

Update on the Triple Bottom Line (December 2021): Introducing the TBL Improvement Tool

[*C08-001 Triple Bottom Line Policy*](#) requires that sustainability impacts, through environmental, social, economic, and good governance factors, are considered in everything we do. To support this, the Triple Bottom Line (TBL) Tool was created which is an excel spreadsheet that helps leaders and teams scope work with the broadest benefits by applying a sustainability lens to their initiatives. To guide and strengthen outcomes, a version 2.0 of the TBL Tool, now called the *TBL Improvement Tool*, was released in December 2021.

Why is there a new version?

The purpose of the TBL Improvement Tool is to provide guidance for teams to explore environmental, social, economic and good governance factors in their initiatives and to steer initiatives towards their highest and best use. The changes to the TBL Improvement Tool make its application easier and more transparent.

The TBL Improvement Tool is an important factor in initiative scoping and the decision-making processes; it complements but does not replace other decision-making considerations, such as feasibility studies, technical analysis, regulatory reviews, cost-benefit analyses, and engagement (see below).

What do the changes look like?

The TBL Improvement Tool has been streamlined so that only the “Indicators” receive an impact rating instead of every single “Success Measure”, and scores have been removed. The Tool is best used to understand and profile the impacts and benefits of individual options and to identify areas where initiatives could be strengthened.

Option comparison now occurs outside of the TBL Tool, and it should incorporate additional factors for analysis and decision-making (see below).

While each options’ TBL profile is considered in the analysis process, the TBL Improvement Tool is not the final and only determinant for a decision or recommendation. For example, the TBL Improvement Tool should not be used to compare providing a service using internal resources or contracting out; it can be used to identify how to maximize co-benefits to improve each option. With the features and profile of each option clearly understood, broader analysis must be applied to understand the benefits and constraints of the options, including feasibility, technical analysis, regulatory reviews, cost-benefit analyses, and engagement outcomes.

What is still the same?

Sustainability is still the responsibility of the entire organization and each department and employee have an important role to play in ensuring sustainable outcomes are achieved. As such, the TBL Tool should still be used on every initiative within the criteria laid out in the Initiative Prioritization categories. The TBL Tool can help facilitate discussion between different subject matter experts, using a diverse group of stakeholders to work through the tool can help understand and improve TBL outcomes.

How should the TBL Improvement Tool be used?

The TBL Improvement Tool can be used early in the project to help develop the scope (for instance business case or project charter), at key milestones or phases to understand the benefits/impacts of an option, and at project closure to check whether the desired TBL objectives were met.

The TBL Improvement Tool can be used to understand the environmental, social, economic, and governance implications of an initiative. It can be used to assess the benefits and minimize trade-offs of an initiative and its options; and the results from the TBL Improvement Tool can be used to report these benefits and impacts to Council and other decision makers. However, it is not meant to be the only analyses used to make these recommendations.

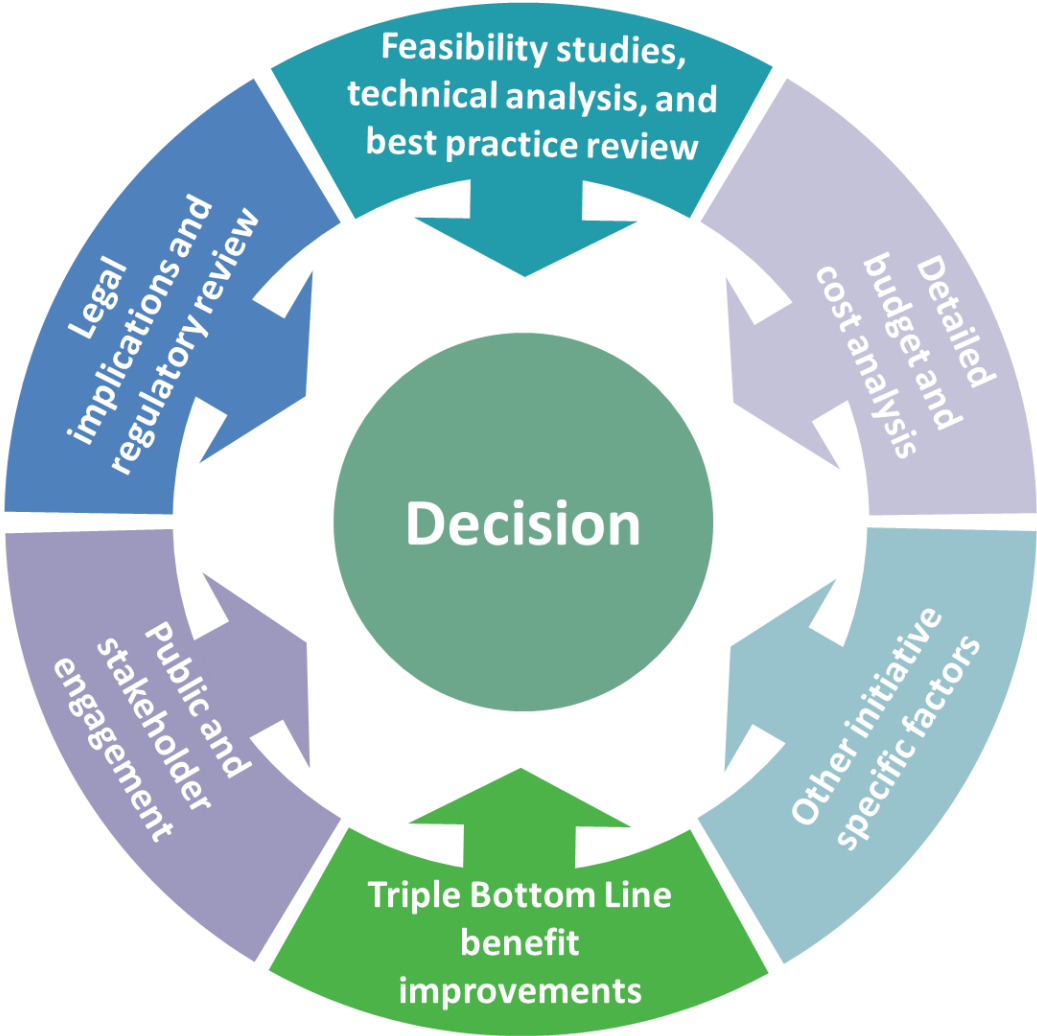
What other analyses should be carried out when making decisions, or to describe options and recommendations?

Many factors go into decision-making. The TBL Improvement Tool should be used in conjunction with other analyses, such as:

- **Feasibility studies, technical analysis, or best practice review** – compares and analyzes specific data and metrics collected through research and studies.
- **Detailed budget or cost analysis** – evaluation of an initiative's budget and compares the differences in cost between multiple options, using established accounting principles.
- **Legal implications or regulatory review** - regulatory factors may impact an initiative's ability to achieve greater outcomes in some indicators.
- **Public and stakeholder engagement** - public consultation, involvement, and collaboration will be done separately from TBL to understand impacts and opinions of stakeholders.
- **Other initiative specific factors** - depending on the work, there may be other specific factors and information that decision-makers need to make their decision.

While the outcomes from the TBL Improvement Tool are one factor, it is important to provide all the information decision-makers need. When beginning an initiative, it is important to plan how and when to make decisions and should be included in the Project Charter (refer to Figure 1). More complex initiatives may use tools such as process maps and GANTT charts to track the various inputs of the decision-making process.

Figure 1. Decision Factors Diagram



Decision Factors