Gelvandale High School and the Zwile Development Forum, offering participants direct insights into local challenges. These engagements fostered cross-cultural dialogue and laid the foundation for sustained collaborative research aimed at addressing systemic inequalities.

Collectively, these international highlights reflect Nelson Mandela University's deepening global partnerships and its commitment to transformative, community-rooted knowledge exchange.



Spain – Living Knowledge Conference Participation

From 25 to 28 June 2024, a university delegation comprising Dr. Bruce Damons, Mr. Osabuohien Clifford Uwuoruya, and Dr. Rize van Rooyen attended the 10th Living Knowledge Conference in Girona, Spain. The visit, supported by the GCSSRP Grant, underscored the University's commitment to community-based research and social responsibility in higher education. This platform enabled the team to engage with global scholars and practitioners, reinforcing Nelson Mandela University's strategic objectives in collaborative and socially responsive research.



Participants at the 10th Living Knowledge Conference in Girona, Spain.

Engagement Office – 2024 Local Highlights Summary

From 21–26 July 2024, the Nelson Mandela University Engagement Office, led by Dr Bruce Damons, launched the Hubs of Convergence (HoC) at the George Campus. This followed earlier engagement visits and was driven by stakeholder interest in replicating the Gqeberha HoC model. A draft concept, developed by the Engagement Office, was presented and discussed in a series of workshops with internal and external stakeholders, including students, staff, community organisations, and local government.

Launch of HOC at George Campus



First Quarter Highlights

Jan – March 2024



Introduction

The year 2024 marked a dynamic and impactful season for the Engagement Office (EO) at Nelson Mandela University. As we continue to advance our mission of community engagement and transformative education, the Hubs of Convergence (HoC) have led the charge in driving change through deep collaboration, community partnerships, and responsive action towards Nelson Mandela University Vision 2030. This report highlights the key achievements and initiatives of the first quarter of 2024, which set the tone for a vibrant and action-oriented year.

Hub 1: Individual and Collective Wellness

The year began with a leadership transition, as Ms. T. Chizu handed over the reins of The Hope Revolution Vision (THRV) programme to take up a role in the EO Director's Office. Mr. W. Jackson, Hub 1 Project Lead, forged new ground by initiating a partnership with the Eastern Cape Liquor Board (ECLB) to explore responsible drinking campaigns aimed at students and staff. A notable collaboration with the Grace-to-Grace Healing Institute (GGHI) produced a strategic workshop focused on trauma healing through a faith-based lens. A proposed Short Learning Programme (SLP) module was developed to support individual and collective healing journeys within the university and community spaces.



Students that participated at the SLP.

Hub 2: Food Sovereignty

Hub 2 Mandela University Food Systems Programme (MUFS) began the year with a pivotal seminar co-hosted with the Agricultural Sciences Department, exploring climate-related challenges faced by small-scale farmers. The seminar led to a milestone event: the North Campus Garden's first vegetable initiative as an experiment that signalled growing potential for student led food production. Hub 2 also had a presence at the World Water Day event in Johannesburg, where the Kusini Water initiative recognized the Borehole Project, led by the HoC and Zwile Development Forum (ZDF). In further support of food security, the SNAC podcast launched with eight recorded episodes exploring a variety of topics with students, from hunger of the mind and bulk buying to agriculture. The quarter closed with strategic meetings on the Borehole Project's future.



Hub 3: Gender Engagement

Hub 3 commenced with an impactful two-day Mina Cup and pad distribution awareness campaign at Metro Residence in Govan Mbeki, driven in collaboration with the Student Hubs of Convergence(SHoC) and EPP advocates. These engagements sparked critical conversations around menstrual health at the university and in the wider Gqeberha community.



Mina Cup Activation with Metro Residence Students.

Further partnerships were developed with Professor Mabenge from the Nelson Mandela University Medical School and the Eastern Cape Department of Health to deepen knowledge dissemination on menstrual health. The hub also submitted the 2023 End Period Poverty (EPP) draft report and conceptualised a new initiative, Thetha Ndoda (Men Speak), focusing on men's mental health and tackling Gender-Based Violence (GBV). Collaborative meetings with Engage Men's Health and Cillie High School lay the groundwork for future programming.

Hub 4: Community-Driven Initiatives

Hub 4 focused on grassroots collaboration and empowerment. A key engagement with Umphanda Foundation for Autism explored the development of support activities for parents of autistic children. Work continued with the ZDF on a Goat Farming Project, with HoC and public management students co-developing a proposal and implementation plan as part of a practical learning experience. The quarter culminated in a multi-stakeholder workshop for the Hostel of Hope initiative, mapping out the project's trajectory and aligning diverse partner inputs.

Hub 5: Knowledge Communication & Application

Continuing its commitment to engaged teaching and learning, Hub 5 maintained momentum on integrating knowledge into practice. Key communication strategies and academic engagement projects continued, with further outputs expected in the next reporting cycle.

Hub 6: Education Ecosystem

The first quarter continued with the 2023 programmatic engagements and planning for 2024. Holding a series of meetings and workshops with all Centre for Community Schools (CCS) stakeholders towards strengthening the work for 2024.

Hub 7: Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS)

The IKS Hub co-hosted a workshop with the Amarharhabe Kingdom through the Nelson Mandela Bay Traditional Leaders (NMBTL). The successful dialogue led to the signing of a Joint Development Agreement (JDA), which signified a milestone in formalising partnerships that preserve and promote Indigenous Knowledge Systems. One of NMBTL's flagship projects—the Dora Nginza and Cecelia Makhiwane Legacy Programme—was housed within Hub 4, honouring the legacy of the first Black nurses in the Eastern Cape, who served courageously during apartheid.

Hub 8: Sports, Arts, and Culture (SAC)

Hub 8 began 2024 by forming strategic partnerships with Blackie and Bleki funeral Directors and the Dean of Students. These efforts led to the conceptualisation of the hub's programmatic strategy and culminated in a significant public engagement: the screening of the SS Mendi Documentary. The event, hosted at the Missionvale Campus, brought together stakeholders ranging from learners to members of the South African Navy and community organisations. The screening not only honoured South Africa's history but also sparked vital conversations on remembrance, legacy, and cultural justice.

Summary

The first quarter of 2024 was a vibrant demonstration of what engaged scholarship and community-connected leadership can achieve. Across all hubs, the Nelson Mandela University Engagement Office remained committed to deepening impact, widening inclusion, and advancing transformation. As the Engagement Office looked ahead to the second quarter of 2024, it remained guided by the vision of co-creating a more just, sustainable, and compassionate society—together with our communities, partners, and changemakers.



SS Mendi Screening event invite

Read full article



Second Quarter Highlights

April – June 2024

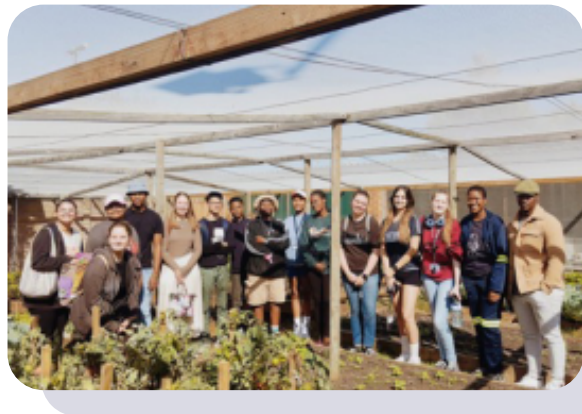


Hub 1: Individual and Collective Wellness

During the second quarter, Hub 1 focused on strengthening partnerships and explored new programming. The EO collaborated with the Grace-to-Grace Healing Institute to co-develop a draft Short Learning Programme (SLP) focused on trauma healing. In addition, discussions with the Eastern Cape Liquor Board progressed towards the launch of a student-led alcohol abuse prevention initiative, aimed at encouraging responsible behaviours within the university community.

Hub 2: Food Sovereignty

Hub 2 began the second quarter with the Student Hunger Subgroup initiating plans to integrate their work into the university's 2025 student orientation programme. Strategic partnerships expanded, including collaborations with AEON on water testing, the Ikhala Trust on both a documentary and working together with the Student Entrepreneurship office on a writing workshop. The hub also contributed actively to the Coordinating of the Gqeberha Declaration and supported experiential learning through engagement with academic modules through both honours and undergraduate modules in the Department of Media and Communications, and Visual and Performing Arts Department.



Students visiting an on-campus garden as part of their engaged learning and teaching work

Hub 3: Gender Engagement

In the area of Gender Engagement, Hub 3 made strides in two flagship programmes. The End Period Poverty (EPP) initiative broadened its outreach and established a presence at the George Campus. Simultaneously, the Thetha Ndoda initiative, which addresses gender-based violence through a focus on men's mental health, was finalised and prepared for activation. Collaborative efforts with the Department of Health and Nelson Mandela University Medical School were also advanced to integrate EPP into broader reproductive health programming.



Hub 4: Community Driven Initiatives

Hub 4 made significant progress through hands-on community partnerships. The Goat Farming Project with the Zwide Development Forum (ZDF) moved forward through a series of student-supported workshops and proposals. Planning also commenced for both a parent engagement workshop and a proposed Autism Conference, in partnership with the Umphanda Foundation and the Faculty of Education. The EO also began the development of a Short Learning Programme (SLP) on self-defence for women and children with I Protect Me (IPM) and maintained active engagements with the REVIVE initiative.

Hub 5: Knowledge Communication and Application

The Knowledge Communication and Application work coordinated under Hub 5, continued development of the CELTIC qualification with strategic planning for the National Research Foundation (NRF) 2024–2027 cycle. Two conference abstracts were submitted one to SAMEA and another on university-community partnerships. Additionally, the EO completed a draft institutional publication proposal and initiated discussions with university leadership to explore internal publishing avenues for the Hubs of Convergence book.

Hub 6: Education Ecosystem

Hub 6 delivered a wide range of impactful activities. School Governing Body training workshops were completed, and a tree-planting event was hosted in collaboration with municipal and education partners. A Swedish School visit provided valuable insights into multilingual teaching in township schools. The Learner Incubation Programme was also launched to allow high school learners to shadow Nelson Mandela University staff and students, supporting early exposure to tertiary education. Support continued for Foundation Phase literacy, including Biblionef workshops and ongoing research by Dr Eileen Scheckle.

Hub 7: Indigenous Knowledge Systems

In Hub 7, the EO supported the initial phases of the Griqua Nation's recognition process, including document reviews. The office also resumed engagements with the Nelson Mandela Bay Traditional Leaders (NMBTL) of the Amarharhabe Kingdom to develop joint efforts in heritage preservation, particularly in honouring Dora Nginza and Cecelia Makhiwane.

Hub 8: Sports, Arts and Culture (SAC)

The hub delivered culturally resonant programming during the quarter by hosting a screening of the SS Mendi documentary, encouraging intergenerational dialogue around history and healing. Further engagements with traditional leaders explored frameworks for heritage preservation and cultural leadership development. A music education initiative was also launched at Parkside Primary School in collaboration with Pandora's Music Box and the Nelson Mandela University Music Department

Strategic Initiatives and Cross-Hub Collaboration

The EO convened a Media Workshop to enhance the visibility and communication capacity of its programmes. Engagements with key stakeholders such as Volkswagen South Africa and the UN Volunteers Programme were initiated to explore collaborative opportunities. The Student Hunger Subgroup also co-ordinated the production of student-designed bags in response to the issue of stigma and dignity associated with food parcels. These were produced by the Association for Persons with Disabilities (APD), further strengthening our partnership with them. The Engagement Office submitted proposals and abstracts to the ISEP and IKS conferences, further amplifying its research and knowledge-sharing efforts.

Third Quarter Highlights

July – Sept 2024



Overview

During the third quarter of 2024, the Engagement Office (EO) continued to strengthen its institutional mission through the dynamic and cross-sectoral work of the Hubs of Convergence (HoC). Initiatives this quarter advanced engaged scholarship, deepened community partnerships, and empowered students and stakeholders through practical, transformative programming.

Hub 1: Individual and Collective Wellness

The Hope Revolution Vision (THRV) programme advanced through the confirmation of a Cape Town trip and strategic consolidation with the Student Hubs of Convergence, enhancing a campus-wide implementation.

Hub 2: Food Sovereignty

Collaboration with Ikhala Trust resulted in a student-led documentary as part of a film module film module. The Student Hunger Subgroup convened planning meetings for a forthcoming food insecurity conference, while twelve social work students undertook practical placements supporting the UCDG project on campus food insecurity.

Hub 3: Gender Engagement

The End Period Poverty (EPP) programme intensified its outreach with residence-based pad drives and discussions with health professionals about designing educational pamphlets for schools and the university.

A highlight of the quarter was the activation of Thetha Ndoda, a programme addressing GBV, bullying, and positive masculinity. The launch event, attended by 400 male students from Hoërskool Cillie, facilitated robust panel discussions and received overwhelmingly positive feedback for its relevance and impact.



Hub 4: Community-Driven Initiatives

The Hostel of Hope project completed a successful half-day workshop with its coordinating committee. Planning was finalised for a parent support programme with the Umphanda Foundation, focusing on families of children with autism.

Hub 5: Knowledge Communication & Application

Preparations were completed for a research ethics workshop led by Prof Lesley Wood. The hub celebrated the acceptance of a conference submission to SAMEA and produced a detailed Mandela Day 2024 report documenting collaborative community engagement activities with internal and external stakeholders.

Hub 6: Education Ecosystem

The Learner Incubation Programme was launched at Westville High School, offering learners hands-on experience within university departments. This initiative strengthens school-university linkages and provides learners with insights into higher education environments.

Hub 7: Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS)

Although the Traditional Khoisan and Leadership (TKLA) application with the Griqua Nation was temporarily paused, the hub welcomed a new collaboration with the Amarharhabe Kingdom's leadership. A workshop hosted at the Ocean Science Campus culminated in a signed Joint Development Agreement.



Workshop with the Nelson Mandela Bay Traditional Leaders

Simultaneously, SHoC intensified its involvement through community events, such as the Grab and Go Foundation outreach, and led a two-day United Nations Volunteer (UNV) registration drive. Notably, SHoC was officially launched at the George Campus, initiating four new student-led projects under dynamic leadership.

Summary

The third quarter demonstrated the Engagement Office's growing role in catalysing inclusive and responsive university-community partnerships. Through its multi-hub approach, the EO continues to advance Nelson Mandela University's Vision 2030 by addressing societal challenges and fostering transformative engagement practices across its campuses and communities.

Fourth Quarter Highlights

Oct – Dec 2024



Overview

The Nelson Mandela University Engagement Office concluded 2024 with significant strides across all eight Hubs, consolidating all 2024 community engagement work for review, reflection and strategically planning for 2025.

Hub 1: Individual and Collective Wellness

The Third Space well-being project gained momentum, with key stakeholders piloting wellness activities at the J-Quad, fostering a co-created space for physical and emotional wellness. Additionally, the Office hosted a visiting U.S. delegation in collaboration with The Hope Revolution Vision as part of the Leader 2 Leader initiative, strengthening global-local academic engagement.

Hub 2: Food Sovereignty

In partnership with COEGA's CSI unit, the HoC hosted a multi-site community project tour across Gqeberha, spotlighting urban agriculture, food kitchens, and sustainable farming. The initiative reflected the University's commitment to resilience, sustainability, and social impact through place-based innovation.

Hub 3: Gender Engagement

The End Period Poverty (EPP) menstrual health programme expanded significantly, reaching new schools, and the PE TVET College (Russel Road Campus) with education and Mina Cup distribution. These interventions underscored a focused approach to addressing gender-based issues.

Hub 4: Community-Driven Initiatives

Fourth-quarter highlights included the completion of a goat farming business proposal in collaboration with the Zwile Development Forum, and the Mandela Day donation drive reaching Mama Tancu's household. Additionally, the Hubs of Convergence (HoC) partnered with the Umphanda Autism Foundation to host a well-attended conference on autism inclusion and awareness.

Hub 5: Knowledge Communication & Application

The Hubs of Convergence (HoC) supported the practical learning of third-year public management students, culminating in the production of an updated institutional overview video and site mapping. The initiative enhanced students' skills while strengthening community knowledge-sharing mechanisms.

Hub 6: Education Ecosystem

The quarter saw major developments, including feedback on the School Based Support Team (SBST) manual and a successful symposium showcasing postgraduate research with a multistakeholder forum and a declaration statement. Key educational outreach included the Learner Incubation Programme, which introduced Westville High School learners to university life, broadening their academic aspirations.

Hub 7: Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS)

The HoC had a central role in the 2024 Provincial Indigenous Knowledge Systems Conference, both supporting the chair and facilitating a plenary session, reinforcing its leadership in promoting IKS in higher education and community spaces. Collaborations with the Nelson Mandela Bay Traditional Leaders (NMBTL) on a legacy project also progressed, with a signed Joint Development Agreement (JDA) and two workshops conducted.



NMBTL members with EO colleagues.

Hub 8: Sports, Arts & Culture

The Thembalabantu Sports Arts and Culture Committee was formed to bridge the gap between Mandela University and Gqeberha communities, as it began engagements with identified pilot schools to activate primary school sports, arts and culture development programmes for 2025.

Summary

Nelson Mandela University's Engagement Office closed the fourth quarter of 2024 on a high note where each hub expanded its reach through well delivered, community-oriented interventions. These initiatives were underpinned by strategic collaborations with various partners such as The Hope Revolution Vision (THRV), local schools, Autism advocates, traditional leadership, and community forums. Simultaneously, foundational structures for 2025 were put in place via formal agreements (such as the Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) Joint Development Agreement with the Nelson Mandela Bay Traditional Leaders (NMBTL), planning processes, and pilot-phase projects designed to catalyse innovation, scale impact, and ensure inclusive convergence across university and community spheres. This reflects the HoC's evolving and agile role as a space for transformative engagement where the University meets community on shared platforms to co-create responses to societal challenges.

Impact and Outcomes Across hubs

- Deepened community engagement and reach beyond campus walls.
- Tangible impact on gender equity and menstrual health education.
- Strengthened partnerships with educational institutions, civic organizations, and public-sector stakeholders.
- Enhanced student learning and applied research within real-world contexts.

New Stakeholder Collaborations for 2024

1. Nelson Mandela University Music Department
2. Eastern Cape Liquor Board (ECLB)
3. I Protect Me (IPM)
4. Engage Men's Health
5. Nelson Mandela Bay Traditional Leaders (NMBTL)
6. Nelson Mandela University Medical and Music Departments
7. Blackie & Bleki Funeral Directors
8. Cillie High School

Reflections and Recommendations for 2025

- Developing monitoring and evaluation (M&E) tools for impact assessment.
- Hosting targeted conferences (e.g., Women's Day Conference, Men's Conference on GBV).
- Intensifying strategic planning and inter-hub collaboration.
- Scaling up and deepening programmes like Theta Ndoda and End Period Poverty (EPP).
- Increasing government and municipal engagement in SAC and education initiatives.

Conclusion

The Nelson Mandela University Engagement Office (EO) ended 2024 with consolidated momentum where it had solidified a strong operational foundation. Its engagement work, aligned with the broader Vision2030 agenda, continuing education, engagement capacity development, and convergence leading to unified institutional practice. The Engagement Office (EO) also delivered impactful programmatic work through highly visible initiatives such as Mandela Day, End Period Poverty (EPP) Conversation Series, CWELL, and the West Africa Hub, all of which strengthened university and community collaboration contributing to societal well-being. Lastly, the Engagement Office in 2024 displayed deepened partnerships through expanded and reinforced partnerships both within and beyond its campuses.

These 2024 engagements make a good baseline for 2025, enabling the Engagement Office to be well positioned to build on this strong base the momentum in programming, institutional alignment with V2030 objectives, and strengthened partnerships to create fertile ground for expanding innovative, inclusive engagement models across multiple domains.

THANK YOU FOR VIEWING THE **HUBS OF CONVERGENCE** 2024 REPORT

Bird Street Campus,
First Floor, Feldsted Building
HOCandEOSP@mandela.ac.za
041 504 4402



[Mandelauniversity_hoc](#)



www.hoc.mandela.ac.za

