

Version 1
May 2025

Triple Bottom Line Evaluation Tool Guidance Document

Overview

The Working Group recognizes both the triple bottom line (economic, community, and environmental) benefits achievable when advancing a One Water approach and knows that the New Braunfels community deserves thoughtful, holistic decision-making. These benefits can be difficult to discern, quantify, and highlight by a traditional cost benefit analysis framework used by water management agencies and other governing bodies. Due to the very nature of One Water, at times One Water-aligned projects may not pencil out when you apply traditional cost benefit analysis approach, but that same One Water-aligned project might deliver a number of benefits to the community that make it “the right” project to advance.

As public service agencies, the One Water partners recognize that agency projects, programs, and plans can have beneficial economic, community, and environmental impacts. The Triple Bottom Line Evaluation Tool described in this guidance document provides a guided evaluation how a project, program or plan advances priority goals and enhances investments in our community to help protect water supplies, quality of life, and the economy.

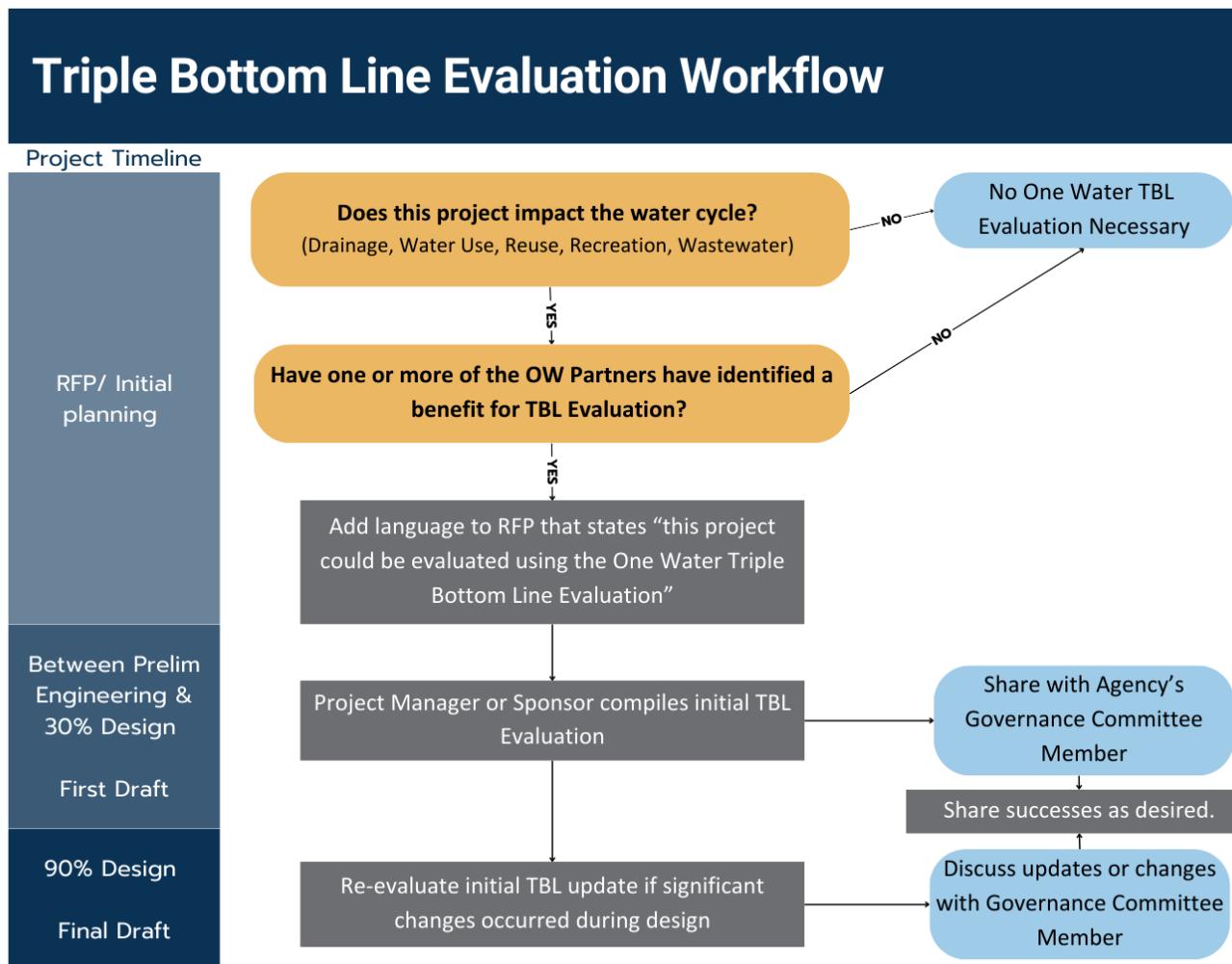
To help the community and governing bodies move to a holistic decision-making framework, the Working Group developed a Triple Bottom Line Evaluation Tool. The intent is that the Triple Bottom Line Evaluation Tool should be utilized early in project development to ensure projects are well-aligned and designed to provide multiple benefits where possible.

Suggested Workflow

The Triple Bottom Line (TBL) Evaluation is intended to help prioritize projects, programs and policies that consider and balance environmental, social, and economic benefits to the New Braunfels area. The goal is to increase use of the evaluation tool and show year to year improvement in project selection that evaluated. The process aims to generate discussion that

leads to enhanced projects, increased awareness of multi-benefit solutions incorporated, and support for these projects when proposed.

Benefits of starting early in the planning process include inviting contractors to contribute ideas, builds familiarity with One Water goals, and encourages iterative learning. By compiling the initial TBL evaluation between Preliminary Engineering and 30% design or first draft phases, the evaluation captures the optimal or proposed plan; then by re-evaluating the TBL at 90% Design or Final Draft it documents what was actually implemented. Each partner agency's Governance Committee member can share project information when appropriate to help identify collaborative opportunities, raise awareness, and improve or enhance One Water aspects. Once the project, program, or plan is complete the evaluation can be used by Communications departments to help inform the public about project benefits and outreach/education.



One Water - Triple Bottom Line Project/Plan/Program Evaluation Tool

("A tool to track and manage economic, social, and environmental value.")

Project/Plan/Program Name:

Project/Plan/Program Submittal Date:

Project/Plan/Program Submitted By:

Project/Plan/Program Reviewed By:

Project/Plan/Program Total Score: 118

Notes:

1. Please complete only the score and justification sections of the table.

TBL	Criteria	Weight	Characteristic	Score	Justification	Subtotal
Economic	Supports Economic Growth	3	5 Project/plan/program will create an environment for positive sustainable development while leveraging the benefits of existing projects/plans/programs.	5		15
			3 Project/plan/program will only serve existing population without improving equity.			
			1 Project/plan/program is incidental to supporting economic growth.			
	Develops Work Force	3	5 Project/plan/program will create new employment opportunities and includes training to expand the skills of the local work force.	5		15
			3 Project/plan/program will only create limited new employment opportunities for the local work force.			
			1 Project/plan/program is incidental to developing the work force.			
	Assesses as Economically Prudent	4	5 Project/s/plan's/program's life cycle economic evaluation provides favorable overall results.	3		12
			3 Project/s/plan's/program's life cycle economic evaluation provides neutral overall results.			
			1 Project/s/plan's/program's life cycle economic evaluation provides negative overall results.			
Community	Enhances Quality of Life	3	5 Project/plan/program enhances quality of life in the community.	4		12
			3 Project/plan/program is neutral to quality of life in the community.			
			1 Project/plan/program reduces the quality of life in the community.			
	Supports Community Aesthetics and Culture	3	5 Project/plan/program enhances the objectives of the Community as outlined in plans and programs with stakeholder input and/or collaboration with agencies and improves public space.	5		15
			3 Project/plan/program is consistent with existing objectives of the Community as outlined in plans and programs of the community or improves public space.			
			1 Project/plan/program is incidental to existing objectives of the Community and projects/plans/programs of the community.			
Environment	Enhances Public Health and Safety	4	5 Project/plan/program is required to meet regulatory requirements and greatly enhances community health and safety.	3		12
			3 Project/plan/program meets required regulatory requirements and improves community health and safety.			
			1 Project/plan/program merely meets regulatory requirements and/or is neutral to community health and safety.			
	Promotes Favorable Impacts on Natural Environment	3	5 Project/plan/program provides a significant improvement or restores a natural system's function.	2		6
			3 Project/plan/program maintains a natural system or provides mitigation as a result of impact.			
Environment	Incorporates Sustainable and Resilient Practices	3	1 Project/plan/program creates a negative impact to a natural system.			
			5 Project/plan/program provides significant integration of standard sustainable principles and is shown to enhance a system's resiliency.	5		15
			3 Project/plan/program provides moderate integration of standard sustainable principles.			
Environment	Preserves Water Resources	4	1 Project/plan/program provides no integration of standard sustainable principles.			
			5 Project/plan/program protects surface water and groundwater availability, quantity, and/or quality at a watershed scale to positively impact the region's water resources.	4		16
			3 Project/plan/program incorporates moderate water preservation measures.			
			1 Project/plan/program is neutral to water preservation.			

ECONOMIC CRITERIA

Economic development that nurtures and protects social and natural resources is sustainable development. While not all projects/plans/programs are directly connected to economic growth, they are all connected to the economy by driving community attractiveness and environmental responsibility.

Return on Investment and upfront capital costs are often the key drivers in planning decisions; however, life-cycle costs of the project, risks and uncertainty, or the broader outcomes that impact the environment and society are similarly important considerations for project planning. The Economic Section of this guidance document relates to the impact the project/plan/program has on the local economy. Scoring is reflected on how well the project supports sustainable economic growth in the community, creates and develops a skilled, resilient, and inclusive workforce, and assesses the associated life-cycle costs and economic impacts to ensure publicly funded expenditures are financially prudent and appropriate.

Supports Economic Growth

INTENT: Promote sustainable economic growth that benefits all citizens, encourages equitable development, and strengthens local economies.

DESCRIPTION: This credit recognizes the ability of projects to create conditions where local businesses can thrive, access to services is improved, and communities benefit from enhanced livability. Projects should be linked to long-term economic prosperity, sustainable development, and be aligned with established community goals. Economic prosperity is the state of a thriving community that supports the needs of the community and businesses, and where people want to live, work, and play. Sustainable development is economic development that is conducted without the depletion of social or natural resources.

METRICS: Alignment and/or support for goals stated in community projects/plans/programs. The extent of increased operating capacity, access, quality, livability and/or improved socioeconomic conditions (including job growth, capacity building, productivity, business attractiveness).

5 points	Project/plan/program will create an environment for positive sustainable development while leveraging the benefits of existing projects/plans/programs.
3 points	Project/plan/program will only serve existing population without improving equity.
1 point	Project/plan/program is incidental to supporting economic growth.

EXAMPLE CONSIDERATIONS:

- Explanation of relevant goals stated in community projects/plans/programs. (E.g., Comprehensive Plan, Habitat Conservation Plan, Drainage Area Master Plan, Water Resources Plan, Water Conservation Plan, Drought Contingency Plan, Clean Rivers Program)

- Does the project provide new operating capacity for business, industry, or the public?
- Does the project provide additional access, increase the number of choices, and/or increase the quality of infrastructure services for business, industry, or the public?
- Does the project improve community attractiveness for business, industry, or the public by generally improving the socioeconomic conditions of the community?
- Will the project stimulate economic prosperity and further economic development?

Note: Modified from Envision Sustainability Framework Criteria: Leadership 3.1 – Stimulate Economic Prosperity & Development

Develops Work Force

INTENT: Support the development of a skilled, resilient workforce and/or creates related jobs that meets the demands of the local community. Provides access to jobs through staff positions or opportunities for contracted support.

DESCRIPTION: This credit addresses the degree to which the project impacts workforce development. Projects should emphasize skill-building, access to quality employment, and increasing economic resilience for individuals in economically disadvantaged areas by expanding the knowledge, skills, and capacity of the community workforce during the project design, construction, and operation and maintenance phases.

METRICS: The inclusion of current and future training programs, informed by skill or capability gaps, and targeted to economically depressed or underemployed communities.

5 points	Project/plan/program will create new employment opportunities and includes training to expand the skills of the local work force.
3 points	Project/plan/program will only create limited new employment opportunities for the local work force.
1 point	Project/plan/program is incidental to developing the work force.

EXAMPLE CONSIDERATIONS:

- Will the project include training programs for local skill development?
- Has the project team identified skill or capability gaps in the local workforce and targeted training programs to address them?
- Does the project create a significant number of new jobs during its design, construction, and operation?
- Will training, education, or skill development programs continue after project delivery? Internships.
- Will training and skill development programs specifically target economically depressed, underemployed, or disadvantaged communities?

Note: Modified from Envision Sustainability Framework Criteria: Leadership 3.2 – Develop Local Skills & Capabilities

Assesses as Economically Prudent

INTENT: Ensure projects and investments are economically sound, provide sustainable value over their life cycles, and account for social, environmental, and financial impacts. This approach ensures that projects are cost-effective, equitable, and aligned with long-term community well-being.

DESCRIPTION: This credit provides for life-cycle evaluations to assess projects from inception to completion, including potential costs and benefits over time. Evaluations should consider not only financial returns but also social and environmental impacts. By applying rigorous analysis, projects that generate community-wide benefits while minimizing negative externalities. Life cycle evaluations also promote transparency and accountability in the use of public funds.

METRICS: The comprehensiveness of the economic analyses used to determine the net impacts of the project, and their use in assessing alternatives to inform decision making.

5 points	Project's/plan's/program's life cycle economic evaluation provides favorable overall results.
3 points	Project's/plan's/program's life cycle economic evaluation provides neutral overall results.
1 point	Project's/plan's/program's life cycle economic evaluation provides negative overall results.

EXAMPLE CONSIDERATIONS:

- Has a life-cycle cost analysis been conducted to identify the financial impacts of the whole project? (I.e., capital costs, replacement costs, annual or reoccurring operations and maintenance costs, residual value, financial benefit streams such as revenues)
- Has the project team mapped the social, environmental, and financial costs and benefits of the project? (I.e., safety improvements, benefits to low- and moderate-income persons/households, enhanced recreational values, enhanced aesthetics or streetscape, productivity improvements, reduced car or truck mileage, noise/odor levels, ecosystem and biodiversity effects, air quality, water quality, water quantity, reduced greenhouse gas emissions, resiliency value)

Note: Modified from Envision Sustainability Framework Criteria: Leadership 3.3 – Conduct a Life-Cycle Economic Evaluation

COMMUNITY CRITERIA

While many projects/plans/programs are driven by engineering parameters, the impact on culture and the community fabric should also be considered during design and construction. Sustainable projects can enhance the community experience by improving individual comfort, safety and health. During construction and operation, considering the physical safety of workers and residents and minimizing nuisances (including light pollution, noise, and vibration) benefit the community experience. When possible projects/plans/programs should enhance quality of life, support community aesthetics and culture, and improve public health and safety.

Enhances Quality of Life

INTENT: Improve the net quality of life of the community as affected by the project and mitigate negative impacts to the community.

DESCRIPTION: This credit addresses the extent to which a project contributes to the quality of life of the community. The term quality of life is being defined as the character, culture, and amenities that make a community desirable for its residents to live, work, and play within the community. As this can be subjective, the criteria should address how well the project team has identified, assessed, and incorporated community needs, goals, and concerns into the project. Relevant community plans are assumed to be a viable expression of those needs, goals, objectives, and aspirations depicting the desired quality of life for the community.

Active engagement and proper alignment of projects with community needs, goals, and concerns should be a priority. Community support and engagement are critical to ensure the appropriate and effective investment of resources. Project teams and owners should consider how aligning the project with community goals reduces the risk of community conflicts that disrupt project delivery, reduce perceived quality of life, and increase cost.

METRIC: Measures taken to assess community needs and improve quality of life while minimizing negative impacts.

5 points	Project/plan/program enhances quality of life in the community.
3 points	Project/plan/program is neutral to quality of life in the community.
1 point	Project/plan/program reduces the quality of life in the community.

EXAMPLE CONSIDERATIONS:

- Will the proposed project improve the quality of life for the residents of New Braunfels?
- Does the proposed project foster neighborhoods that are attractive centers of the community; protect and enhance parks and natural open spaces; establish connectivity between recreation centers and neighborhoods; or improve the appearance and image of the city.
- Does the project meet or support the needs and goals of the greater New Braunfels area including upstream and downstream communities?

- Has the project team assessed the positive and negative social impacts the project will have on surrounding communities' quality of life? Explain any design considerations incorporated to address these.
- Have communities been meaningfully engaged in identifying how the project meets community needs and/or goals? Explain how.
- Does the project proactively address long-term social, economic, or environmental changes that impact quality of life?

Note: Modified from Envision Sustainability Framework Criteria: QL1.1 Improve Community Quality of Life.

Supports Community Aesthetics and Culture

INTENT: Preserve or enhance community aesthetics, cultural sites, and related resources.

DESCRIPTION: This credit addresses the aesthetics and cultural resources that make the community unique and that, once lost, cannot be truly replaced. Community aesthetics and cultural resources can drive the community's attractiveness, livability, and tourism that in turn supports economic activity and a strong tax base. While protection is a necessary first step and should be highly prioritized, there are also often opportunities to highlight, enhance, or facilitate the continuance or utilization of the community's aesthetics and cultural resources.

METRIC: Steps taken to identify, preserve, or enhance community aesthetics and cultural resources.

5 points	Project/plan/program enhances the objectives of the Community as outlined in plans and programs with stakeholder input and/or collaboration with agencies and improves public space.
3 points	Project/plan/program is consistent with existing objectives of the Community as outlined in plans and programs of the community or improves public space.
1 point	Project/plan/program is incidental to existing objectives of the Community and projects/plans/programs of the community.

EXAMPLE CONSIDERATIONS:

- Has the project considered existing plans and stakeholder input?
- Does the project avoid all historic/cultural resources or fully preserve/protect their character-defining features?
- Does the project enhance or restore threatened or degraded historic/cultural resources in the community, or add a resource to a protected registry?
- Have important natural or man-made features been identified and addressed in construction management and/or operation plans?
- Will the project result in the restoration or enhancement of views or local character?

- Has the project team assessed and mitigated impacts or improved conditions for existing public space and/or amenities?
- To what extent does the project involve significantly enhancing, creating, or restoring public space and/or amenities?

Note: Modified from Envision Sustainability Framework Criteria: QL3.2 Preserve Historic & Cultural Resources, QL3.3 Enhance Views & Local Character, and QL3.4 Enhance Public Space & Amenities.

Enhances Public Health and Safety

INTENT: Protect and enhance community health and safety.

DESCRIPTION: All projects must meet all safety and health regulations as required by law. This credit recognizes the opportunities many projects have to exceed minimum regulatory requirements, or to improve health and/or safety within a project or the community in other ways. The credit assesses the degree to which a project contributes to increased safety and health benefits on the project site, surrounding sites, and the broader community.

METRIC: Measures taken to increase safety and provide health benefits on the project site, surrounding sites, and the broader community in a just and equitable manner.

5 points	Project/plan/program is required to meet regulatory requirements and greatly enhances community health and safety.
3 points	Project/plan/program meets required regulatory requirements and improves community health and safety.
1 point	Project/plan/program merely meets regulatory requirements and/or is neutral to community health and safety.

EXAMPLE CONSIDERATIONS:

- Is this project required to meet regulatory requirements? Please explain relevant requirements.
- Does the project meet all health and safety regulations and laws for operations?
- Has the project exceeded minimum legal health and safety requirements as established by regulations and laws?
- What is the area/scope impacted or influenced by the health and safety improvements?
- Will the project provide critical infrastructure services to communities experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, imminent negative health and/or personal safety impacts?

Note: Modified from Envision Sustainability Framework Criteria: QL1.2 Enhance Public Health & Safety.

ENVIRONMENTAL CRITERIA

Stewardship and conservation of water resources and ecosystem services is an explicit goal for the One Water New Braunfels program. While stewardship of water resources is an essential and immediate goal, long-term goals should be directed toward conservation where practical. This is intended to reinforce the point that, to really contribute to sustainability, projects must do more than mitigate negative impacts. Mitigation is important, but does not alone decrease the pressure on water resources to restore the economic, environmental and social conditions of the Guadalupe River Basin. All planners need to consider the positive and negative impacts the potential project has on water. This includes quantity, quality, surrounding habitat, and restoration of harm done.

The water resources around us perform critical functions called ecosystem services that provide us with clean water, a diverse ecosystem, and economic benefits. One Water focuses on creating unified, sustainable, water management that maximizes the benefits of integrative planning.

Promotes Favorable Impacts on Natural Environment

INTENT: Minimize the impact of development on stormwater runoff quantity, rate, and quality; preserve water resources by preventing pollutants from contaminating surface water and groundwater and monitoring impacts during construction and operations; preserve and improve the functionality of terrestrial (land) habitats. Maintain and restore the ecosystem functions of streams, wetlands, waterbodies, and their riparian areas.

DESCRIPTION: This credit addresses that New Braunfels depends on its water resources as community and benefits from the resulting economic benefits. Planners should ensure that projects do not cause runoff or other means of lowering water quality of the Comal and Guadalupe Rivers or water recharging the Trinity or Edwards Aquifers. Infrastructure should be planned in a way that addresses stormwater outside of wastewater facilities. When projects happen in areas with springs and wells, planners should incorporate measures that will prevent pollutants from contaminating groundwater. Groundwater ecosystems are sensitive to changes in water quality which could lead to loss of ecosystems and loss of the natural purification process of water.

The Comal and Guadalupe Rivers and Edwards Aquifer are home to many unique species. Projects should include ways to protect ecosystem functions by preventing fragmentation, impairing habitats or reducing biodiversity.

METRIC: The degree to which the project avoids or minimizes impacts to water and the environment. Special consideration should be given to water focused actions in order to stretch water supply, encourage conservation, provide clean water for the community, and offer water recreation, where appropriate.

5 points	Project/plan/program provides a significant improvement or restores a natural system's function.
3 points	Project/plan/program maintains a natural system or provides mitigation as a result of impact.
1 point	Project/plan/program creates a negative impact to a natural system.

EXAMPLE CONSIDERATIONS:

- Will the proposed project increase sustainability by focusing on the protection of natural riparian corridors; protection of urban forestry assets; conservation of natural resources; implementation of best management practices to improve stormwater quality; and the reduction of solid waste, air pollution, routine maintenance, energy consumption, and water consumption?
- To what extent does the project infiltrate, evapotranspire, reuse, and/or treat stormwater on site?
- Does the project improve water supply?
- Does the project promote water conservation in the community?
- To what extent does the completed project limit rate or quantity of runoff compared to existing conditions?
- Does the project treat stormwater from other sites or does it function as part of a larger stormwater management plan?
- To what extent does the project reduce the risk of surface water and/or groundwater quality degradation during construction and operations?
- Does the project improve surface water and/or groundwater quality?
- Does the project improve or preserve the quantity or quality of existing or proposed new habitat?
- Does the project protect/restore water quality or aquatic habitat?
- Does the project protect sediment transport and reduce sedimentation?
- Does the project offer water recreation, if appropriate?

Note: Modified from Envision Sustainability Framework Criteria: Natural World 2.2 Manage Stormwater, Natural World 2.4 Protect Surface and Groundwater Quality, Natural World 3.1 Enhance Functional Habitats, and Natural World 3.2 Enhance Wetland and Surface Water Functions

Incorporates Sustainable and Resilient Practices

INTENT: Increase resilience and enhance operational relationships to strengthen the functional integration of the project into connected, efficient, and diverse infrastructure systems. Preferred projects should not stress resources over time but rather benefit ongoing human and environmental needs now and in the future.

DESCRIPTION: This credit addresses the implementation of strategies and systems to increase the resilience of a project that involves, or has the ability to impact water resources. Planners should identify any vulnerabilities and risks involved with the project and create strategies to minimize that risk. Furthermore, planners should recognize that all projects are part of interconnected systems and that they have an opportunity to increase resilience throughout New Braunfels. New or renovated elements should positively affect the surrounding systems by creating infrastructure that increases water infiltration into the soil, minimizes impervious cover, protects recharge zones and prevents flooding of the immediate or connected areas.

METRIC: The degree to which the project incorporates elements that increase the resilience of New Braunfels' water resources. The term 'Standard sustainable principles' refers to established, proven, documented methods that conserve resources, minimize waste, and yield positive benefits over the long term. The degree to which the project is integrated into other connected water dependent habitats, where beneficial and appropriate, in order to increase resilience and performance. Examples of this include low impact development, using native plants, incorporating sustainability practices, implementing BMPs and adding a rain catchment system.

5 points	Project/plan/program provides significant integration of standard sustainable principles and is shown to enhance a system's resiliency.
3 points	Project/plan/program provides moderate integration of standard sustainable principles.
1 point	Project/plan/program provides no integration of standard sustainable principles.

EXAMPLE CONSIDERATIONS:

- Does the project incorporate strategies that address water demand management, site harvested supply, supply augmentation, water quality protection, or integrated management (One Water Menu elements)?
- Has the project team implemented strategies sufficient to address major project risks and improve project resilience?
- Does the project reinforce infrastructure networks to reduce risks or prevent cascading failures?
- Does the project integrate infrastructure networks?
- Does the project integrate data or monitoring systems in order to improve performance?
- Does the project include low impact development?
- Does the project use native plants instead of non-natives or invasives?
- Does the project have water focused BMPs?

Note: Modified from Envision Sustainability Framework Criteria: Climate and Resilience 2.5 Maximize Resilience and Climate Resilience 2.6 Improve Infrastructure Integration

Preserves Water Resources

INTENT: Assess and reduce the negative net impact on fresh water availability, access, quantity, and quality at a watershed scale to positively impact the region's water resources.

DESCRIPTION: Water quality and availability is a major concern affecting New Braunfels and the surrounding area. This credit is to address the potential impacts of development projects on the use of water resources. Planners should focus on projects that not only reduce water use but strive to improve water quality. In accordance with "One Water" principles planners should focus on reuse of non-potable water and look for ways to reuse the water before it returns to its natural cycle and where appropriate to use recycled water and stormwater instead of potable water.

METRIC: The extent to which the project considers and contributes to positively addressing broader watershed issues. This includes beneficial effluent, effluent reuse, municipal water restrictions, coordinate conservation efforts, integrate water efficiency measures and more.

5 points	Project/plan/program protects surface water and groundwater availability, quantity, and/or quality at a watershed scale to positively impact the region's water resources
3 points	Project/plan/program incorporates moderate water preservation measures.
1 point	Project/plan/program is neutral to water preservation.

EXAMPLE CONSIDERATIONS:

- Has the project team estimated the water usage and wastewater generation over the life of the project?
- Does the project include features to minimize the negative impacts of water usage, and/or watershed-scale issues?
- Does the project make a direct net-positive improvement to water resources?
- Is the project part of a community-level plan?
- Is the project coordinating conservation efforts with others?
- Does the project integrate water efficiency measures?

Note: Modified from Envision Sustainability Framework Criteria: Resource Allocation 3.1 Preserve Water Resources

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Much of the content for the Triple Bottom Line Evaluation Tool Guidance Document was pulled from the Institute for Sustainable Infrastructure's Envision Sustainable Infrastructure Framework Manual V3 (<https://sustainableinfrastructure.org/envision/about/>) then modified by the One Water New Braunfels Project Pipeline Committee. Each partner agency team took the lead on refining language for one of the Categories: Economic (NBU), Community (CoNB), and Environmental (GBRA). The Committee members worked to ensure that the Intent, Description, and Metric sections reflect the goals of One Water New Braunfels and address the shared challenges and toolsets available to the partners. This Guidance Document was developed and reviewed over Nov 2024 – Jun 2025 then tested with a diverse set of pilot projects. It is expected that this will be a living document that is refined with experience.

A very special thank you to the dedicated members of the One Water New Braunfels Working Group staff and leadership for their help in development and testing of the Triple Bottom Line Evaluation Tool and Guidance Document. Additional thanks to Sarah Richards, Lauren Willis, and Jean Drew for their significant contributions to One Water New Braunfels.

Note: * indicates Project Pipeline Committee members and ** indicates Governance Committee and Advisory Council members.

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