

Sustainable Community Indicators

How can we measure the sustainability of a community?

The sustainability of your community has three main aims: a healthy environment, a vibrant economy, and social well-being. Each of these can be measured to see how well your community is doing. Indicators are used to measure a community's sustainability.

What is an indicator of a sustainable community?

Indicators are meaningful measures of activities or conditions occurring in your community. For example, the "number of people who have graduated from high school" is an indicator that measures the education level of citizens and the versatility of the local workforce.

An indicator should be measurable, and applicable to the community. The information has to be available on a regular, predictable basis, and be easy to obtain. Also, collecting the information should be cost-effective. Indicators must be reliable; in other words collected by a reputable source, such as Statistics Canada.

Examples of sustainable community indicators

Following are some examples of indicators you can use to measure your community's level of sustainability:

Economic Indicators

- Average age of the population.
- Unemployment rate.
- Economic diversification.
- Sale of locally produced goods or locally harvested products.
- Capital costs to repair municipal/rural infrastructure.

Environmental Indicators

- Number of boil orders issued for the drinking water supply in your community.
- Number of people driving to work alone per day.
- Average number of smog free days.
- Percentage of land in the community in parks or public open space.

Social Indicators

- Population density per kilometer.
- Life expectancy.
- Annual population change.
- Number of people on social assistance.
- Average number of people using the food bank.

How to rate the indicators?

Some indicators may be more important to your community than to other communities. For example, you may find that number of smog-free days is an important indicator of environmental health in your community, so your community may put emphasis on reducing traffic during peak hours.

How to report the indicators to the public?

Once your community has determined its level of sustainability, you can provide this information to citizens by displaying the information in a chart, graph, or map format. A report card format is one way for your community to measure how it is meeting sustainability goals over time.

Need more info?

For more information, please contact the Provincial and Community Planning Section at the New Brunswick Department of Environment and Local Government, P.O. Box 6000, Fredericton, NB, E3B 5H1, or phone: (506) 453-2171. Department website: www.gnb.ca/environment.