

## What is the Service Sustainability Assessment Tool?

Local governments across British Columbia are striving to provide sustainable services to their residents. However, many are not certain how their services are performing today or if they're prepared for the future. Factors such as scarcity of resources, rising expectations, and aging infrastructure threaten the sustainability of municipal services. The Service Sustainability Assessment Tool (SSAT) was prepared to help local governments identify areas where service sustainability may be threatened, and to provide feedback on practices that contribute to service sustainability.

The SSAT tool will help you:

- Communicate to Council and the public about sustainability
- Identify areas where services are doing well
- Identify areas where the sustainability of the service is at risk
- Develop plans to improve the sustainability of service provision
- Track progress over time

This tool helps communities self-assess their sustainable service delivery performance in eight core services:



Wastewater



Fire Protection



Water



Parks and Recreation



Drainage and Flood Protection



Solid Waste



Transportation



Civic Facilities

## What does “Sustainable Service Delivery” mean?



**Sustainability of service delivery**

*Will our local government be able to provide these services into the future?*



**Overall community sustainability**

*Is our community planned, built, or modified to promote sustainable living?*

Sustainable service delivery means meeting present needs without compromising the community's ability to meet future needs. The SSAT is intended to support communities in making decisions about the sustainability of **service delivery**. It does not assess overall community sustainability, which is linked to broader social, economic, and environmental goals.

The SSAT assesses service sustainability in two ways: first, over time by considering both current performance and preparedness for the future; and second, through a balanced understanding of the key components of service delivery. The assessment considers leading indicators that identify actions that are likely to lead to desired outcomes, as well as lagging indicators that measure whether a desired outcome has been reached.

### Paying Attention to Today and Tomorrow

Understanding sustainable service delivery requires assessing both **current performance** and **preparedness for the future**. Why is this important? With so many pressing needs today, thinking about the future is often pushed to the backburner. On the other hand, long-term plans often sit on the shelf. Consider the following scenarios:

- A community consistently receives reports of strong satisfaction from Council and residents regarding how water services are delivered. However, the aquifer is being depleted each year and there is no long-term strategy in place to protect the source over the long term.
- A community is investing significantly into long-term planning and, on paper, they should be exceeding performance measures. However, an implementation gap means that this effort has not translated into improved service levels.

Neither of these scenarios is sustainable. The SSAT is a tool that helps local governments assess **both** current performance and preparedness for the future, and identify these types of gaps.

### Components of Service Delivery

Service sustainability requires balancing service delivery with good governance and strong finances. Many communities have a strong understanding of **service delivery** itself, that is, how services are delivered, in what quantity, to whom, and where. In fact, much of the work of local government is in the delivery of services. Good **governance** provides consistent and transparent decision-making that takes a long-term view. Strong **finances** are key to being able to deliver a service affordably over time.

By assessing the three components of sustainable service delivery together, the SSAT provides clear feedback on strengths and gaps in each service area.

### Using the Service Sustainability Assessment Tool

#### Which Communities Should Use This Tool?

The tool is intended to be used by any local government, of any size, and at any stage of reviewing the way that services are delivered.

#### How Long Does It Take to Use the Tool?

It should take approximately 15 minutes to complete one service area assessment. It may be desirable to spend additional time on each service area if your community wishes to provide references to external documents and data.

#### How Should the Assessment Be Completed?

The tool was designed as an Excel workbook to make it easy for any community to use. Each Excel sheet represents a service area and includes a set of measures to assess current performance and preparedness for the future for that service area. For each measure, enter a score between 0 and 3 that best describes the situation in your community.

Once scores have been entered, click “Generate Report”. The report presents the results in three dashboards that can be used to meet different communication needs. These are described on the next page.

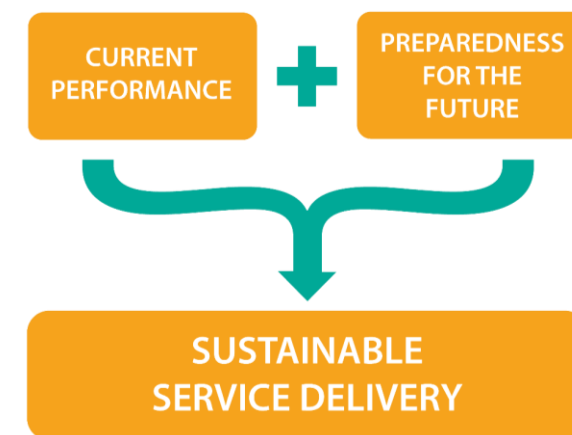
### When Should the Assessment Be Completed?

The Service Sustainability Assessment Tool was designed to be completed annually to allow communities to track their progress over time. The tool measures actual performance in each year. It does not measure anticipated service delivery. When completed annually, the SSAT will identify trends in service delivery sustainability.

### How Should the Scores be Interpreted?

The intent of the SSAT is to provide an overall snapshot of current performance, future preparedness, and overall service sustainability. The scores are intended to spark discussion and raise awareness about potential gaps and areas where further investigation may be needed.

Score	Service Sustainability
75-100%	Service delivery appears well-positioned to achieve sustainability.
50-74%	Overall, service delivery is approaching sustainability, though there are some threats.
25-49%	There are some significant threats to service sustainability.
0-24%	There are many significant threats to service sustainability.



## Communicating Service Delivery Sustainability

Each completed assessment will provide a dashboard summary of results at three levels of detail that can be used to communicate service delivery sustainability to different audiences, including Council, the public, senior management, and departmental staff.

### 1 ELECTED OFFICIAL REPORT—COMMUNICATING OVERALL PERFORMANCE

**AUDIENCE**  
Council  
Public

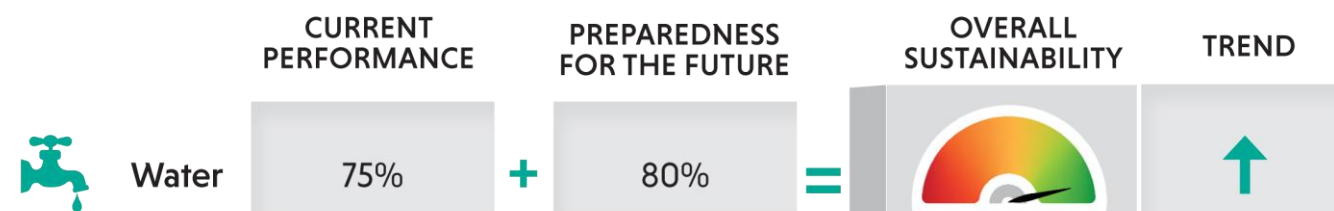
The first SSAT dashboard level provides a snapshot of service sustainability for each core service area. At a glance, Council and the public can see the overall performance and trends over time.



### 2 DIRECTOR REPORT—COMPARING CURRENT PERFORMANCE AND PREPAREDNESS FOR THE FUTURE

**AUDIENCE**  
Senior Managers

The second dashboard level highlights differences between current performance and preparedness for the future.



### 3 MANAGER REPORT—IDENTIFYING SPECIFIC STRENGTHS AND CHALLENGES

**AUDIENCE**  
Department Staff

The third dashboard level breaks down the score for each of the components: service delivery, finances, and governance. With this information, managers and staff within each service area department can identify priority improvement areas, as well as areas that require further study.

WATER	CURRENT PERFORMANCE	PREPAREDNESS FOR THE FUTURE
Service Delivery	90%	70%
+ Finance	75%	90%
+ Governance	60%	80%
	75%	80%

## Acknowledgements

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We hope the SSAT will serve as a valuable resource for local governments working to improve service sustainability in their communities.

