



## YOUR LOCAL ASSET MANAGEMENT COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE IN BC.

Enhancing BC communities through leadership in asset management.

FORTIETH EDITION – FALL 2023

### District of Summerland receive UBCM Award of Excellence in Asset Management



At the annual UBCM Convention in September 2023, the District of Summerland received the Award of Excellence in Asset Management for their Water and Road Infrastructure Integrated Asset Management Plan. Congratulations to Mayor Doug Holmes, the council, and staff for an exemplary effort to move your asset management program forward for Sustainable Service Delivery.

The District of Summerland has turned to asset management as the process for **making informed infrastructure decisions, improving governance, and building financial capacity** to renew, operate, and maintain existing infrastructure. Utilizing funding from the Strategic Priorities Fund, the District developed an integrated asset management plan for its roads and water assets. The plan utilized a service and risk assessment to

prioritize capital re-investments in these key asset categories. The plan has been developed by incorporating community priorities, strong asset management principles, and through close collaboration with Council. It also includes **an innovative, engaging public-facing webpage that summarizes the results of the plan, provides transparency in decision-making, and includes performance metrics.**

Summerland has utilized an approach that involves planning, finance, engineering, and operations as well as the community to develop the Water and Road Infrastructure Integrated Asset Management Plan. The goal of the approach/plan is to effectively manage assets and invest in existing infrastructure in order to reduce risk and provide publicly supported and sustainable levels of service that are affordable. The plan also shares detailed information with the public to ensure transparency in decision-making and includes reporting on performance. The intention of the plan is to be updated regularly by utilizing a prioritized set of criteria, which determines investments and provides guidance for the long-term capital investment plan.

Local governments are responsible for the provision of key services which requires making informed and transparent decisions to ensure community support. The Water and Road Infrastructure Integrated Asset Management Plan includes community priorities in the selection of projects and a web-based page (**StoryMaps**) that shares the District's asset management goals, processes, and information for decision-making.

The webpage includes the results of the risk assessment, prioritization of projects, and a section on measuring and reporting on progress.

This type of public information sharing is unique to the Okanagan region and is seen as an innovative process in the region.



At the core of sustainable service delivery is financial sustainability. A financially sustainable government provides valuable services to residents within available means while proactively taking measures to build and preserve services in the long run.

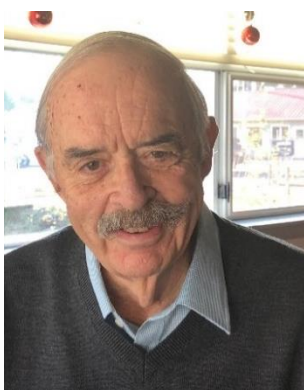
Informed by a series of collaborative staff and council workshops, careful examination of the cost profile, revenue forecast, and risk and service considerations, the asset management plan was developed to guide infrastructure and service delivery decisions.

This plan serves as a roadmap for the District to make sound infrastructure and financial decisions through evolving conditions. Its primary objective is to provide clarity to staff, Council, and the community by outlining the process in which infrastructure investment decisions are made, both today and in the future, to ensure sustainable service delivery. The plan has been used in creating the 5-year financial plan and capital plan as well as setting the stage for rate setting and updates to the Development Cost Charges Bylaws.

[Watch for an upcoming case study in a future edition of the Asset Management BC newsletter.](#)

## Collaboration and cooperation are needed to achieve positive results.

*Wally Wells P. Eng. Executive Director Asset Management BC*



For over a decade we have listened to you tell us about your successes and barriers, your fears and frustrations.

We, in the asset management community, understand that asset management is a process that leads to better decisions for sustainable service delivery across the organization. We must ensure that others, especially

the 'users' of the material for decision making, primarily our Boards and Councils see and understand the added

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value and benefits of engaging in and using the asset management process.

The process entails much more than just the ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN. All the steps are equally important. The whole process for Asset Management for Sustainable Service Delivery is shown in the graphic below and described in the BC Framework document. Examine each box carefully and determine what it means for you.



I frequently hear comments and concerns about getting buy-in to asset management within the organization and with the elected officials. Recently I spoke to a mayor who said, “I do not understand what this is about” and added “we are already too busy with a very small staff!” No wonder communications (and miscommunication) continue to be our biggest barrier.

We often need to show, not only to Councils and Boards but also to staff, the value-added benefits of asset management, not just talk about the process of asset management. An associate of mine, Kim Stephens of the partnership for Water Sustainability, provided the following quote, which I believe sums up some of our issues:

***“The asset management community has lost sight of Sustainable Service Delivery strategies because it is lost in the details of Asset Management.”***

Think about your local government structure and organization. I have sympathy for elected officials as their job requires them to make decisions across the entire spectrum of services and prioritize expenditures with limited funds. They must think horizontally, yet our organizations are defined in discrete departments that function, report, and operate vertically. The transition for decisions must be made across the departments, integrating all results to provide a complete picture before allocating funds. It can be done by a good administrator or CAO who must think and work both vertically and horizontally, or a committee across the organization representing all disciplines and functions. The latter is what many communities have done to address asset management. This is the internal process to form a working group. Externally, we have good examples of working groups engaging several local governments in a geographic area with the most successful to date being North Vancouver Island and the Sunshine Coast and the South Vancouver Island. These groups are called Regional Communities of Practice and the AMBC Spring 2023 newsletter contains articles on their successes. We have interest and potential champions to form similar groups in the Fraser Valley, Lower Mainland, North Okanagan, Southeastern BC, Northeast and Northwest BC. Stay tuned for further information on these groups.

There is fear in many organizations with busy staff that they are being asked to do extra work. We need to focus more on the value of asset management to their existing jobs. We suggest you read the case study from the Town of Gibson’s manager of their water and wastewater treatment plants on how asset management helped her do her job as an Operations Manager. The article is entitled **“Worlds Colliding: An Operator’s View on**

**Operations and Maintenance, and Asset Management”** and you can find it in the Asset Management BC newsletter Edition 33, Fall 2021. I also suggest you read the article in this edition entitled **“Why Frustrated Operators do the Best Asset Management?”** Another case was of showing value within the organization was where the asset management coordinator assisted the parks department in the inventory of park assets, bringing that assessment to a common base where they could compare data across the asset spectrum. We need to show value at all levels of an organization from our elected officials to our workers in the field if we expect active participation buy-in and commitment. Eventually asset management becomes part of the corporate culture and that is where we need it to be.

We strongly recommend you watch the 4-minute video created by FCM on Collaboration. You will see some familiar faces ([fcm.ca/en/resources/mamp/asset-management-insights-municipal-collaboration](https://fcm.ca/en/resources/mamp/asset-management-insights-municipal-collaboration)).

**What are your barriers to progress?** Let us know and hopefully we can tell you what we have learned from others and/or provide you with contact information of people to talk to.

**Have a story to tell?** We are always looking to publish your case study. So, tell your story and share with others. Our experience? People LOVE case studies!

## CITY OF SALMON ARM

### CASE STUDY:

#### Just Do It: City of Salmon Arm and Service Delivery Management

*Jennifer Wilson, Service Delivery Management Coordinator, City of Salmon Arm; Jody Rechenmacher, Urban Systems; and Lucas Timms, Urban Systems*

#### Background

Nestled in the picturesque British Columbian Shuswap with a growing population of approximately 19,400 the City of Salmon Arm (the City) has been steadily building and improving their asset management program for years.

***“We call it Service Delivery Management, to keep the focus on the services and so all staff can see their role in it”*** says Jenn Wilson, Service Delivery Management Coordinator for the City.

The City’s journey of formalizing asset management practices began more than a decade ago when Jenn (as



the City Engineer at the time) attended NAMS training together with the City's CFO. Their goal was to support a shift from reactive to proactive decision-making.

Following the training, staff worked to incrementally build systems for service delivery management – yet it often felt like the work was being done off the sides of their desks.

In 2021, City Council approved a Service Delivery Management policy along with funding for a full-time position of Service Delivery Management Coordinator. The top-down endorsement gave new momentum to the foundational work that staff had done in prior years.

### The Importance of Climate Change

The City is a signatory to the BC Climate Action Charter and has been reporting on greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions for several years, conducting facility audits and energy reduction projects as opportunities arose. Some work has been done to identify and adapt to climate change risks, although this has been driven by separate initiatives such as integrated stormwater management planning or efforts to mitigate wildfire.

The City recognizes that they may be vulnerable to other impacts of climate change, such as increased drought, flooding, or changes to lake water quality. The City wants to be able to understand the potential significance of these climate impacts to service delivery and what they could do about them.



### The Approach

In 2022, Jenn jumped on the opportunity to sign the City up for the Climate Action Cohort program being offered by the Canadian Network of Asset Managers (CNAM) and funded by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM).



This initiative is offered through the Municipal Asset Management Program, which is delivered by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, and funded by the Government of Canada.

Jenn saw the Cohort program as a great opportunity to bring a team of staff from the City together to learn about integrating climate considerations into service delivery management, share with each other the work they were doing, and look for opportunities to centralize their individual efforts.

Participating municipalities were encouraged to identify an initiative or project to advance through the approximately year long program. The City had recently started the process of business continuity planning, and identified this as an ideal opportunity to start talking about climate change in a way that could help build a broader understanding of the potential impacts to the services they were delivering.

The business continuity planning began with high-level risk analysis. The introduction of climate hazards into the process enabled a broad range of staff to begin to make the connections between climate change and service delivery, based on information currently available. It also identified where further detail about climate hazards and impacts may be useful – such as understanding changing flood risk.

The City has now convened a Climate Action Steering Committee to make connections between climate action and the organization's goals, and to guide further work on climate adaptation and mitigation. Many members of the Climate Action Steering Committee are also members of the Service Delivery Management Committee, which will lead to further integration of the work.

The next step for the City is to develop a Low Carbon Resilience Plan, which will help provide further information on climate risk and priorities for reducing GHG emissions that staff can integrate into decisions about service delivery.

### Lessons Learned

As Jenn reflects on her journey with the City and more recent experiences with integrating climate into service delivery management, she shares some lessons learned.

***“Don't put your head in the details – focus on the big picture, for us that was centered around service delivery.”***

The City has known that climate change will have impacts on service delivery but struggled to advance the conversation without the details of knowing the exact changes or specific impacts. However, Jenn remembered sage advice she received during the initial NAMS training years ago: “the instructors emphasized to not always worry about the details – to step back and connect what you're doing to the big picture.” The City saw success with climate mitigation initiatives by starting conversations at a

high level and then building up increasing detail over time, where it was needed.

***“Just start the conversations, talk to people frequently, make connections.”***

In previous years, climate adaptation efforts were happening through a handful of individual projects, but the City had not gained broad momentum. Introducing climate adaptation into a topic people were already engaged in – business continuity planning – created a platform to start the conversation and build broader awareness. This awareness led staff to make new connections, both with the topic of climate change and with each other.

A significant benefit of the Cohort program was the ability to make connections with staff in other participating municipalities and share perspectives, successes, and challenges. The learning that City staff gained from other participants highlighted the value of connecting beyond their organization.

***“It’s hard to drive change when you’re working in your own siloes. When you have a team, and people are checking in, you work together.”***

Even though the City is not a large organization, and each staff member wears many different hats, there are still siloes that emerge in day-to-day work. The Climate Action and Service Delivery Management Committees have helped to build momentum because there is a team moving the work forward together. Each member can educate others on what they are doing and together the Committees can identify connection points.



## CASE STUDY:

### Resort Municipality of Whistler: Asset Management: Going Further Together

*Stéphanie Levine, Manager, Capacity Development,  
Municipal Asset Management Program, FCM*

When the [Resort Municipality of Whistler](#) set out to update its asset management plan in 2021, the project consultant suggested reaching out to Oakville, Ontario.

Whistler wanted to incorporate natural assets into its asset inventory, update its asset management reporting template and develop a long-term financial model. And, like many other local governments, it had limited time and resources to do all this. Hearing about Oakville’s

experience helped municipal staff in Whistler to better understand their own asset management journey. **Collaborating gave them insights on resourcing and timelines that they could use to inform their long-term strategy.**

Whistler staff also spent time together studying public documents from other British Columbia local governments. They found particularly helpful **Oak Bay’s Asset Management Program**, because of the district’s reputation as a peer leader on AM planning in the province, and **Gibson’s Asset Management Program**, because of its championing of natural assets.

Whistler successfully updated its asset management plan in early 2022. Staff say the process strengthened relationships between teams and made it easier to prioritize assets. They’re also seeing more community support for funding asset replacement.

As Whistler found out, when local governments work together to share their expertise and solve problems, they can create powerful results that would have been difficult or impossible to achieve on their own. To establish good asset management practices, local governments need to collaborate both internally and externally.

Internally, municipal staff can form cross-functional teams to draw on more data and knowledge to ensure the services provided meet the needs of citizens. Externally, local governments can reach out to neighboring municipalities, pooling resources and experience to find innovative solutions to address challenges.

FCM’s [Municipal Asset Management Program \(MAMP\)](#) can help. We foster collaboration between municipalities on asset management through project funding, group training and events.

Since May 2020, 83 municipalities have been approved for a MAMP asset management grant featuring collaboration with neighbouring local governments. These projects see, on average, three municipalities at a time working together to collect data or develop asset management inventories, plans and roadmaps.

Local governments say that when they collaborate on asset management projects, they:

- Increase internal capacity by sharing workloads
- Accelerate innovation, understanding and skill development
- Meaningfully address climate change vulnerabilities
- Find support to tackle shared concerns not confined to municipal boundaries
- Save money through economies of scale or by sharing costs of services

MAMP has also funded more than 600 asset management training and learning activities delivered by our partners to local governments across Canada. Many of these are designed to encourage peer learning among municipal participants. Peer groups say they benefit because they:

- Expand their networks in neighboring communities and across Canada
- Discover shared challenges and alternative solutions
- Share tools, examples, plans and software
- Progress on their asset management objectives in similar ways
- Form relationships that extend beyond training

Staff in Whistler enjoyed many of these benefits when they collaborated with Oakville. Their recommendation to other municipalities is to start the collaboration process early and come back to it often.

“We can be more efficient and move faster if we absorb the lessons that others have learned and let them shape our approach,” says **Carlee Price, Director of Finance at Resort Municipality of Whistler**. “Who doesn’t love a shortcut?”

The [Municipal Asset Management Program](#) (MAMP) at the [Federation of Canadian Municipalities](#) (FCM) aims to support municipalities across Canada to make better infrastructure-related decisions through grants, training and resources.

Are you curious about the benefits of collaborating on asset management within your municipality or with neighbouring communities? Read our new report, [Asset Management Insights: Municipal Collaboration](#), to discover how collaboration around asset management is accelerating municipal innovation and skill development, increasing internal project capacity and creating cost savings.

## CONTEXT AND HISTORY DO MATTER:

### Droughts, Forest Fires, Floods and Sustainable Service Delivery

*Kim Stephens, M.Eng., P.Eng, Executive Director,  
Partnership for Water Sustainability in BC*

Mother Nature has an amazing sense of timing. On the 20th anniversary of the evacuation of 27,000 people from Kelowna due to forest fires, history repeated itself in August in the Kelowna region, in particular West Kelowna.

The fire situation was personal this year because our eldest daughter and her family were visiting from Kelowna when the news broke on a Friday night. Because of the escalating risks to life and property, they delayed their

return to the Okanagan and remained with us until travel restrictions were lifted.

Governments have had two decades to prepare for the obvious and the inevitable. 2003 was the first of a series of “teachable years”, with the full onslaught of a changing climate hitting hard as of 2015.

So, how does this relate to asset management, or more importantly, **Sustainable Service Delivery**?



## Context and history do matter.

As a longtime contributor to the Asset Management BC Newsletter, this gives me a good sense of the audience. So, when Wally Wells offered me an opportunity to stir the pot with a provocative article, I thought why not!

When Asset Management BC was birthed circa 2010 as a companion initiative to the Partnership for Water Sustainability, I remember the strategic goal articulated by Glen Brown – **to foster innovation and integration using the provincial grants program as a financial incentive to influence how communities manage land and water.**

A memorable Glen Brown quotable quote from September 2009 captures the WHY and the WHAT behind the vision for sustainable service delivery as a driving force for innovation and integration:

**“The reality of an increasing local government infrastructure deficit means that there will be even stiffer competition for available funding. As a result, there is a greater incentive for local governments to demonstrate how their innovation and integration will be effective in meeting the goals of both the Green Communities Initiative and Living Water Smart.”**

The spotlight shone brightly on the notion of levels-of-service. And this led to the vision and game plan for [Asset Management for Sustainable Service Delivery](#) which Wally Wells has successfully spearheaded for all these years.

## How well are we doing?

When I reflect on the Glen Brown quote, and recall the context, I lament the missed opportunity that the quote symbolizes. Sustainable service delivery should have been



**the engine for integration** across disciplines, departments, and sectors. But that is not how it turned out.

When Glen Brown introduced the concept in 2011 at our “course on a course correction for watershed planning” in Metro Vancouver, we at the Partnership for Water Sustainability were convinced that **Sustainable Service Delivery** would influence HOW communities develop land, use water, and protect streams. That was our big picture.

Fast forward to 2023. My observation is that “asset management” overshadows or dominates “sustainable service delivery” in everyday thinking. The two ideas have in practice become disconnected. That is unfortunate.

Viewed in the big picture context, it is no surprise that the asset management community has lost its way. We are observing this across sectors. Communities and local governments are being overwhelmed by the issues of the day, losing sight of the goal, and getting lost in the details.

#### ISSUES OF THE DAY >

**How communities accommodate population growth and provide housing**

**How communities adapt to a changing seasonal water cycle and respond to weather extremes**

#### CLEAR & PRESENT RISKS >

**Altered landscape**

**Floods, drought and forest fires**

#### Now what?

The past informs the future.

If done right, I see **Asset Management for Sustainable Service Delivery** as being at the core of **Risk Management**. SSD is a mechanism that can still be leveraged to achieve informed and superior planning for land and water.

It certainly helps that risk management is language that gets the attention of elected representatives. With risk management as the lens, an integrated approach to SSD would help them focus them on levels-of-service and consequences for water, land, and finances.

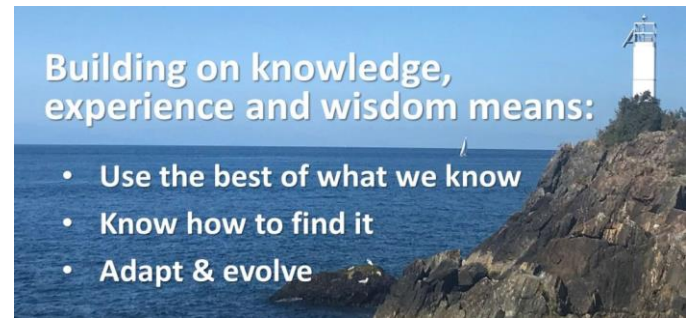
Layered over risk management is the question of what local government will do to fulfil the spirit of **DRIPA**, the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*.

Interweaving Indigenous oral history and Western water science represents an opportunity for BC communities to re-set and get the big picture right when it comes to the WHY, WHAT and HOW of tackling the clear and present risks associated with a fundamentally altered landscape.

What we in the Partnership are essentially talking about is **Water Reconciliation**. That means going back to the

headwaters of where we got our relationships with water and with one another wrong; and then starting back down the river of time – this time together – with a full understanding of the importance of embracing a water-first approach to planning human interventions in the environment.

#### Local is the scale where actions matter - Blue Ecology is a pathway to Water Reconciliation and Resilience in BC



On World Rivers Day, the Partnership, and the Watershed Moments Team (which includes local and provincial government members) released the Blue Ecology documentary video for broadcast on the Shaw / Rogers community television network. It is also accessible on YouTube using this link:

<https://waterbucket.ca/wcp/2023/09/14/michael-blackstock-blue-ecology/>

The Blue Ecology video features Michael Blackstock, independent Indigenous scholar, in conversation with two representatives of local government: Richard Boase, North Vancouver District; and Brian Carruthers, former CAO who is now an independent strategic advisor to local governments across BC.

#### A message of hope

The Watershed Moment Team seeds the idea that hope lies within the spheres of influence for local governments --- whether Indigenous OR non-Indigenous. At its heart, Blue Ecology is about embracing lessons learned from First Nations oral history, taking responsibility for care of the land, and handing off the intergenerational baton.

*“Rather than looking through a cumulative effects lens, I also see the concept of ‘cumulative healing’ landing as a way to give back to water and land,” says Michael Blackstock. “Rather than wondering how much more can we take or impact land before we need to stop, instead we should ask how much longer should we let the water and land heal, before we ask for more?”*

Water brings people together. It is a natural starting point for any conversation about common interests, and by

extension, our shared future. Stories unite us. Water does it. And through his polling research, Angus McCallister proved that a decade ago. “I have learned that people are hardwired to water, at both the functional and emotional levels,” he stated in 2014.

A message of hope is paramount in these times of droughts, forest fires and floods. Through the power and magic of collaboration, BC communities can rise to the challenge and adapt to the new climate reality of seasonal extremes. **Sustainable Service Delivery is essential to the solution.**



Climate change is accelerating. There is no time to re-invent the wheel, fiddle, or go down cul-de-sacs. Understand how the past informs the future and build on that experience.

## BCWWA Releases New Report About the Financial Sustainability of BC's Water Systems

*Marian Hand, Chief Operating Officer, BCWWA*



The BC Water & Waste Association (BCWWA) is a not-for-profit organization that represents around 4,000 water professionals who are responsible for ensuring safe, sustainable, and secure water, sewer and stormwater systems in BC and the Yukon. The BCWWA has been a part of

the provincial landscape for over fifty years. During this time, the organization has played an integral part in supporting water and wastewater professionals at operational, consulting, government, and academic levels and across a wide swath of specializations.

We have been a proud partner of Asset Management BC since the beginning. Water utilities are responsible for a considerable portion of a community's infrastructure and are a natural fit with the goals of AMBC. The issues that weigh heavily on water utilities include infrastructure maintenance and renewal, climate change adaptation and accommodating community growth. Understanding a community's existing and future water infrastructure through asset management practices is a great step in

preparing for ongoing financial sustainability. Additionally, the increased focus on water sustainability and green infrastructure places a greater emphasis on documenting and protecting natural assets such as watersheds and wetlands within a community.

This September, the BCWWA is releasing a new report on municipal financial sustainability called *Are Our Water Systems at Risk? Assessing the Financial Sustainability of BC's Municipal Water Systems – 2023 Update*. The report was prepared by the BCWWA with consulting support from Urban Systems Ltd. and JW Infrastructure Planning Ltd. This initiative was made available through the Municipal Asset Management Program, which is delivered by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and is funded by the Government of Canada.

This report reviews the public financial reports of 161 municipalities in BC and tracks four key performance indicators. It also provides feedback from a public Ipsos poll regarding public perception on paying for water services and contains interviews from municipalities who have made improvements to their financial sustainability and have some interesting insights into their experiences.

Upon releasing this report, the BCWWA is providing free workshops in September and October for municipal and regional district leaders and their staff to better understand their water systems' financial risk. Part of the workshop will focus on participants looking at their community's water system and completing the assessment using the Financial Indicator Tool, designed to align with the financial indicators discussed in the report. The workshop will run for two afternoons and host three different cohorts. For more information or to register for a workshop, please visit the BCWWA events calendar <https://www.bcwwa.org/site/events/calendar>.

The BCWWA will be speaking on the report on October 11, 2023, by webinar, and at different conferences throughout the fall, including the AMBC conference. To download a copy of the report or the Financial Indicator Tool, please look for updates on the BCWWA website [www.bcwwa.org](http://www.bcwwa.org).

## How to Write a Long-Term Financial Plan for Asset Management, 2023 Edition

**Pre AMBC-Conference Workshop**  
**Tuesday November 7, 2023**

Back by popular demand! Join **Christopher Paine, Director of Finance and Asset Management for the District of Oak Bay** and Principal of FIT Local Government Finance



Consulting for the successful long-term financial planning course piloted at the 2022 AMBC Conference.

The 2023 version has been expanded and upgraded based on feedback from 2022. Part one is comprised of general concepts and calculations, while part two is diversified into different streams with content that is varied depending on the audience (Local Government, First Nations).

From data collection, through core calculations to developing funding options and communicating findings, this hands-on course is a must for anyone involved in creating a long-term sustainability plan for asset management and having to prove their case with solid calculations.

Delegates registering may attend a preparatory webinar(s) prior to the in-class instruction. These webinars, while not mandatory, are as follows.

- For **First Nations**: LTFP for AM Fundamentals Webinar – October 13 (8:30AM-12PM)
- For **First Nations**: FN Unique Funding Challenges Webinar – October 19 (10AM-12PM)
- For **Local Governments**: LTFP for AM Fundamentals Webinar – October 13 (1PM-4:30PM)

Once registered, FIT Consulting will contact registrants to confirm webinar(s) logistics. The in-class, full day session will be held at the Radisson Vancouver Airport Hotel as the “pre-con” of the 2023 AMBC Conference, on Tuesday, November 7th, from 9:30am - 4:00pm. Breakfast, Coffee and Lunch will be provided to participants.

Cost: \$675 per person + GST

Registration subsidies are available through the UBCM Asset Management Planning Program (local governments) and Indigenous Service Canada (First Nations). For further information, contact [gvindisch@ubcm.ca](mailto:gvindisch@ubcm.ca).

Local governments please register through CivicInfo. First Nations personnel register by contacting Gabi Vindisch at [gvindisch@ubcm.ca](mailto:gvindisch@ubcm.ca).

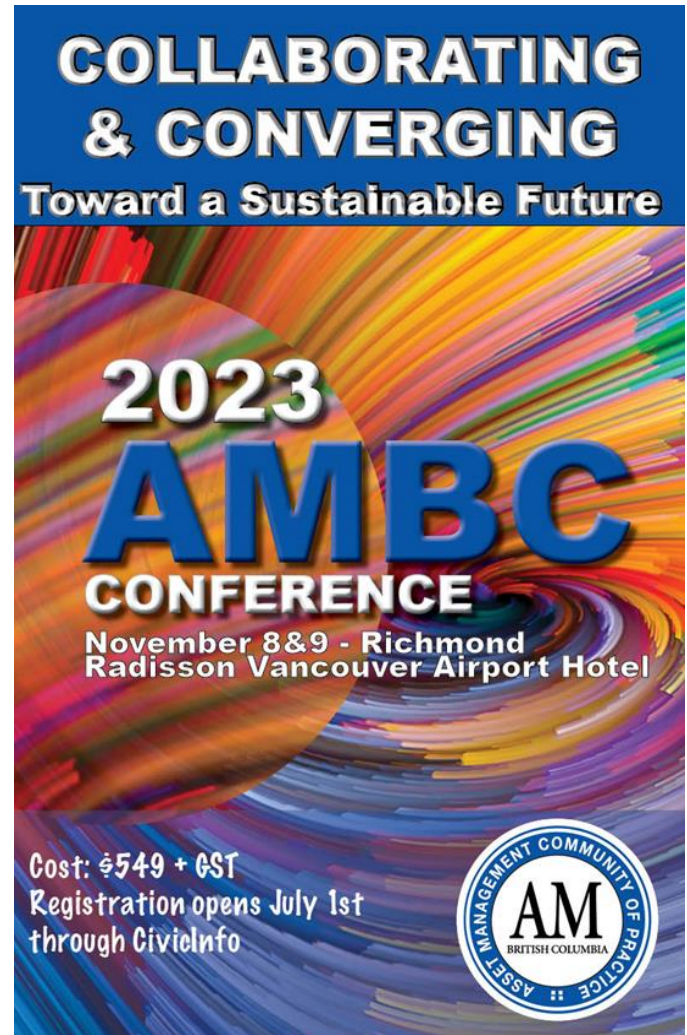
## Asset Management BC Hosts Annual Conference

Another year and another opportunity to bring you the best of asset management. **Asset Management BC** invites you to the 2023 annual conference to be held **November 8 and 9, 2023** at the Radisson Vancouver Airport Hotel.

The theme of the conference this year is:

### **Collaborating and Converging Toward a Sustainable Future**

*... Fostering Social, Economic and Environmental Well-being Through Continuous Improvement Processes*



It will be an exciting program with high quality keynote speakers and a wide variety of topics and case studies on different facets of the asset management journey. Registration opens on CivicInfo as of July 1, 2023.

Last year, AMBC introduced a new annual awards program with two Awards of Excellence, one for an individual and another for an organization. Nominations for these awards are now being accepted.

All information or expressions of interest, registration and awards nominations are on the AMBC website at [www.assetmanagementbc.ca](http://www.assetmanagementbc.ca)

**See you in November!**



## Access to Municipal Asset Data enables Collaboration in The Pas - Empowered Staff and Council lead to Proactive Decisions for the Future

*Published with permission of MAMP program, Federation of Canadian Municipalities. This article initially appeared on FCM.ca as part of the Municipal Asset Management Program, which is delivered through the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and funded by the Government of Canada. Contact: [info@townofthepas.ca](mailto:info@townofthepas.ca)*

The Town of The Pas, Manitoba, is a multi-industry community situated at the confluence of the Pasquia River and the Saskatchewan River, in the vast Northern Region of Manitoba. Known as "The Gateway to the North," The Pas is located on Treaty 5 Territory and has an approximate population of 5,500 people.

In 2020, The Pas was in the early stages of its asset management journey. A small number of Town staff had taken asset management training, helping others who were less familiar with asset management become interested to learn more. Operations staff had been collecting detailed data about infrastructure material, size, age and repair history over several years, but not everyone was familiar with the information they had. They believed that creating a shared understanding of asset management and their existing asset information amongst staff and council could spark a change in its decision-making culture. Staff had a desire to engage more deeply with this data and create the Town's first Asset Management Plan to better understand and plan for the infrastructure it provides to the community.

Receiving a grant from FCM's Municipal Asset Management Program (MAMP) allowed The Pas to take their existing data and create a robust asset inventory database, develop asset renewal and replacement forecasts, formalize an Asset Management Plan, and engage in customized council and staff training.

As of March 2023, MAMP has approved 96 asset management grants for local governments in Manitoba and has funded training through partner organizations to more than 60% of Manitoba communities.

### Highlights

- Made existing data more accessible and understood across the organization

- Consolidated quality data into a robust inventory, and developed a 20-year asset replacement forecast
- Convened workshops for staff and council to understand their data and how to apply the findings
- Created a deeper understanding of asset management within the organization
- Empowered staff and council to begin to build an asset management decision-making mindset into their operations



*The Pas Regional Library. Source: Town of the Pas*

### The challenge

The Town was typically making reactive repairs to their infrastructure and did not have a long-term plan to help inform renewal and replacement decisions. For example, the Town's approach to maintaining and repairing existing water infrastructure was very reactive, which resulted in water pipes that had been clamped and banded multiple times. This mindset of 'band-aid repairs' does not allow the Town to invest in growth and development. A good understanding of infrastructure realities and a methodical approach to growth and infrastructure development is necessary for the Town to grow sustainably.

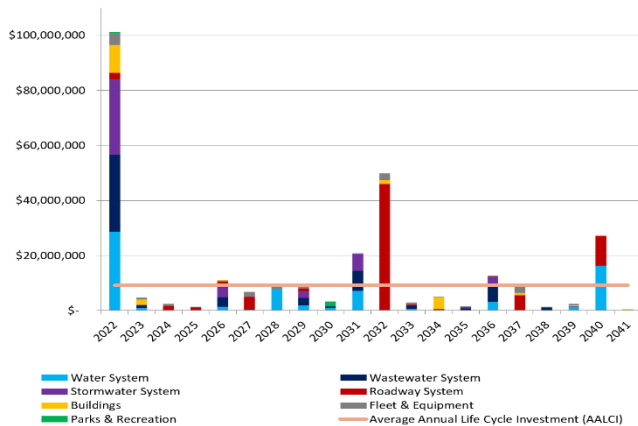
Some staff knew they had a lot of data to work with and there was significant institutional knowledge about the Town's assets but did not have the tools to share their asset information with council. The challenge was to bring all the data and information they had together, make sense of it and begin to understand how to use it in the decision-making process while finding ways to meaningfully bring council into the conversation. Council was interested in learning more and supporting staff to develop an asset management plan.

"Asset management allows us to strengthen decision-making processes by ensuring we are doing the right things at the right time. It provides the opportunity to see a better return on investment and gives visibility to the value and risk management aspects of municipal operations." - Mayor Andre Murphy

## The approach

Led by a core group consisting of the Controller, Municipal Superintendent, Assistant CAO, and Economic Development Officer, the Town worked with a consultant to support development of a 20-year asset replacement and renewal forecast, develop their first comprehensive Asset Management Plan, and deliver asset management awareness training for staff and council.

The consultant supported managers in understanding their existing data, forecasting renewal and replacement costs, and initiating conversations about community risks and service levels. The process focussed on utilizing the Town's detailed data and conveying it in the most appropriate manner to support ongoing decision-making. This included creating consolidated spreadsheet inventories and a series of easy-to-understand charts and figures that summarized the Town's 20-year replacement and renewal forecast by infrastructure category. These visuals helped staff and council understand the total value of their infrastructure and significant spikes in the replacement cycle. This provided insight into the infrastructure investments council should be planning for in the short and long-term.



*Town of The Pas 20-year Asset Replacement Forecast.*

*Source: Town of The Pas Asset Management Plan.*

Staff and council engaged in a series of facilitated workshops and meetings, which included background information on the fundamentals of asset management, how to interpret and use data and information, and how to commit to an asset management decision-making mindset.

In the years before this project, staff had taken some awareness and technical assistance training through MAMP-funded partner organizations including [PEMAC Asset Management Association of Canada](#), [Canadian Network of Asset Managers](#), [Association of Manitoba Municipalities](#), and [NAMS Canada](#). Having invested in staff training allowed them to build on their knowledge

and develop solid asset management practices for their municipality.

## Results

The Town developed a robust asset inventory database and prepared an asset replacement and renewal forecast. This information was collected into an Asset Management Plan grouped into seven asset categories:

- water
- wastewater
- stormwater
- roadway
- buildings & facilities
- vehicles & equipment
- parks & recreation

The plan provides detailed information about what The Town owns, when it needs to be replaced, what needs to be done to replace it, and what funds will be needed. This information provides a strong foundation for staff and council to make better decisions about their assets and priorities.

The Pas, like most Manitoba municipalities, owns a lot of assets and is facing pivotal decisions about their infrastructure renewal and replacement. Bringing together their data and information helped start the conversation between staff and council. The Town is now on a journey to use this information and embed an asset management mindset into their operations to make more informed decisions. Council has adopted the Asset Management Plan as a “living document” that they will reference year-round at council meetings and during the capital planning and budgeting process.

They intend to use the consolidated information and visuals in their asset replacement forecast to help prioritize projects, support funding applications, and share relevant information with the community. This allows staff and council to unite around a central source of information that provides a clearer insight into the decisions that need to be made. With a deeper understanding of their infrastructure to inform their planning, the Town will ideally proceed with proactive maintenance and repairs, saving time and money in the future.

## Benefits

Through this process, The Pas has realized the impact of asset management, and how it can create a change in its decision-making culture. Council and staff feel they are better positioned to make holistic decisions using the information they have at their fingertips. This has resulted in increased support for asset management planning and



a stronger desire to take action on their infrastructure decision making.

“The Asset Management Plan is bringing structure into the decision-making process. Especially when it comes to new development, we are leaning on the Asset Management Plan to ensure the types and locations of new development can be sustained. We know we want to grow, and we know there is demand, but the Asset Management Plan puts things into perspective on what we can achieve and what it will cost.” - Jackie Rechenmacher, Economic Development Officer

## Lessons learned

**Start the conversation.** Getting started can be the hardest part. Using available tools like [Starting the Conversation in Your Municipality](#) can help kickstart the conversation with staff and council and help guide your asset management journey.

**Go into the project with an open mind.** Be prepared to learn and take other courses on asset management to help learn more.

**Use the knowledge and information you already have.** Use any available data you have and harness the experience and skills of staff who know and understand their assets.

**Engage council frequently.** Provide education and awareness opportunities to build the capacity of council before and during project delivery.

**Keep the conversation going.** Your asset management journey is never over. Building asset management into your organization is an ongoing process and a collaborative effort of staff and council.

## Next steps

Equipped with detailed and consolidated information about their assets, the Town will begin to develop and implement a method of measuring asset condition and performance. This process also laid the groundwork for the Town to initiate conversations about levels of service with the community. This will help the Town understand who is using its infrastructure and services, what community needs are today and into the future, evaluate climate risks to service delivery and ensure that all residents' voices are considered in the asset management process.

The Town is also setting out to identify performance measures to monitor their asset management progress and is committed to making progress in the People and Leadership competency of [FCM's Asset Management Readiness Scale](#) (AMRS), by:

- Identifying an asset management team responsible for leading asset management within the organization.
- Identifying ways to communicate progress on asset management to the wider staff group and to the community.
- Identifying ways to increase council support for continued funding for asset management activities.

By bringing staff and council together to collaboratively learn and grow their asset management knowledge, the Town is more prepared than ever to implement their program and carefully plan for its future.

## Related resources

Looking for more resources to help your municipality improve its decision-making culture and asset management practices? Check out these MAMP tools below.

- Asset management resource library: <http://fcm.ca/assetmanagement>
- Asset management insights: Municipal collaboration: <https://www.fcm.ca/en/resources/mamp/asset-management-insights-municipal-collaboration>
- Web-based asset management training: <https://fcm.ca/en/resources/mamp/online-asset-management-training>
- Asset management training for municipalities: <https://fcm.ca/en/resources/mamp/asset-management-training>

## Why Frustrated Operators Do Asset Management Best (and How to Help)

Gracelyn Shannon, Asset Management Manager,  
City of Abbotsford.



Whenever I meet a frustrated operator, I know we are going to do good work together. Frustrated operators are engaged operators. And engaged operators are excellent asset managers.

I did a presentation at an operations conference in 2021 titled “Why Frustrated Operators do the Best Asset Management”.

It was my love letter from Asset Management to Operations, to the operators who were brave enough to resist the lure of cynicism and apathy.

Now I get to address my fellow Asset Managers on the topic. My advice to you is to find a frustrated operator, listen to them, and engage them in what you're doing. I promise, your work will change for the better.

## Getting Frustrated

Now let's talk about frustration.

When we see a discrepancy between what is happening and what we know should be happening, we experience the emotion of frustration. This frustration which lives in the gap between our reality and our expectations is what Peter Senge calls **Creative Tension**. When we experience creative tension, and the corresponding uncomfortable feelings, we have two choices: change reality or change expectations.

Changing our expectations is the easiest option of the two. **Cynicism** is when we lower our expectations to avoid feeling the uncomfortable feelings. When we drop expectations altogether, it's called **Apathy**. It feels safe to us to expect nothing and never be disappointed.

The second option for coping with the discomfort of Creative Tension is to **change reality**. Changing reality costs us our energy, money, and time. It's hard work. The ones that are willing to change reality are the ones that you want doing your asset management.

## Engaging the Frustrated

Frustration is a good sign. Operators who don't care don't get frustrated. Operators who have given up aren't frustrated. Operators who don't have a sense of how things could be done better aren't frustrated. The frustrated operator is (1) paying attention to how things are and (2) has an idea of how things should be. This is why frustrated operators are your potential change makers.

However, the operators that don't have support or tools to change their reality for the better are susceptible to Cynicism. If an operator experiences disappointment enough times, they sink into apathy. And organizational change is impossible with an apathetic workforce.

When asset management is at its best, it's a way of equipping that operator with a set of tools, terminologies, processes, and support networks to enact the changes they intuitively know need to happen. You can be the difference between their creative tension meeting its potential or not.

When you find a frustrated operator that you want to help with the power of asset management, the place to start is always a conversation. Tips for your conversation with your frustrated operator:

- **Make Time.** I know you're busy. Do it anyway. I know that the spreadsheet you've been working on is

important. It'll be there for you when you get back from coffee with your operator.

- **Lead with Respect and Empathy.** The frustrated operator does not owe you this conversation. In fact, conversations exactly like this one may have been the source of disappointment in the past. If a relationship and trust needs to be built first, invest in that. It will pay dividends.
- **"Seek First to Understand, Then to Be Understood".** You're on a mission to get a clear picture of their reality and what their ideal future looks like. They may have never put it into words, and they may not have a concrete idea of either.
- **Keep it Future Focused.** If you've been lucky enough to have an operator open up to you about their challenges, you are also most likely going to experience (1) stories about why things are the way they are now, and (2) complaining. With stories about the past, ask questions about how it affects the present to add to your picture of their current reality. With complaining, try to understand what that is indicating about the operator's ideal future.
- **Let it be a Process.** No conversation has to go perfectly. Lean into the Continuous Improvement part of asset management and allow room for mistakes and learning. Trust takes time. Understanding takes time. Change takes time.

## Stay Frustrated

I am personally fascinated by the space where the world of Asset Management meets the world of Operations. Both have their own unique history, development, and raison d'être.

I've heard plenty of complaints from operations about asset management and vice versa. But then, we're all trying to achieve the same thing in the end. As local government staff, we want to deliver services to the public for a long, long time. In asset management, we call that **Sustainable Service Delivery**. When I was an operations manager, I called it "keeping sh\*t running". The tension between asset management and operations departments is surmountable and you can choose to be the bridge.

## Getting Started

You can start the conversation this week. Look, I even wrote the email for you so there's no excuses:

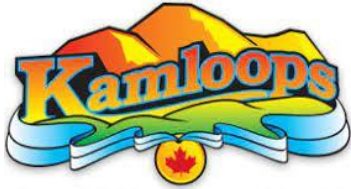
*"Hi [Frustrated Operator],*

*I wanted to pick your brain on asset management. Are you available next week on [Day]?*

*Looking forward to it.*

*[Your Name]"*

Find them. Hear them out. Ask good questions. Engage them in the process. And then, watch your frustrated operator do the best asset management.



## Kamloops: Improving Systems and Asset Management Data Quality

*Greg Sawatzky, City of Kamloops*

When asked to contribute to the Newsletter regarding the state of Asset Management (AM) at the City of Kamloops, I immediately thought of the importance of the overall state of AM across BC with respect to addressing efforts to combat climate change. All local governments will play a pivotal role in providing sustainable services while protecting infrastructure through drought, massive wildfires, excessive heat over longer periods and with flooding and storms that are re-writing our current understanding of the climate.

AM practices are the best way for local governments to safeguard against an uncertain future that threatens not only infrastructure and property but lives as well. AM is too important to be left exposed to political swings and shifting short-term priorities. There must be a common framework under the ISO550xx guidelines and language that all BC local governments understand and operationalize. More on this later, back to Kamloops.

Currently, we are undertaking some much-needed and long-overdue technological updates. These updates will provide access to improved data collection tools within our excellent and flexible Cityworks™ and ESRI Canada AM solutions. Of course, the software by itself is not but our improved systems will reduce data collection overhead and end-user complexity. **This means we will be able to build more efficient data collection processes resulting in higher quality data for AM decision-making purposes.**

Providing easy-to-use data collection solutions in the field is a result of extensive comparative configuration studies, workflow analysis, and system integrations. The City of Kamloops Enterprise AM System (EAMS) includes integrations to Cityworks from several systems including fleet data and our financial systems. This is all built on top of the City's GIS services allowing a blend of information that encompasses operational, capital project, and financial data related to geocoded event and work tracking. There is a lot of complexity involved in making

sophisticated systems useable, so **when I receive positive feedback from our end users that they find the process easy to navigate and useful to them, I consider it a success.**

Our goal has been to emphasize the importance of everyone's contribution to the AM big picture. We have designed workflows that make available relevant information to interested stakeholders across the organization. Staff are trained that if they are doing their own job correctly, the result of their activity automatically benefits everyone in the organization. For example, a properly created and maintained work order provides or augments AM data. The information in a work order is associated and geocoded to a specific asset contributing to condition and fault prediction analytics by engineers and risk managers, the actual costs are captured in the financial system for project and program funding prioritization as well as current replacement cost calculations. Additionally, operations can track adherence to levels of service, unitized costs for work planning, and asset attribute accuracy.

To manage this sophisticated EAMS update requires many groups to come together, starting with our excellent support team and consultants from ESRI Canada. The City has also brought together internal staff from finance, payroll, stores, IT, GIS, and operations. This type of exercise proves that AM processes cannot happen in organizational siloes. Successful AM development requires cross functional teamwork, although teamwork is an overused term and I do not like to use it.

The term "teamwork" used in a business context, often does not represent the true meaning of working as a team and is frequently overused by those who have not actually seen how a team works. A team is not based on the type or colour of clothing or the style of haircut. **Successful teams bring together people with diverse competencies and backgrounds for a common goal.** A hockey team consisting entirely of goal keepers will likely never do better than to finish in a 0, 0 tie. Counter intuitively, working well together for a common goal means knowing one's strengths and then keeping to one's lane. Successful teams find strength in diversity and cohesion in purpose.

Regardless of our initial backgrounds whether it is engineering, business, or finance, or even what organization we report to, AM practitioners are a team. Obviously, we do not do this job to become popular but because we believe we can contribute to building stronger, more resilient communities. We have a purpose. That effort would be better facilitated by our local governments adopting a homogeneous approach to AM based on ISO550XX standards so our communities of



practice can build a uniform consensus and direction with a common language and goals.

To finish where I started, AM and sustainable service delivery are critical to promoting a safe and equitable future for our respective communities under changing circumstances. I will continue to advocate for the mandatory registration of 2 critical AM documents for each local government in BC at the provincial level, perhaps within the purview of the Ministry of Local Government Infrastructure and Finance's Local Government Data Entry Reporting scheme. These would include a council-approved AM policy and a council-approved Strategic AM Plan both compliant with the standards of ISO550XX. These documents would be updated, with versions noted, every 2 years once in the election year and once in the middle. Though not as strong as Ontario's AM regulations (O. Reg. 588/17), this would start to entrench the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders within the AM process so no matter who occupies a position as time passes, the AM functions and duties are carried forward for the long term.

As the proverb states. *"One generation plants a tree, the next generation enjoys the shade"*

## MIABC – Can Natural Assets Actually Reduce Liability Risk?

Stephen Gares, Municipal Insurance Association of BC



### Overview

It has been widely acknowledged that climate change is having an impact on local governments. Lately, much has been written advocating for the use of natural asset management to reduce the impacts of climate change. But every novel approach carries with it uncertainty about the potential for increased risks. So, the next question that is trending is: **what**

**are the liability risks of addressing climate change through natural asset management?**

### Negligence

Negligence is the law that attributes liability to those who knew, or ought to have known, that their actions or inaction could cause harm to another party. Where there is a duty, local governments must meet a reasonable standard of care, given not only what the local government knew, but also what it ought to have known.

A local government can defend a claim in negligence if it has a 'policy' in place. More specifically, a policy that includes core policy decisions. A 'policy' is a clear, definable procedure or system based on social, political, or economic factors.

As experts confirm that natural asset management is a reasonably effective approach, and the community adopts this practice, there are several ways that natural asset management can be defended from a potential negligence claim:

1. a decision by a local government to adopt a climate adaptation plan that incorporates natural asset management (if done properly to meet the test) could be defended as a bona fide 'policy'; and
2. there will be support for the defence that the local government acted reasonably and without negligence.

### Nuisance

Nuisance is a substantial and unreasonable interference with the use and enjoyment of property. In the context of climate change, typical nuisance claims include flooding caused by infrastructure failures or limitations. Unlike negligence claims, it is no defence to a nuisance claim that the local government had a bona fide 'policy' in place or was not negligent.

There is case law that suggests that liability will only attach to those that cause or contribute to the nuisance. Therefore, generally speaking, a natural event like a deluge of rain will not attract liability in nuisance or negligence. However, a local government increases its risk of liability if it gets involved in some way that causes or contributes to the nuisance, such as approving a development that changes the direction of water. In the urban setting there is great potential for this type of liability exposure because local governments are involved with the building of roads, sidewalks, and other infrastructure, such as storm sewer systems and culverts, that alter the flow of water and impact the pervious nature of the earth's surface.

Given that the risk of liability in nuisance increases the more a local government is involved in changes to the natural flow of water, it arguably follows that the reliance on natural assets, rather than engineered solutions, could conceivably reduce the risk of liability in nuisance. This would be welcome relief given the limited availability of defences for nuisance claims.

### Regulatory Risks

Climate change can result in various types of regulatory risks under federal or provincial legislation, including flooding that may cause a deleterious substance to enter

fish bearing water or a drinking water source. Recent provincial legislation requires local governments to adopt targets, policies, and actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the community, which creates more regulatory requirements and resulting risks for local governments.

To defend a regulatory charge, a local government must show that it acted with due diligence, or that reasonable steps were taken, considering what the local government knew or ought to have known.

Like potential negligence claims, expert evidence that supports the use of natural asset management as a reasonably effective approach will provide a potential due diligence defence to local governments.

### Takeaway

As research confirms that natural asset management is at least equally as effective as engineered approaches, and as the use of natural asset management becomes accepted by mainstream experts and adopted by local governments, in time, we should find that the courts too will accept natural asset management as a reasonable approach. In fact, we may find that reliance on natural asset management may even decrease the risk of liability for nuisance claims. It is not often we find **the potential for such a perfect storm (so to speak) of effectiveness, lower cost, and lower liability risk.** Let us hope for such a storm as local governments adapt to climate change.

## Tips and Tactics: Making Life Easier with Collaboration, Participation, and Case Studies.

*Bernadette O'Connor, PMP, IAM Dip, CAMA, NZCE(Civil), Asset Management Specialist, WSP*



Whenever we are planning to start something new (or to improve something), we often look for who has already done it and if there any templates or tools freely available that we could use or adapt.

We are looking for ways to make our task easier and to learn from others to get ideas, be efficient,

and avoid common mistakes. Collaboration, case studies, and participation are useful mechanisms for this.

### Collaboration

Taking a little effort to connect can save you many hours in development. Practical ways to use collaboration to make a new task easier to do, include:

- Reaching out to other organizations to see if they are interested in a similar task and might like to work together on it (or can give you ideas if they have already done it).
- Find a case study for a similar project and contact the organization to ask if they would participate in a discussion on the topic to help you plan your task. And perhaps to check in once or twice as you progress, to offer any helpful advice.

### Participation

Look for opportunities to have a conversation about your new task. These may include attending events such as CNAM Knowledge Pods which are virtual meetings hosted by the Canadian Network of Asset Managers where asset management topics and challenges are discussed, and ideas shared.

Participate, host, or start up a local/regional CoP (Community of Practice) for support and sharing ideas and practical help.

### Case Studies

We frequently hear people ask for case studies and say how useful these are for ideas and contacting people who have completed similar work to what you are wanting help on. The main obstacle is availability of case studies. So, here are some tips for getting your case study written up without needing a lot of effort and resource:

1. At the beginning of the project / task think about whether your organization or others would benefit from a case study article on the work.
2. Begin the case study process early – don't wait to the end – start by writing up a description of the project / task at the beginning. This can be:
  - a. Part of the project plan (for a big project),
  - b. Part of an RFP if you are engaging outside resources to assist you, or
  - c. A simple statement of intent that you can also use as a reference during the project to keep focus and check results against.
3. Collaborate with others. If using a consultant, consider asking them to work with you on writing the case study.

### Sharing

If you have an AM document you are proud of, or a smart tool you have created or adapted, consider making it available to others through your Community of Practice or through CNAM (ideally with a case study story to explain how you used the tool or developed the document).

## Upcoming Events

### **Asset Management BC**

November 7, 2023

Pre-conference Workshop - **How To Write an LTFP for Asset Management**

Radisson Airport Hotel – Vancouver  
Richmond, BC

Registration on CivicInfo: [civicinfo.bc.ca](http://civicinfo.bc.ca)

### **Asset Management BC**

November 8-9, 2023

Annual Asset Management Conference  
Radisson Hotel, Richmond BC

[assetmanagementbc.ca](http://assetmanagementbc.ca)

Registration on CivicInfo: [civicinfo.bc.ca](http://civicinfo.bc.ca)

### **Municipal Insurance Association of BC (MIABC)**

April 3 – 5, 2024

Risk Management Conference  
Vancouver, BC

[miabc.org](http://miabc.org)

### **Recreation Facilities Association of BC (RFABC)**

April 15 – 18, 2024

Annual Conference and Trade show  
Harrison Hot Springs, BC

[rfabc.com](http://rfabc.com)

### **BC Water & Waste Association (BCWWA)**

April 28-30, 2024

Annual Conference and Trade Show  
Whistler, BC

[bcwwaconference.org](http://bcwwaconference.org)

### **Canadian Network of Asset Managers (CNAM)**

May 2024

CNAM Annual Conference  
Edmonton, AB

[cnam.ca](http://cnam.ca)

### **Government Finance Officers of BC (GFOA BC)**

June 5 – 7, 2024

Annual Conference  
Kamloops, BC

[gfoabc.ca](http://gfoabc.ca)



### **Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM)**

June 6 - 10, 2024

Annual Conference and Trade Show  
Calgary, AB

[fcm.ca](http://fcm.ca)

### **Local Government Management Association of BC (LGMA)**

June 11-13, 2024

Annual Conference and Trade show  
Victoria, BC

[lgma.ca](http://lgma.ca)

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