



# BECOMING A GREEN UTILITY

A didactic tool for changing and evolving water utilities

## PARTICIPANT'S MANUAL

### ABSTRACT

Through a didactic participatory session, identify what being “green” is for your organization and develop a coherent plan of action and monitoring. Part of the Green Utility toolkit under BEWOP.

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## Green Utility Tool

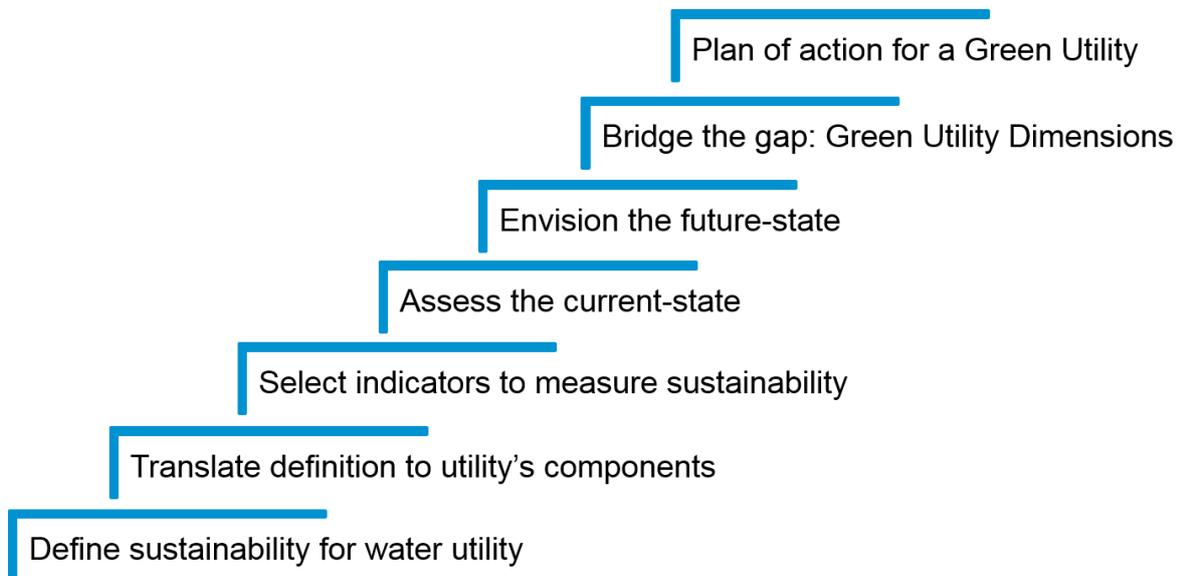
The Green Utility Tool is a self-assessment strategic planning and monitoring tool for water and wastewater utilities that are interested and willing to improve their practices in a sustainable and environmentally-conscious manner. As such, the terms ‘green’ and ‘greening’ refer to the processes and activities that can be implemented by utilities to support their development along the 3 pillars of sustainability – Social, Environmental, and Economical – while considering a long-term business horizon.

The tool contains 7 steps that lead water utilities’ staff (and other stakeholders) to define:

- (i) What being a Green Utility means for them,
- (ii) How they intend to measure its performance,
- (iii) Where they envision their utility in the future, and
- (iv) How they plan to get there.

By doing so, expectations, definitions and plans are made explicit and can be built upon.

The 7 steps, which together target each of the objectives described above, lead to the development of a Plan of Action for becoming a Green Utility as so:



If your water utility already has defined certain aspects, such as how sustainability is understood and operationalized, some steps may be skipped by your facilitator.

Depending on the number of participants, the Green Utility Tool can be carried out in groups or by individuals depending on their expertise, roles and interests. This aspect can be defined before the workshop by the facilitator or at the beginning with the whole group of participants.

Regardless of the form in which the tool is implemented, the key factor to success is the commitment from the participants and the water utility in being honest, realistic and committed to implementing the results from this exercise.

We hope this tool supports you and your utility’s journey towards becoming a more sustainable and environmentally-friendly utility today and for the future.

If you would like to share your experiences using this tool and have points of improvement, we welcome your ideas and can be contacted at [a.cabrera@un-ihe.org](mailto:a.cabrera@un-ihe.org).

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## 1. Defining Sustainability

This step consists on building a common understanding among participants on what it means to be sustainable, specifically for the case of your water utility. Your facilitator will provide you with an exercise, to support you and your group in creating a working definition of sustainability for your utility.

Your Top 3 Sustainability-Words		

Your Group's Top 5 Sustainability-Words		

Your Working Definition of Sustainability

## 2. Translating to Components

In this step, you will translate your working definition of sustainability into the different overarching activities and processes carried out by your utility. These have been grouped here as *components*:

### Sustainability-based Components:

Component	Description
Organizational	
Financial	

Operational	
Technological	
Environmental	
Social	
Political (Institutional)	
Sector-wise	
Other:	

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### Milestone #1

*Having completed steps 1 and 2, you and your utility now have a **common working definition for sustainability and jointly-developed definitions** of how this working definition translates into the utility's different overarching activities and processes.*

***Well done!***

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### 3. Selecting Relevant Indicators

During this step, the facilitator will provide you with a battery of indicators. You will select the ones that are deemed most suitable to assess and monitor the sustainability-based components developed in the previous step. In choosing your indicators, keep in mind that they will be more useful if they achieve the following 4 criteria (based on Foxon et al. 2002):

(1) *Comprehensive*: The group of indicators should cover economic, environmental, social (and potentially technical) aspects, in order to ensure that progress towards sustainability objectives is being accounted for on all fronts.

(2) *Applicable*: The indicators chosen should reflect the working definition of sustainability and its translation into sustainability-based components.

(3) *Traceable*: The utility has, or can have, the capacity to collect sufficient reliable numerical or qualitative data to enable comparison over time and locations.

(4) *Practical*: The indicators should be relatively simple to implement, based on the current capacity of the utility.

In the table below, write down the final set of indicators that has been decided upon, including how you will measure them. You do not need to select a total of 25 indicators if you and your group find fewer indicators to be sufficient; alternatively, you can go beyond 25 indicators if you find it necessary.

INDICATOR	Unit of measurement
1.	
2.	
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24.	
25.	

#### 4 & 5. Assessing the Current-State and Envisioning the Future-State

In this step, you will assess your utility’s current and future (desired) state based on the indicators chosen from the previous step. The first part of this step will focus on assessing the current state, for which you can assign a “C” under the different categories: Very Low, Low, Medium, High, and Very High.

Although these categories result in a qualitative assessment, to support their later translation (*post-workshop*) into tangible and relevant targets, the STANDARD / GUIDELINE column should be filled with the relevant measurement mechanism, e.g. WHO Guidelines, National Legal Standards or

your utility’s Internal Guidelines. As such, you will be expected to be able to explain why you (or your group) have selected the given score. For example, explain what the difference is between *low vs high* for a given indicator.

IND. #	STANDARD / GUIDELINE	Very Low	Low	Med.	High	Very High
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						
6						
7						
8						
9						
10						
11						
12						
13						
14						
15						
16						
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22						
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25						

Once all indicators have been agreed upon and assessed, you will choose and discuss where your utility should score in the future. That is, provide the scores for your (ideal) green utility. As a first step, you will decide how far you are looking into the future:

**Time-frame for your Green Utility:** \_\_\_\_\_ **years.**

Now, you will explicitly define the constraints faced by your utility in considering future scenarios. For example: A slow-changing legal framework or lack of dedicated funding to address a specific issue.

CONSIDERED CONSTRAINTS

Based on the definitions in steps 1 and 2, assign an “F” for each indicator for its future-state score. When assigning future-state scores, it is important to be challenging, yet realistic.

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### Milestone #2

*Having completed steps 3 to 5, you and your utility now have selected **the relevant indicators to measure your “greenness”**, coupled with a **planning and monitoring tool** to guide and assess your progress towards a greener path within a specific time-frame.*

***Well done!***

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## 6. Bridging the gap: Green Utility Dimensions

Having identified the differences between the current- and future-state of the utility, you will now identify, develop and select various approaches to bridge these gaps. This process will be based on the 3 dimensions of the Green Utility framework, namely Current Practices, Pathways, and Green Turn-over:

*Current Practices:* The identification and development of potential, or already existing, 'green' approaches in service provision based on current day-to-day processes and activities.

*Pathways:* The potential synergies that utilities can seek with external initiatives and stakeholders to develop and further 'greener' approaches, both within and outside the water sector.

*Green Turn-over:* Key decision making moments (e.g. large investments or legislative actions) where water utilities can significantly minimize their water, carbon, and/or ecological footprint in a cost-effective manner. Also considers enhancing resilience to climate change and disasters through incorporating eco-system services in operations.

IND. #	CURRENT PRACTICES	PATHWAYS	GREEN TURN-OVER
1			
2			
3			

4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			

10			
11			
12			
13			
14			
15			

16			
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## 7. Planning for a Green Utility

In this last step, you (and your group) will strategizing in selecting the most effective and feasible *activities / approaches* from the previous step. When selecting the *time-frame*, keep in mind that quick-wins will help you in fostering support towards greener approaches, while long-term approaches will likely involve more radical changes in your utility. *Estimated Investment Costs* should support you in assessing which activities can be done internally and which will require external funding. *Potential Sources of funding* are intended to aid you in identifying where usual and innovative partnerships will need to be developed. Finally, *Responsible(s)* will help you and the utility define the person or group within the utility that will undertake the development and implementation of the chosen activity / approach.

### Green Utility Plan of Action

Activity / Approach	Time-frame			Estimated Investment Cost	Potential Source of funding	Responsible(s)
	Quick-win	Mid-term	Long-term			


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### Milestone #3

*Having completed steps 6 and 7, you and your utility now have **identified the potential approaches** to becoming greener, as well as **set forth a plan of action** to achieve your envisioned Green Utility.*

***Congratulations!***

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