

## Community Excellence Awards 2018 Application Form

Please complete and return the application form by Friday, May 25, 2018. All questions are required to be answered by typing directly in this form. If you have any questions, contact [awards@ubcm.ca](mailto:awards@ubcm.ca) or (250) 356-5193.

### SECTION 1: Applicant Information

Local Government: City of Grand Forks

Complete Mailing Address:

City of Grand Forks

7217-4th Street

Grand Forks, BC,

V0H 1H0

Contact Person: Diane Heinrich

Position: Chief Administrative Officer /  
Corporate Officer

Phone: 250.442.8266

E-mail: [dheinrich@grandforks.ca](mailto:dheinrich@grandforks.ca)

### SECTION 2: Category

- Excellence in Governance.** *Governance processes or policies that are outcomes-based and consensus oriented; support and encourage citizen participation in civic decision-making; are efficient, equitable and inclusive, open and transparent; and exemplify best practices in accountability, effectiveness, and long term thinking.*
- Excellence in Service Delivery.** *Projects/programs that provide effective services in a proactive manner, demonstrate benefit to the community, and utilize performance measures, benchmarks and standards to ensure sustainable service delivery.*
- Excellence in Asset Management.** *Projects/programs that demonstrate a comprehensive system of asset management policies and practices, meeting and/or exceeding accepted best practices.*
- Excellence in Sustainability.** *Projects/programs that incorporate a long-term sustainability lens by considering cultural, social, economic and environmental issues in planning, policy and practice.*

### SECTION 3: Project/Program Details

**1. Name of the Project/Program:**

Service Sustainability Assessment Tool

**2. Project/Program Summary.** Please provide a summary of your project/program in 150 words or less.

Local governments across British Columbia strive 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. The Service Sustainability Assessment Tool (SSAT) was prepared to help local governments identify where service sustainability may be threatened, and to provide feedback on how to improve service sustainability.

The SSAT tool will help with:

- Communication to Council and the public about sustainability
- Identifying areas where services are doing well
- Identifying areas where the sustainability of the service is at risk
- Developing plans to improve the sustainability of service provision
- Tracking progress over time

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

- Wastewater
- Water
- Drainage and Flood Protection
- Transportation
- Fire Protection
- Parks and Recreation
- Solid Waste
- Civic Facilities

**3. Demonstrating Excellence.** Please describe how your project/program demonstrates excellence in meeting the purposes of local government in BC and provides promising practices for others to follow.

At its very core, the purpose of local government is to provide services to residents. Therefore, it is essential that local governments have a way of assessing the sustainability of the services their residents rely upon.

The City of Grand Forks developed the SSAT with Urban Systems in 2017. The intention of this resource is to improve governance, improve communication about assets, and to better allocate resources over time. The most significant achievement the City made was to take an exceedingly complex topic and make it easy for municipalities to assess where they are today and identify where they need to improve in the future. The City of Grand Forks noticed that there are often key gaps left by tools that assess

overall community sustainability and that the SSAT fills in those gaps through focusing on the sustainability of service provision. Understanding that it can be challenging to dedicate hours or days to complete a sustainability assessment, the tool was developed to take an average of 15 minutes per service to complete. By saving time and stress, the City of Grand Forks and other local governments can dedicate more time and energy to other community needs.

In May of 2018, the SSAT, the City of Grand Forks, and Urban Systems Ltd. were recognized by the Association of Consulting Engineering Companies - British Columbia by being chosen for the Award of Merit in the soft engineering category during the 2018 Awards for Engineering Excellence Gala. The award was judged by esteemed colleagues of the association and was chosen because of the SSAT's environmental, economic and social sustainability, aesthetics, and technical excellence and innovation. The tool will now be a part of a travelling exhibit to over 15 venues that will showcase the winners of the awards. We hope that through this tour, other local governments adopt the tool and make meaningful strides towards service sustainability in their own communities. The City of Grand Forks values the focus on sustainability ACEC-BC demonstrated by recognizing the SSAT as an outstanding project.

#### **4. Category Criteria.**

**A. Please describe how your project/program meets the objectives of the category you have applied under. Refer to S. 3 of the Program & Application Guide.**

From initial discussions to eventual development and use, effective asset management has been at the core of all decisions regarding the SSAT. The City of Grand Forks believes that accepted best practices in the field of asset management are not as comprehensive as they could be. By using the tool, local governments can be proactive and communicate the findings of their service sustainability assessment, demonstrating accountability, long-term thinking, and effective decision making. When asset management is done right it includes more than just tracking tangible assets such as sewers and roads. By focusing on the sustainability of service delivery, the City of Grand Forks demonstrated a deep understanding of asset management.

**B. In many cases projects may meet the criteria of more than one category. If applicable, please describe how your project meets the criteria of one or more other categories.**

It was difficult to choose a category to enter for this year's Excellence Awards. When used by local governments, the SSAT has a positive impact on the following:

- **Governance**

The SSAT supports open communication with the public and Council. The tool can be used as an instrument towards open dialogue between stakeholders in the community and the government. Communities can see if they are improving, staying the same, or doing worse than they had in previous years. Knowing how a community is doing today and how it is preparing for the future will support stronger decision-making and more effective governance.

- **Service Delivery**

The City of Grand Forks hopes that the SSAT can be an example of working towards sustainable service delivery in all communities across British Columbia and Canada. This project has delivered a way to be proactive about service management. If many

municipalities were to adopt the SSAT to identify their service delivery methods, we would have a more universally understood and easily trackable picture of sustainability across the province. Communities would better understand their strengths and seek out advice from cohort communities that are excelling in various fields.

- Sustainability

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.

## SECTION 4: Program Criteria

**5. Leadership.** Describe the extent to which your local government acted as a local or regional leader in the development or implementation of the project/program.

The City of Grand Forks led the creation of this tool, while emphasizing the importance of collaboration and involving cohort communities throughout the design process. The City of Grand Forks is very proud of taking the first steps towards creating this tool and for being financially responsible for the development of the SSAT. Acting as a leader in asset management in the region is a fantastic first step towards sustainable service delivery. With the goal of having this tool used across Canada, the City is leading by example and using their own experience with the tool to promote its use.

**6. Partnerships and collaboration.** Describe the breadth and depth of community and/or regional partnerships that supported the project/program and the extent to which internal and/or external collaboration was evident.

The SSAT would not have had the same impact if it were not for external community partnerships. Understanding the importance and benefits of this tool, a cohort of local governments volunteered their time and expertise to collaborate with the City of Grand Forks. The following cohort communities helped test and refine the SSAT to ensure an appropriate and approachable design:

- The City of Rossland
- The Village of Salmo
- The District of Clearwater
- The District of Squamish
- The District of Central Saanich

- District of Saanich

The City of Grand Forks and the cohort communities recognized that the tool needed to reflect common services provided by local governments as well as provide opportunities for personalization. If a local government wants to change the wording of questions, or delete or add questions or sections, they have the option to do that. Through collaboration, the City of Grand Forks learned that asset management is not a one-size-fits-all approach, it ebbs and flows with the interests of each community. Working in close consultation with different communities gave the City of Grand Forks the opportunity to learn more about effective asset management strategies used in other local governments and, in turn, provided a chance for those local governments to take ownership over the final product.

**7. Innovation and promising practices.** Describe the degree to which the project/program demonstrated creativity and innovation, and contributed to increased efficiency or effectiveness.

The SSAT's most significant achievement is its ability to take an exceedingly complex topic and make it easy for municipalities to assess where they are today and identify where they need to improve in the future. The SSAT is the only tool of its kind focused on the sustainability of service provision. It fills a key gap left by tools that assess overall community sustainability. With relatively little effort, the City of Grand Forks now has a full view of the sustainability of its services. Furthermore, this project met the approved budget and schedule and is now available on the Asset Management BC website as a free resource for all Canadian communities.

- Environmental

The SSAT tracks changes in greenhouse gas emissions associated with the provision of each service year-over-year. The tool also tracks performance on specific environmental issues such as effluent quality, runoff quality, and climate change.

- Economic

A necessary, though not sufficient, condition of service sustainability is financial sustainability. The SSAT helps municipalities assess:

- o the current financial state of each service; and,
- o whether the municipalities financial planning is adequate to support service provision in the future.

This tool will help eliminate many of the blind spots communities have around finances, including those related to asset renewal/replacement, which is a significant threat to future service provision

- Social

The user-friendly design of the SSAT and the visual representation of the final report promotes ease of comprehension and engagement for all stakeholders. The SSAT's dashboard has been specifically designed to improve communications with staff, managers, Council, and the public about service provision. This tool will not directly impact governance, but the local government can use it to improve governance by more effectively communicating and having information to support decision making.

**8. Public engagement and communications.** Describe the extent to which public engagement was foundational to the success of the project/program, including the use of communication tools such as social media.

Beyond reaching out to cohort communities, the City of Grand Forks worked in close consultation with various internal members of the government. It was understood by the developers of the tool that having input from those that work with the various assets adds to the success of the project. With municipal core services such as wastewater, water, drainage and flood protection, transportation, fire protection, parks and recreation, solid waste, and civic facilities, it was important to have experts with professional experiences in these departments take part in the development of the SSAT.

There are questions in each section of the tool regarding public communications and engagement. The following are an example of public engagement and communications questions asked in the “transportation” section:

- Score 0: Citizen engagement is not considered at all.
- Score 1: Citizen engagement (when required) is ad hoc for transportation.
- Score 2: Deliberate, well-planned citizen engagement occurs only for major transportation infrastructure projects that require citizen engagement- little consideration of citizen engagement outside of major infrastructure projects.
- Score 3: Citizens are engaged as per formal communications and engagement plans for all transportation matter that require citizen engagement.

Please refer to section 6 “Partnerships and Collaboration” to see more about our collaboration and communication with cohort communities.

**9. Transferability.** Describe the degree to which the process or outcomes of the project, or other learnings, could be conveyed to other UBCM members.

As stated above, other UBCM members have access to this tool for free; however, it does not need to be used in the same way Grand Forks has decided to. The tool is free to be modified in whatever way best suits that government’s needs. Because the tool is intuitive and straightforward, the SSAT framework can be easily transferred and modified for planning services, policing, or other divisions of local government. The City of Grand Forks hopes that other UBCM members can see how beneficial the tool is when measuring service sustainability. If a significant number of British Columbia municipalities were to use this tool on an annual basis, we would have a more sustainable and prepared province.

## **SECTION 5: Additional Information**

**10.** Please share any other information you think may help support your submission.

We have included some pictures to highlight some of the features of the tool.

Picture 1 - Shows an overview of the "Overall Sustainability" per item in form of a gauge

Picture 2 - Shows a current performance level and preparedness for the future as well as

the overall sustainability

Picture 3 - Shows a more detailed view into each item and how the overall score is calculated. Departmental staff complete the Service Delivery section for each item, the Finance Department completes the Finance section, and Council scores each item from a Governance level.

Picture 4 - Shows the data entry side of the tool for WasteWater Current Performance Model with 2017 real data and 2018 anticipated data, completed by the Manager of Operations and Deputy Manager of Operations & Sustainability

Picture 5 - Shows the data entry side of the tool for WasteWater Future Preparedness Model again with 2017 real data and 2018 anticipated date, completed by the Manager of Operations and Deputy Manager of Operations & Sustainability

Various items of the tool will be used for annual report and other reporting to Council and the public. The focus will most likely be on the detail charts and gauges based on Picture 1,2, and 3.

We also anticipate some level of integration into our website and social media feeds to further engage the public and provide a transparent view of the sustainability of our organization and the community as a whole.

## SECTION 6: Signature

Applications are required to be signed by an authorized representative of the applicant.

Name: Diane Heinrich

Title: Chief Administrative Officer /  
Corporate Officer

Signature:



Date: May 17, 2018

All applicants are required to submit:

- Signed application form. Applications should be submitted as Word or PDF files.
- Five representatives photos of the project. Photos should be submitted as JPEG files.

If you choose to submit your application by e-mail, hard copies do not need to follow.

Submit applications to Local Government Program Services, Union of BC Municipalities

E-mail: [awards@ubcm.ca](mailto:awards@ubcm.ca)

Mail: 525 Government Street, Victoria, BC, V8V 0A8