



**Masterclass Series on Municipal Finance for
Journalists**

**Delivered in partnership with the Henry Nxumalo
Foundation and the South African National Editors'
Forum (SANEF)**



1. About the ASISA Academy

One of three transformation entities of the Association for Savings and Investment South Africa (ASISA), the ASISA Academy is an accredited independent business school offering high-quality learning solutions to meet the skills development needs of South African savings, life assurance and investment management organisations.

Learning solutions are offered as short courses, learnerships, full qualifications, internships and graduate programmes.

More than 27 000 people in the Southern African financial services sector have learned with the ASISA Academy since 2008.

2. Programme Outline

The ASISA Academy Journalism Masterclass Programme was established in response to a SANEF request for help to upskill journalists, starting with understanding and reporting on municipal functions and finance.

The run-up to the upcoming local government elections has highlighted the importance of holding municipalities accountable on an ongoing basis, and hopefully more journalists will intensify their scrutiny of whether election promises are delivered after the elections.

Given ASISA's existing relationship with the Henry Nxumalo Foundation, established to support the Our City News initiative, the Foundation was approached to partner with the ASISA Academy on the masterclass programme.

The aim of this four-part series is to provide you with the foundational knowledge of how a city works, why the municipal budget matters, where to find key information, and how to use artificial intelligence responsibly to make sense of large volumes of information.

Before enrolling in the masterclass series, please take note of the following:

- The Journalism Masterclass Programme on Municipal Finance is fully funded by the ASISA Academy, and participation is free.
- Each class is one-and-a-half hours long and delivered online via Microsoft Teams.
- To qualify for a certificate of completion, you must attend all four sessions and provide proof of a relevant article published by your news organisation or a podcast, radio or television clip broadcast by your news portal. The submission must indicate which learning from the topics presented was applied. The submission deadline is 12:00 on Tuesday, 1 December 2026.
- You are welcome to attend selected sessions only, but you will not qualify for a certificate.
- To enrol in this programme, please [click here](#).

3. ASISA Academy Journalism Masterclass Programme

Series 1: Municipal Finance

Masterclass 1

Topics	Date & Time	Anchor	Presenters
Journalist's guide to how the city works and how to access role players - Understanding the structure of a city, including the differences between metro, district and local municipalities - The various role-players in the municipal structure (from mayor to ward councillor), their responsibilities and how (and why) to hold them accountable - Who to contact for information	Tuesday, 27 October 2026 12h00-13h30	Lucienne Fild, ASISA Head of Communications and former Business Times Money journalist	Welcome and introduction: Alicia Davids, CEO of the ASISA Academy Our teacher: Monica Laganparsad, Business Day News Editor & former senior researcher with the International Budget Partnership*

*The International Budget Partnership collaborates with civil society organisations around the world to improve governance and ensure that scarce public resources are used effectively to improve service delivery and fight poverty. A big focus of this work is promoting transparent, participatory and accountable public finance systems and processes.

Masterclass 2

Topics	Date & Time	Anchor	Presenters
The municipal budget	Tuesday, 10 November 2026 12h00-13h30	Lucienne Fild, ASISA Head of Communications and former Business Times Money journalist	Welcome and introduction: Anton Harber, Executive Director of the Henry Nxumalo Foundation Our teacher Louise Flanagan, independent freelance journalist and researcher with nearly 40 years' experience. Louise's work has included tracking government spending, identifying and exposing corrupt spending, and she recently spent about eight years working with the Organisation Undoing Tax Abuse (OUTA) team. She currently does research for NGOs.

*OUTA exists to halt the abuse of power and mismanagement of public resources that weaken the government's ability to serve the people.

Masterclass 3

Topics	Date & Time	Anchor	Presenters
Apart from the budget, what are the other crucial sources of information for a journalist?	Tuesday, 17 November 2026 12h00-13h30	Lucienne Fild, ASISA Head of Communications and former Business Times Money journalist	Welcome and introduction: Sbu Ngilwa, Editor of Our City News and Treasurer General of SANEF Our teachers: Louise Flanagan & Sarika Lakraj, local government finance and supply chain management expert and whistleblower

Masterclass 4

Topics	Date & Time	Anchor	Presenters
From Documents to Stories: Using AI for Local Government Reporting*	Tuesday, 24 November 2026 12h00-13h30	Lucienne Fild, ASISA Head of Communications and former Business Times Money journalist	Welcome and introduction: Jude Mathurine, journalism and new media lecturer in the Department of Media and Communication at Nelson Mandela University & interim-SANEF convenor for the Eastern Cape Our teacher: Michael Salzwedel, a digital media trainer and partner at Social Weaver. He has more than a decade of experience training journalists and media organisations in digital journalism, data journalism, mobile storytelling and emerging technologies.

* This practical, interactive session will explore how journalists can use AI to work more effectively with the large volumes of documents, data and other information involved in reporting on local government. Using real-world examples and live demonstrations, we will look at a workflow for finding and gathering relevant material, interrogating and comparing documents and data, identifying possible story leads, anomalies and red flags, and verifying and synthesising findings. The emphasis will be on using AI as a reporting and research partner while retaining the journalist's critical thinking, verification and editorial judgement – moving from simply finding the facts to asking the essential question: **so what?**

4. Our Programme Champion



Lucienne Fild is an independent communications consultant with 35 years of experience in the field of communications. She holds a Master's Degree in Journalism from the University of Stellenbosch.

Lucienne practised as a journalist for 10 years, concluding her news media career in 2000 as Editor of Sunday Times Business Times Money. She then joined Old Mutual and, after nearly six years, resigned as Head of Media, responsible for the retail business, to become an independent communications consultant. She has consulted to the Association for Savings and Investment South Africa (ASISA) since 2008.