

# Support services and operations

## Strategic focus and transition of initiatives

During the past year, we implemented an important strategic decision to transition some initiatives that had previously operated within the organisation.

### Strengthening focus for greater impact

Following a comprehensive review, we concluded that our greatest contribution to South Africa's democratic landscape lies in our core work: challenging corruption and maladministration and advocating for accountable governance.

As a result, initiatives such as WaterCAN and JoburgCAN were supported in transitioning towards independent governance structures, allowing them to continue their valuable work while enabling ourselves to focus our resources more directly on our core mission.

This transition process was carefully managed to ensure continuity of impact, including governance support, operational assistance and transitional funding where appropriate.

Both initiatives continue to play important roles in strengthening civic oversight and public participation within their respective focus areas.

In addition, we successfully concluded our involvement with the CAN and the Link municipal reporting platform, further streamlining our operational footprint.

This strategic focus has significantly strengthened our organisational sustainability while allowing us to concentrate our energy and expertise where it can deliver the greatest national impact.

### Support services, governance and systems

#### Building the institutional strength behind OUTA's impact

Behind every successful investigation, legal challenge, policy reform or public accountability campaign, stands an organisation capable of sustaining that work over the long term. For us, 2025/26 was a year of strengthening that institutional backbone.

During the year, we undertook a strategic refinement of our organisational structure and operational model. This process was guided by a simple but important principle, to focus our resources where they deliver the greatest impact in strengthening accountability and protecting the responsible use of public resources.

The outcome was a more focused, resilient and strategically aligned organisation. By streamlining certain initiatives and strengthening internal capability, we are now better positioned to deliver sustained impact in our core

mission of exposing corruption, challenging maladministration and defending democratic accountability in South Africa.

For our supporters and funding partners, these changes represent an important signal of organisational maturity. We are not only an organisation that demands accountability from public institutions, we apply that same discipline and transparency in our operations.

### Support services

#### One organisation – One operational engine

To support our strategic focus, we consolidated our finance, human resources, information technology, governance and office management functions into a unified Support Services Division.

This integrated structure ensures that our operational backbone functions as a coordinated system rather than isolated administrative units. The result is improved efficiency, robust governance oversight and an intuitively responsive support structure for the programme teams working on complex investigations and advocacy initiatives.

The Support Services Division now provides the organisational infrastructure that enables our public impact through:

- professional human resource management and staff development;
- rigorous financial management and forecasting;
- strengthened internal controls and compliance oversight;
- modernised systems and integrated operational platforms; and
- proactive organisational governance support.

This shift has transformed support services from a largely administrative function into a strategic enabler of our mission.

Equally important, it ensures that donor contributions are used as efficiently as possible. By reducing duplication and strengthening internal systems, a greater proportion of resources can be directed towards programme work that delivers measurable public impact.

Also, with oversight on project intent and impact, support services can reduce cost and ensure better cash flow, complementing operational teams to capitalise more when achieving milestones.

# People, culture and capacity

## People behind the mission

### Teamwork. Purpose. Culture

At the heart of our work is a diverse, committed team of professionals who share the common purpose of strengthening accountability and protecting the responsible use of public resources in South Africa.

Our impact is driven by a multidisciplinary team that combines investigative expertise, legal capability, policy analysis, communications excellence and operational support. Together, they enable us to pursue complex investigations, challenge irrational policies and hold institutions accountable in the public interest.

As they say, “Culture trumps strategy every time”. During the 2025/26 year, we undertook a series of activities to redefine the organisation’s culture and to implement the changes deemed necessary to enhance unity, strengthen teamwork and ensure alignment following our strategic shift.

An internal organisational energy assessment highlighted high levels of commitment, renewed clarity of purpose and strong motivation across the team following the strategic restructuring process. All the results confirmed strong alignment between the team and the organisation’s mission.

By the end of the reporting period, our staff complement stood at 33 team members, reflecting a more cohesive organisational structure designed to maximise efficiency and impact.

Beyond internal frameworks, we continue to prioritise the development and well-being of our people. Advocacy and accountability work often takes place in complex and demanding environments, requiring resilience, integrity and strong professional capability. For this reason, we actively invest in maintaining a supportive and mission-driven work environment where staff can thrive and grow.

Our values remain central to our culture. Integrity, courage, justice and resilience guide how we operate internally and how we approach our work externally.

We also continue to invest in professional development, recognising that strong institutions depend on capable people. Training opportunities, skills development, mentoring and knowledge sharing remain important components of our long-term sustainability.

For donors and partners, the strength of our team provides confidence that the organisation has the expertise, diversity, professionalism and resilience required to sustain our work in the future.



# Governance, ethics and systems

## Governance, ethics and organisational integrity

### Accountability starts at home

Our work often involves challenging powerful institutions and exposing failures of governance. To do so credibly, we must uphold the highest standards of integrity within our own operations.

Against this backdrop, we have continued strengthening our governance framework to ensure that the organisation remains a model of transparency, accountability and responsible stewardship.

Our governance environment is aligned with best-practice frameworks, including the King V Report on Corporate Governance for South Africa, and is supported by comprehensive board oversight, transparent financial reporting, internal auditing and rigorous internal control systems.

An annual ethics and risk assessment is conducted to ensure ethical alignment of organisational values and processes.

During 2025/26, we further strengthened these systems through:

- refinement of governance frameworks and policy structures;
- enhanced financial oversight and reporting mechanisms;
- a comprehensive organisational ethics assessment; and
- an internal and external auditing process.

The results confirmed a strong alignment between our internal practices and the values we promote publicly.

Governance is not simply about compliance. It is about creating an organisational culture that sustains courage, integrity and resilience over time.

At OUTA, we believe good governance is not a checklist, rather, it is a tangible and measurable asset.

### Systems, cyber security and operational resilience

#### Technology enabling accountability

In today's world, the ability of CSOs to operate effectively depends increasingly on the strength of their digital infrastructure.

For an organisation such as OUTA, which regularly investigates corruption, challenges powerful interests and protects sensitive whistleblower information, robust technology systems are essential.



Over the past year, we continued strengthening our digital ecosystem to ensure that our systems remain secure, resilient and capable of supporting our national impact.

Our integrated operational environment supports key organisational functions including:

- supporter relationship management and donor engagement;
- digital communications and advocacy campaigns;
- secure financial and operational reporting;
- internal collaboration, workflow and project management; and
- protected document management and data storage.

Security remains a core priority. Our systems are continuously monitored and protected through layered security protocols designed to safeguard sensitive investigations, donor information and organisational data.

Automation and system integration have also improved operational efficiency across the organisation. By streamlining workflows and improving data visibility, we are able to reduce administrative overheads while strengthening accountability and transparency.

For donors and partners, this provides confidence that contributions are managed within a secure, professionally governed and technologically capable organisation.