User manual

Self-Assessment Tool for Conservation Trust Funds

March 2023

Developed by:

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The Self-Assessment Tool for Conservation Trust Funds

The Self-Assessment Tool (the "Tool") is a starting point for Conservation Trust Funds (CTFs) to **evaluate their compliance with the 2020 Practice Standards** for CTFs of the Conservation Finance Alliance (Bath et al., 2020).

The Tool aims to **simplify the assessment process for CTFs** and produce accessible results with practical considerations for improvement after performing the assessment.

This manual provides simple **guidance on the usage of the Tool**.

When deciding to use the Tool, a CTF should also carefully **consider other aspects such as the goal, audience, methodology and resources available** for the assessment, among others.

Bath, P., Luján-Gallegos, V. and Guzmán-Valladares A. (2020), Practice Standards for Conservation Trust Funds Funds - 2020 edition, Conservation Finance Alliance, New York. https://www.conservationfinancealliance.org/s/Practice-Standards-For-Conservation-Trust-Funds-2020-EN-links-211208.pdf

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Who should participate in the self-assessment?

CTFs recommend that during a self-assessment, various team and/or Board members **jointly review the compliance with different standards** and reach an **agreement on a shared response**.

Some CTFs use a highly participatory approach by **engaging full staff teams** (by expertise) to do the assessment, in part to ensure that they all know about- and utilize the Practice Standards.

Another alternative is that **different knowledgeable individuals** (e.g. Board, staff and even external parties) can be asked to complete the assessment for the full set of standards or by core area. Then a coordinator, or coordinating team, consolidates the results of the assessments, and clarifies possible doubts.

The methodology chosen by each CTF will depend on their **stage of evolution, capacity and experience**. A good practice is to **choose one methodology** and use it consistently over the years to have comparable data.

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The Spreadsheets

To ensure **wide accessibility**, the Tool is built in Microsoft Excel using simple functionalities[1].

You can complete the full assessment by going through the following four **spreadsheets**.

1. Introduction	2. Assessment	3. Results Overview	4. Practical considerations

This manual provides general guidance on the steps to follow when using the Tool, but more specific instructions can be found within each spreadsheet.

[1] The Tool was built on Microsoft Excel version v2302 for Windows OS. It should be noted that using older or different software versions can result in visual variations and, potentially, its functionality. To minimize the risk of the latter, the correct functioning of the Tool was tested by multiple CTF representatives in their respective Operating Systems and available software.

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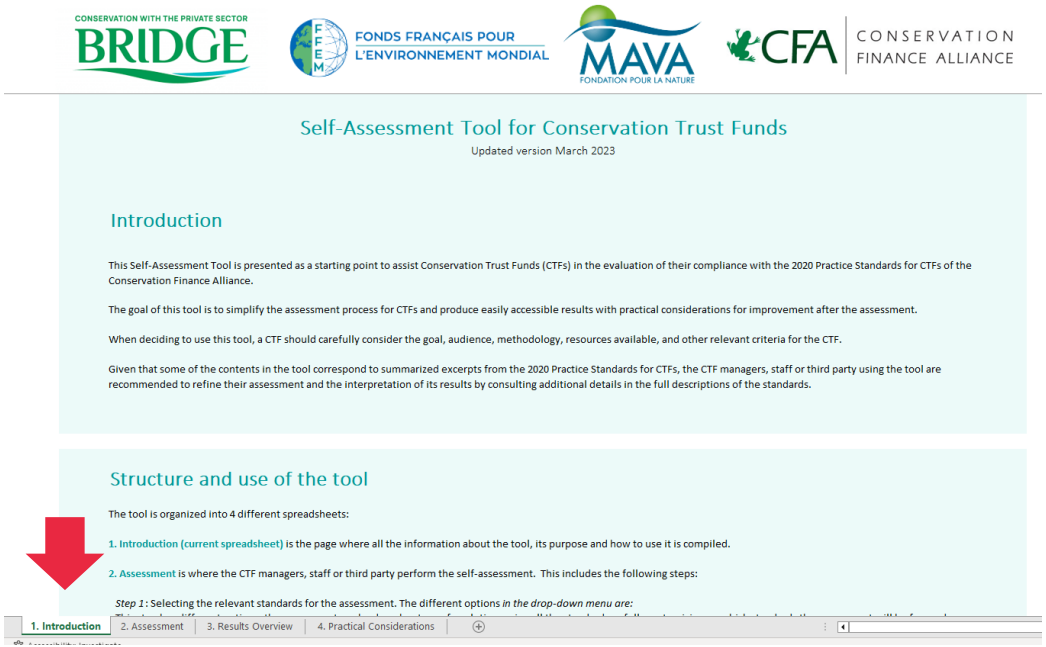
Spreadsheet 1. Introduction

The **Introduction Spreadsheet** guides you through the structure and use of the Tool, including brief explanations of each spreadsheet.



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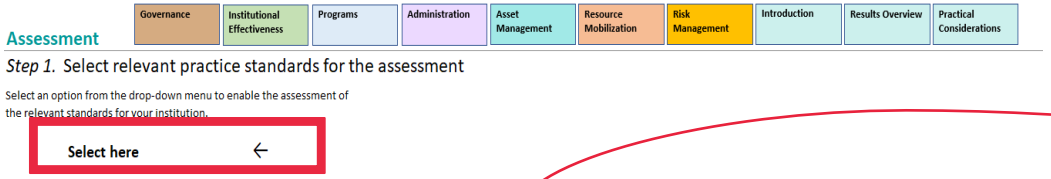
Spreadsheet 2. Assessment

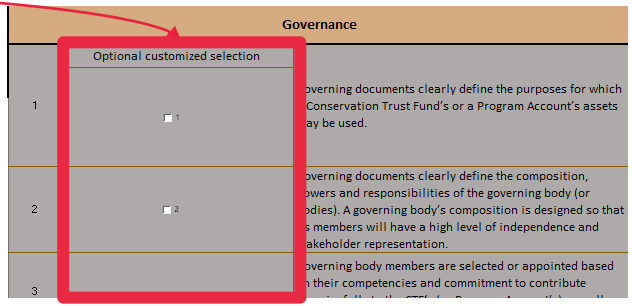
Step 1. Selecting relevant Practice Standards for the assessment

The first step in this spreadsheet is to **select the relevant Practice Standards** for the assessment. You can do this by clicking on the *Select here* cell, which will display a drop down menu to select either:

- A given set of standards that are relevant for a specific stage of evolution (i.e., **Pre-registration**, **Start up**, **Operational**, **Institutional** or **Termination**) based on Bath et al. (2020);
- **All Standards**; or
- A **Customized Selection** of standards.



When choosing the *Customized selection* option, you can choose the standards that you would like to assess by checking the relevant boxes in the column *Optional customized selection*.



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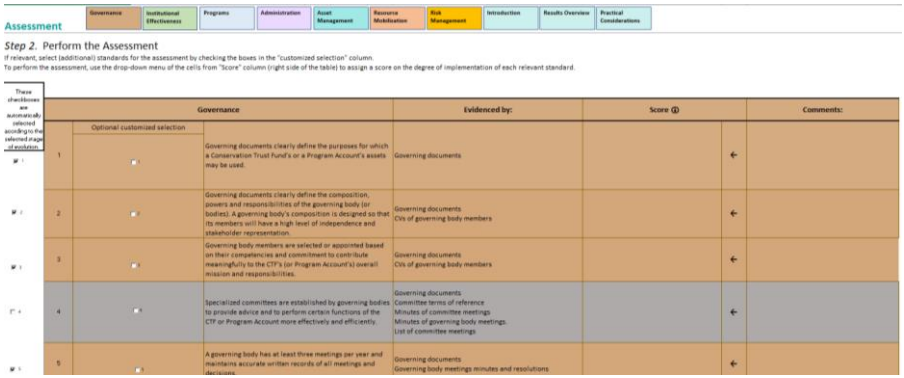
Spreadsheet 2. Assessment

Step 2. Performing the assessment



Once you have selected an option from the drop-down menu, the **applicable standards will be displayed** in colour and can be evaluated in the **score cells**.

Standards that remain grey do not apply for that selected option. However, you can **manually add them** by checking the *Optional customized selection* checkbox.

Governance		Evidenced by:	Score ⓘ	Comments:
ıal customized selection				
☐ 1	Governing documents clearly define the purposes for which a Conservation Trust Fund's or a Program Account's assets may be used.	Governing documents	3: Fully Implemented 2: Partially Implemented (Satisfactory) 1: Partially Implemented (Unsatisfactory) 0: Not Implemented	
☐ 2	Governing documents clearly define the composition, powers and responsibilities of the governing body (or bodies). A governing body's composition is designed so that its members will have a high level of independence and stakeholder representation.	Governing documents CVs of governing body members		
	Governing body members are selected or appointed based			

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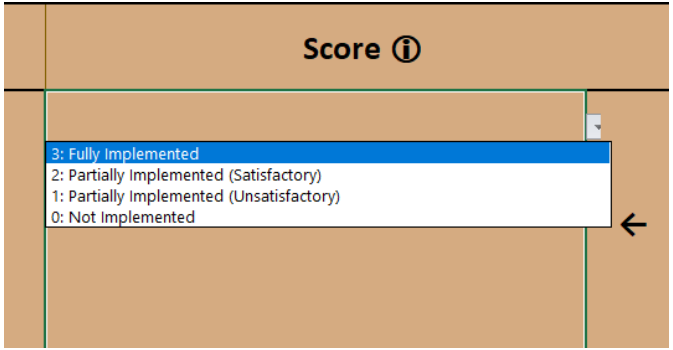
Spreadsheet 2. Assessment

Step 2. Performing the assessment



When performing the assessment, clicking on the *Score* cell will **activate another drop-down** menu with **4 scoring options** to indicate the level of compliance of the CTF with each Practice Standard.

Descriptions of each score are provided in the **Introduction Spreadsheet** as well as a pop-up comment in the *Score* cell itself.

Note: The distinction between *Satisfactory* and *Unsatisfactory* progress has been introduced as a **subjective element** that allows a CTF to qualify its progress towards compliance based on **internally defined targets and expectations** when a standard has been *Partially Implemented* . Therefore, it is important that the CTF managers, staff or third parties using the tool **make a conscious decision on how to assign** this subjective element of the assessment.

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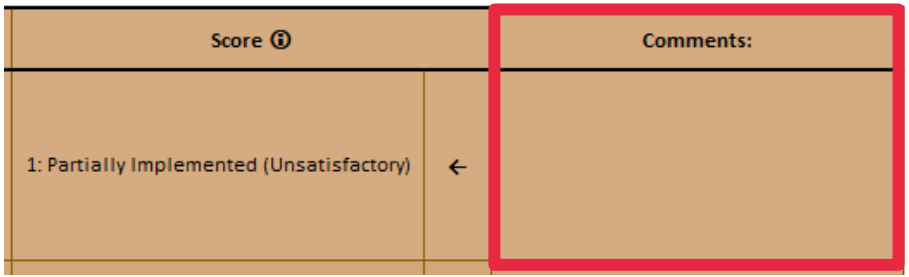
Spreadsheet 2. Assessment

Step 2. Performing the assessment

Since multiple and/or recurring assessments could be conducted by different teams or individuals over time, it is important to **keep track of the rationale** that they have used when assessing each standard by providing relevant details about this in the column for *Comments*.

The column for *Comments* can also be used to record the titles and locations of the documents that were used as **evidence** and key supplementary information, such as the status of such documentation (e.g. draft, final version, expired, etc.)

By adding the relevant details to this column, a CTF can promote **continuity**, **comparability** and **coherence** among multiple assessments. This can be particularly important when a standard is assessed as *Partially implemented*, given the subjective considerations that the use of this category can entail.



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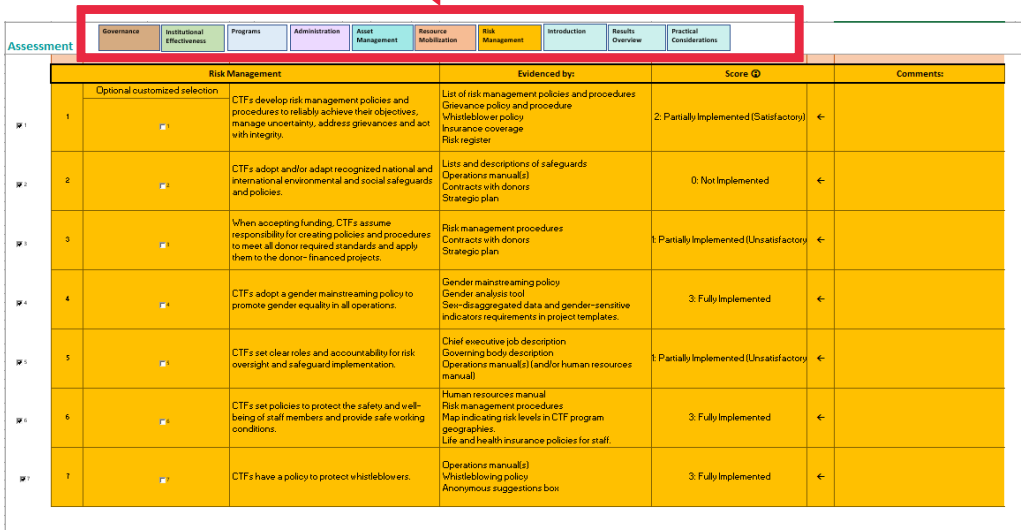
Spreadsheet 2. Assessment

Step 2. Performing the assessment

While conducting the assessment, you can use the **buttons** at the top of the page to move across the **different core areas of the Practice Standard** and **Spreadsheets of the Tool**.

Once you **reached the end of the Assessment Spreadsheet** and have completed all the core area assessments that apply to your selection, you are ready to go to the **Results Overview Spreadsheet**.



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Spreadsheet 3. Results Overview

The **Results Overview Spreadsheet** has 2 parts: **The first part** is this table where you can graphically **see the results of the assessment**, you can use the colour key at the top right of the page, to match each colour with its score. If there is a white cell, this means you have not assigned a score for it.

Results Overview

Top of the page	Introduction	Assessment	Practical Considerations

The table below presents an overview of the applicable standards and their score, on the left side there are two different graphics with information about the results as a visual aid for the user. This table will display the scores assigned by standard with colour.

Color key: Overview of the degree of implementation	
Not Applicable	
Not Implemented	
Partially Implemented (Unsatisfactory)	
Partially Implemented (Satisfactory)	
Fully Implemented	

Overview of degree of implementation of Practice Standards by core area

Governance										
1.1	1.2	1.3	1.4	1.5	1.6	1.7	1.8	1.9	1.10	
Institutional Effectiveness										
2.1	2.2	2.3	2.4	2.5	2.6	2.7	2.8			
Programs										
3.1	3.2	3.3	3.4	3.5	3.6	3.7	3.8	3.9	3.10	
Administration										
4.1	4.2	4.3	4.4	4.5	4.6	4.7	4.8	4.9	4.10	
Asset Management										
5.1	5.2	5.3	5.4	5.5	5.6	5.7	5.8	5.9	5.10	
Resource Mobilisation										
6.1	6.2	6.3	6.4	6.5	6.6	6.7	6.8	6.9		
Risk Management										
7.1	7.2	7.3	7.4	7.5	7.6	7.7				

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Spreadsheet 3. Results Overview

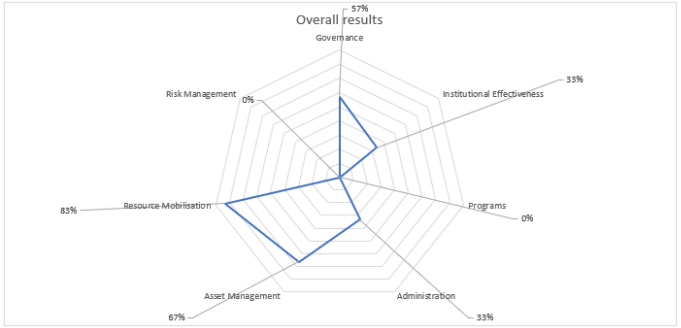
Results Overview | Top of the page | Introduction | Assessment | Practical Considerations

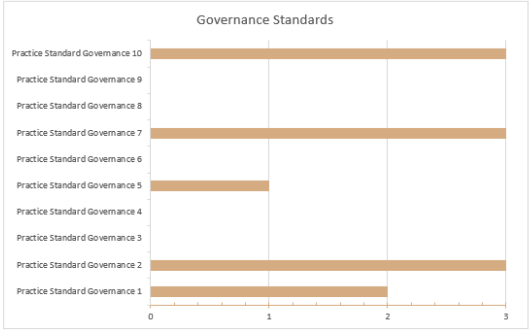
Color key: Overview of the degree of implementation

Overview of scores obtained from the self-assessment

Core Area	# Standards	# of applicable standards for assessment	# Fully implemented	# Partially implemented (satisfactory)	# Partially implemented (unsatisfactory)	# Not implemented	Sum of score by core area	% Score with respect to applicable standards
Governance	10	7	3	1	1	1	12	57%
Institutional Effectiveness	8	2	0	0	2	0	2	33%
Programs	12	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Administration	12	1	0	0	1	0	1	33%
Asset Management	10	1	0	1	0	0	2	67%
Resource Mobilisation	9	2	1	1	0	0	5	83%
Risk Management	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Total	68	13	4	3	4	1	22	56%

Visual overview





The second part of the **Results Overview Spreadsheet** contains a table **with information about the applicable standards** and how many are fully implemented, partially implemented or not implemented. It also contains an **overall score** with for the applicable standards.

The **spider chart** shows the results for each standard in a visualized way.

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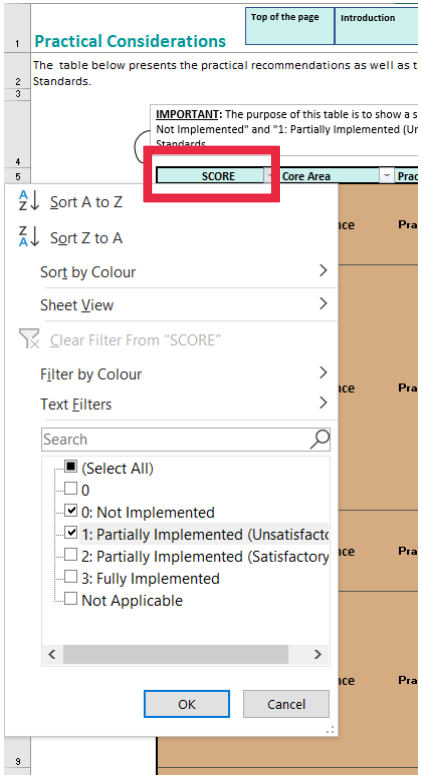
CONSERVATION WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR BRIDGE

Spreadsheet 4. Practical considerations



Finally, in the **Practical Considerations Spreadsheet**, it is important to **refresh the filter** in the score column every time you make changes in the assessment for it to show the relevant practical considerations for the standards with the lowest scores.

This spreadsheet includes *Practical Considerations* that are **extracted from the Practice Standards 2020** edition. The CTF managers, staff or third party using the Tool are also recommended to refine their assessment and the interpretation of its results by **consulting additional details in the full descriptions of the standards**.

The spreadsheet also includes a column with *External Resources* that contain **some links to the CFA Environmental Funds Toolkit.** It is important to note that this website is a living page and that relevant resources might not be available at all times.

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The Following Conservation Trust Funds tested the draft version of the Tool and provided valuable feedback to improve it: MAR Fund, Caribbean Biodiversity Fund, Mulanje Mountain Conservation Trust Fund, Micronesia Conservation Trust Fund, Madagascar Protected Areas and Biodiversity Fund, and Fondo Mexicano para la Conservación de la Naturaleza.

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