



# National Environmental Services Center

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## Self-Assessment Tool for Small Community Decision Makers

Providing drinking water, wastewater, and solid waste services are important functions for small community governments. This self-assessment guide, designed to be used by decision makers in small communities, is structured to identify areas where improvement can be made in the management of environmental services. It is intended to identify broad areas where training is needed. It covers general areas of system operations, finances and administration, and environmental personnel management. It focuses more on those areas where decision makers are most likely to be directly involved.

Questions will elicit simple *yes*, *no*, *don't know*, or *not applicable* responses. Answers that are colored indicate areas where training or additional information may be needed to help improve environmental services. The guide assumes that the community has municipal control of their wastewater, drinking water, and solid waste systems. This assumption will not be true for all communities, so not all questions will be applicable to all communities. However, even in cases where the community does not have municipal control of a particular service, for example when a service has been contracted to a private company, there may still be some questions that are applicable in that section.

Examples of types of officials who will find this guide useful include small town mayors, town managers, town clerks, county commissioners, and member of governing boards or committees for water, wastewater, and solid waste services.

Small community officials using this guide can contact the National Environmental Service Center (NESC) to provide training and assistance when areas where improvements could be made are identified. NESC can provide assistance in a number of ways including providing targeted training, providing educational materials, or referring local decision makers to other organizations who also provide assistance or training. To get assistance from NESC, call 800-624-8301 and ask to speak to a training specialist.

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- 1) Does the governing board of the water system have written policies that define how the board operates?  
Yes       **No**       **Don't Know**       Not Applicable
- 2) Can the governing water board member explain their duties and responsibilities?  
Yes       **No**       **Don't Know**       Not Applicable
- 3) Does the governing water board have written policies regarding the role of water system personnel that includes job description, benefits, and performance standards?  
Yes       **No**       **Don't Know**       Not Applicable
- 4) Can the governing board and water operators explain the basic requirements of the Safe Drinking Water Act and their state's drinking water law?  
Yes       **No**       **Don't Know**       Not Applicable
- 5) Do you know the source of your community's drinking water?  
Yes       **No**       **Don't Know**       Not Applicable
- 6) Does the water system have a written source water protection plan or wellhead protection plan in place?  
Yes       **No**       **Don't Know**       Not Applicable
- 7) Can water system personnel describe their day-to-day duties and responsibilities?  
Yes       **No**       **Don't Know**       Not Applicable
- 8) Has the community had any difficulties finding or retaining certified water operators during the last five years?  
**Yes**       No       **Don't Know**       Not Applicable
- 9) Does the drinking water system have a written plan in place to ensure that operators have adequate opportunities for training and maintaining certification?  
Yes       **No**       **Don't Know**       Not Applicable
- 10) Has the drinking water plant been served with any notices of violated in the last three years?  
**Yes**       No       **Don't Know**       Not Applicable



- 11) Are plans in place to correct any violations?  
Yes       **No**       **Don't Know**       Not Applicable
- 12) Does the water system have a procedure in place to make sure water operator(s) are aware of all upcoming compliance deadlines?  
Yes       **No**       **Don't Know**       Not Applicable
- 13) Do the operator(s) have regular meetings with the governing board to discuss system needs?  
Yes       **No**       **Don't Know**       Not Applicable
- 14) Do the water operator(s) have a copy of the engineer's as-built drawings of the treatment facility and distribution system?  
Yes       **No**       **Don't Know**       Not Applicable
- 15) Have consumers expressed any complaints with the taste or odor of the water over the last three years?  
**Yes**       No       **Don't Know**       Not Applicable
- 16) Has the water system been able to compile and produce Consumer Confidence Reports as required over the past three years?  
Yes       **No**       **Don't Know**       Not Applicable
- 17) Does the water system have a written Risk Management and Safety Policies document?  
Yes       **No**       **Don't Know**       Not Applicable
- 18) Does the water system have an Emergency Operating Plan?  
Yes       **No**       **Don't Know**       Not Applicable
- 19) Can you describe what measures have been taken to make the water system more secure?  
Yes       **No**       **Don't Know**       Not Applicable
- 20) Has the water board evaluated whether the water system has capacity to provide water for growth in the community that is expected to occur over the next 10 years?  
Yes       **No**       **Don't Know**       Not Applicable
- 21) Has the water system been certified to have adequate capacity and pressure to provide fire protection for the community?  
Yes       **No**       **Don't Know**       Not Applicable



22) Does the water system have written plans in place to remain financially viable over the next 10 years?

Yes       **No**       **Don't Know**       Not Applicable

23) Is the water system metered?

Yes       **No**       **Don't Know**       Not Applicable

24) Can you describe how user fee rates are set?

Yes       **No**       **Don't Know**       Not Applicable

25) Are water rates set at a level that is designed to ensure the long-term viability of the system?

Yes       **No**       **Don't Know**       Not Applicable

26) Are user fee revenues dedicated to the water system, as opposed to being used as a source of general revenue for the community?

Yes       **No**       **Don't Know**       Not Applicable

27) Does the water system have a written process for dealing with past due bills and delinquent water accounts?

Yes       **No**       **Don't Know**       Not Applicable

28) Does the water system have an inventory of the assets of the system and their condition?

Yes       **No**       **Don't Know**       Not Applicable

29) Does the inventory include information on the make, model, and locations of items?

Yes       **No**       **Don't Know**       Not Applicable

30) Are the condition of water system components assessed on a regularly scheduled basis?

Yes       **No**       **Don't Know**       Not Applicable

31) Does the water system have an annual budget?

Yes       **No**       **Don't Know**       Not Applicable

32) Are governing board members and water system personnel both involved in developing the budget?

Yes       **No**       **Don't Know**       Not Applicable



33) Does the annual budget include financial resources to cover the cost of repairing worn out equipment or for unforeseen emergencies?

Yes       **No**       **Don't Know**       Not Applicable

34) Does the water system have a Capital Improvements Plan that covers at least the next three years?

Yes       **No**       **Don't Know**       Not Applicable

35) Does the water system have annual written financial reports?

Yes       **No**       **Don't Know**       Not Applicable



- 1) Does the governing board of the wastewater system have written policies that define how the board operates?  
Yes       **No**       **Don't Know**       Not Applicable
- 2) Are the governing wastewater board members able to explain their duties and responsibilities?  
Yes       **No**       **Don't Know**       Not Applicable
- 3) Does the governing wastewater board have written policies regarding the role of wastewater system personnel that includes job description, benefits, and performance standards?  
Yes       **No**       **Don't Know**       Not Applicable
- 4) Can the governing board members and wastewater operators explain the basic requirements of the Clean Water Act and their state's water pollution law?  
Yes       **No**       **Don't Know**       Not Applicable
- 5) Do you know how and where your community's treated wastewater is disposed?  
Yes       **No**       **Don't Know**       Not Applicable
- 6) Are there any natural resources that the community may feel are potentially threatened, such as groundwater aquifers or high quality lake or streams, by wastewater discharges?  
**Yes**       No       **Don't Know**       Not Applicable
- 7) Can wastewater system personnel describe their day-to-day duties and responsibilities?  
Yes       **No**       **Don't Know**       Not Applicable
- 8) Has the community had difficulty finding and retaining certified wastewater operators within the last three years?  
**Yes**       No       **Don't Know**       Not Applicable
- 9) Does the wastewater board have a written plan in place to ensure that operators have adequate opportunities for training and maintaining certification?  
Yes       **No**       **Don't Know**       Not Applicable
- 10) Do the wastewater operator(s) have regularly scheduled meetings with the governing board to discuss system needs?  
Yes       **No**       **Don't Know**       Not Applicable





11) Has the wastewater plant been served any notices of violation in the last five years?

Yes  No  Don't Know  Not Applicable

12) Are plans in place to correct any violations?

Yes  No  Don't Know  Not Applicable

13) Is a process in place so that wastewater operator(s) are aware of all upcoming compliance deadlines?

Yes  No  Don't Know  Not Applicable

14) Are there any commercial or industrial facilities that discharge into the wastewater collection system that have the potential to negatively affect treatment processes at the plant?

Yes  No  Don't Know  Not Applicable

15) Does the wastewater system have a pretreatment program in place to prevent disruption of the treatment process?

Yes  No  Don't Know  Not Applicable

16) Are roof drains and/or storm drains connected to sanitary sewers?

Yes  No  Don't Know  Not Applicable

17) Is inflow and infiltration a problem for the wastewater system?

Yes  No  Don't Know  Not Applicable

18) Has the wastewater system had difficulty with disposal of sludge/biosolids from the treatment plant?

Yes  No  Don't Know  Not Applicable

19) Do the wastewater operator(s) have a copy of the engineer's as-built drawings of the treatment facility including the collection system

Yes  No  Don't Know  Not Applicable

20) Have customers made complaints in the last year about the quality of service, such as lines backing up?

Yes  No  Don't Know  Not Applicable

21) Does the wastewater system have a written Risk Management and Safety Policies document?

Yes  No  Don't Know  Not Applicable







## Solid Waste Management

- 1) Does the solid waste board have written policies that define how the board operates?  
Yes       **No**       **Don't Know**       Not Applicable
- 2) Can the solid waste board members explain their duties and responsibilities?  
Yes       **No**       **Don't Know**       Not Applicable
- 3) Does the solid waste board have written policies regarding the role of solid waste system personnel that includes job description, benefits, and performance standards?  
Yes       **No**       **Don't Know**       Not Applicable
- 4) Can the solid waste board and solid waste personnel explain the basic requirements of the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act and their state's solid waste law as they pertain to municipal solid waste?  
Yes       **No**       **Don't Know**       Not Applicable
- 5) Does your community or solid waste board have a written Solid Waste Management Plan?  
Yes       **No**       **Don't Know**       Not Applicable
- 6) Does your community have a program to involve citizens in helping to provide input on solid waste management policies?  
Yes       **No**       **Don't Know**       Not Applicable
- 7) Does the solid waste board have regularly scheduled meetings that are open to the public?  
Yes       **No**       **Don't Know**       Not Applicable
- 8) Does the solid waste board have a written policy to ensure that workers have opportunities for training?  
Yes       **No**       **Don't Know**       Not Applicable
- 9) Are there policies in place regarding protection of health and prevention of injuries for solid waste personnel?  
Yes       **No**       **Don't Know**       Not Applicable
- 10) Do you know how far the landfill is that receives solid waste from your community?  
Yes       **No**       **Don't Know**       Not Applicable
- 11) Do you know the estimated remaining life span of the landfill your community operates or uses?  
Yes       **No**       **Don't Know**       Not Applicable







