

## **Appendix 3: An Overview of the Triple Bottom Line Decision Making Tool**

### **Introduction**

The Triple Bottom Line Decision Making Tool (TBL Tool) is being developed to help the City implement the proposed Triple Bottom Line Council Policy. It is meant to assist City employees and decisions makers when planning new initiatives or re-evaluating existing initiatives.<sup>1</sup> The objective is to consider how to integrate as many TBL indicators as possible into our work, while avoiding trade-offs, negative impacts, and significant adverse effects.

Multiple divisions and project teams are piloting and reviewing the TBL Tool. The intent of this process is to assist in the implementation of the TBL Council Policy and to ensure it reflects and supports the City of Saskatoon's strategic direction. This document explains the mechanics of the TBL Tool.

### **Benefits**

The TBL Tool provides a comprehensive framework to help employees and decision makers identify opportunities to achieve multiple corporate goals and co-benefits, leading to broadly-defined success criteria and more sustainable outcomes. While the City of Saskatoon is already making strides to support a triple bottom line approach through its work (e.g. through its plans, strategies, and policies), the TBL Tool allows the City to make decisions and achieve its strategic priorities using a transparent, intentional, and consistent approach. Establishing the TBL Tool as a collective responsibility will also help ensure the City's values are applied in the same way across the corporation.

The TBL Tool is also expected to:

- Drive better project outcomes. By highlighting opportunities for co-benefits, the tool can lead to improvements to infrastructure, facilities, service levels, programs, policies, and delivery models by meeting multiple objectives through the initiatives and services we deliver;
- Inform the City's guiding documents, strategies, business plans, budget deliberations, and financial decision making;
- Improve Customer Service. Because the tool encourages an interdisciplinary approach to all initiatives, it is anticipated to result in customer service improvements, as many services delivered by the City intersect social, economic, environmental, and governance dimensions;
- Facilitate collaboration between various disciplines, divisions, and areas of expertise;
- Spark innovative and creative outcomes, both internally and by our partners, suppliers, and contractors;

---

<sup>1</sup> Initiatives refer to programs, projects, policies, procedures, plans, strategies, etc. undertaken by the City.

- Help staff better understand the linkages between the City’s various business lines, as well as the true cost of doing business; and
- Improve the quality of our decision-making and, as a result, improve the quality of our work.

### **Principles and Indicators**

The TBL Tool is meant to guide the City’s work by helping employees and decision makers identify opportunities to achieve sustainability outcomes in multiple areas. The tool functions similar to a scored evaluation matrix, whereby values are assigned to a list of sustainability principles, indicators, and success measures<sup>2</sup> based on the positive and negative impacts of an initiative. The objective is to achieve Net Sustainability Gains, whereby an initiative achieves positive TBL scores in each of the four principle areas: environmental health and integrity; social equity and cultural wellbeing; economic prosperity and fiscal responsibility; and good governance.

#### ***Principle: Environmental Health and Integrity***

This principle supports a healthy environment through the protection and restoration of natural habitats, ecosystem services, wildlife, water and air quality, fertile lands, and nutritious food, as well as supports urgent action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change.

Indicators:

- Renewable Energy
- Conservation of Resources
- Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation
- Green Buildings, Infrastructure and Land Use
- Sustainable Transportation
- Healthy Ecosystems
- Clean Air, Water, and Land
- Waste Reduction and Diversion
- Storm Water Management
- Sustainable Food System

---

<sup>2</sup> The TBL Tool is a research-based decision making framework. The principles, indicators, and success measures have been informed by over 45 different sources, including: peer reviewed articles and books; industry led reports; publications by other municipalities and regions; international policy documents; and strategic City documents.

***Principle: Social Equity and Cultural Wellbeing***

Achieving the indicators in this area will help improve the lives of all people by supporting intra- and inter-generational equity; diversity; inclusion; individual and community health and well-being; safety; culture and identity; and quality of life.

Indicators:

- Equity and Opportunity
- Diversity, Accessibility, and Inclusion
- Heritage and Culture
- Self Sufficiency and Living with Dignity
- Health and Wellbeing
- Safety and Resiliency
- Civic Participation
- Recreation

***Principle: Economic Prosperity and Fiscal Responsibility***

The objective of this principle is to enhance environmental and social outcomes by supporting a robust, sustainable, and responsive economy; stimulating local employment, business, and entrepreneurship opportunities; and making sound financial investments and decisions.

Indicators:

- Innovation
- Sustainable Procurement
- Fiscal Responsibility
- Support the Local Economy
- Asset Management
- Skills and Training
- Labour Rights and Employment
- Affordability

***Principle: Good Governance***

Good Governance is considered a key factor for the delivery, uptake, and success of sustainability outcomes; adding this pillar creates what some refer to as a Quadruple Bottom Line approach. The indicators in this area help achieve sustainability outcomes by way of accessible, accountable, transparent, and ethical governance systems. Good governance is oriented towards long-term outcomes/benefits, supports policy integration and common goals, sets limitations on the types of trade-offs that can be made, utilizes effective mechanisms that support implementation, and establishes a culture of learning, innovation, and adaptation.

Indicators:

- Ethical and Democratic Governance
- Effective Service Delivery
- Education, Communication, Engagement and Capacity Building
- Monitoring, Reporting and Compliance

- Agile and Adaptiveness
- Roles, Responsibilities and Rewards

### **How and When to Use the TBL Tool**

During the planning phases of a new initiative or the re-design of an existing initiative, the TBL Tool can be used to identify the impacts of the initiative on a list of TBL indicators and success measures. Staff may choose from a drop-down menu that includes the following options:

- **Significant Benefit:** Leads to significant improvements; resolves existing problems; results in innovative/transformational outcomes; results in long-term benefits.
- **Positive Impact:** Leads to direct benefits; however, further benefits could be achieved.
- **Meets Minimum Standards:** Meets a minimum standard of practice; maintains basic benefits; meets (but does not exceed) an established regulation, policy, or procedure.
- **No Impact / Not Applicable:** There are no opportunities to support the TBL indicator through the initiative. Out of scope.
- **Unknown Impacts:** While there may be positive or negative impacts, these potential impacts are unknown (i.e. they have not been studied, they cannot be determined at this time, they will be followed up with at a future date, other).
- **Negative Impact:** Leads to direct negative impacts (whether intentional or unintentional).
- **Significant Adverse Effect:** Leads to (or risks leading to) a significant decline; deepens existing problems; results in new problems that are impossible or close to impossible to reverse; compromises long-term viability.

The TBL Tool assigns positive or negative points to each impact; however, it does not evaluate or measure quantitative sustainability outcomes. Rather, the score system allows staff to identify areas of benefit and concern so that decisions can be made early on that improve the sustainability outcomes of an initiative or process. For example, it may indicate where to focus attention, conduct further research, seek additional resources, and/or build capacity or partnerships. It may also highlight the need to redesign or enhance an initiative by, for example:

- reducing negative impacts and eliminating significant adverse effects;
- deepening the positive impacts of specific TBL outcomes (i.e. by achieving greater benefits where some efforts are already being made); and/or
- supporting a greater breadth of TBL outcomes (i.e. by making improvements in a greater number of areas).

When using the TBL Tool, the following guidelines should be met:

- Trade-offs between indicators are only acceptable if the initiative as a whole delivers Net Sustainability Gains.
- For initiatives that result in negative impacts and/or significant adverse effects in one or more area (immediately or over the long term), the initiative should be adjusted to improve TBL outcomes.
- No activity that has a significant adverse effect is acceptable unless all alternatives are worse.
- Placing significant adverse effects on future generations is not acceptable unless all alternatives are worse.
- Justification is required to explain any remaining negative impacts or significant adverse effects. Explanations for any unknown impacts is also encouraged.

The TBL Tool may also be used to explore how changes to the design of the initiative and/or alternate options result in differing TBL outcomes. This allows staff and decision makers to compare and evaluate different scenarios through a TBL lens, including:

1. A typical business-as-usual approach;
2. An option that meets more TBL objectives than a business-as-usual approach;  
and
3. An innovative option that achieves multiple TBL outcomes and leads to greater co-benefits.

The TBL Tool can be applied to any City initiative; however, it is especially important to use when:

- Project, program, or policy options have competing views and/or impacts;
- There's a need to articulate trade-offs;
- The outcome(s)/direction may be controversial;
- The issue being explored/addressed is complex, has unclear effects, and/or has significant impacts or costs; or
- Multiple stakeholders and/or viewpoints are involved.