



## Community and Economic Development in North Carolina and Beyond Blog: A New Tool for Assessing the Triple Bottom Line in Economic Development

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The so called triple bottom line (TBL) in economic development calls for promoting growth in ways that are environmentally sustainable and that yield positive social returns. (See Portland State University's Initiative on Triple Bottom Line Development.) The TBL framework takes into account the *economic*, *environmental*, and *social* aspects of growth and development efforts and recognizes the connections among them. Recruiting a manufacturing plant to town will boost the local economy, but how will it affect the natural environment? To what extent will the new plant be good for the community as a whole in terms of its effects on the quality of life, local culture, civic infrastructure, and the like? This is a much more holistic and comprehensive way of thinking about economic development and is quite challenging to measure as a result.

The U.S. Economic Development Administration has funded the design of a new web-based tool for examining TBL impacts at the local level. The tool is expected to help local decision makers optimize their economic development investments by explicitly examining TBL effects and enabling users to rank and prioritize projects and explain how they advance community goals. A beta version of the Triple Bottom Line Tool is now available. The tool's creators are seeking user feedback regarding possible improvements. The TBL Tool includes measures related to the three broad TBL goals of economic vitality, natural resource stewardship, and community well-being. Detailed information about the tool's background and data elements can be found in the user's guide.