



# Environmental Assessment Process

## What is an environmental assessment?

Environmental assessments (EA) look at the ability of a project applicant to minimize or prevent environmental impacts before any work gets underway.

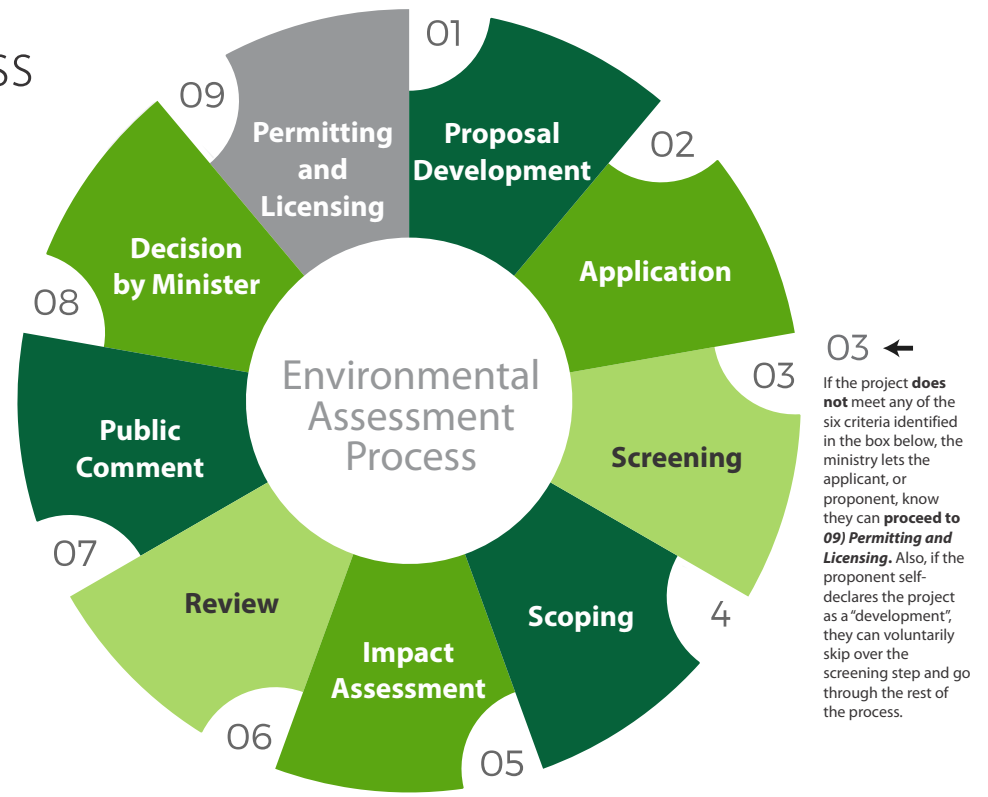
The process starts when an applicant seeks government approval to build a new development that could impact air quality, fish and fish habitat, wildlife, people or Indigenous use of lands, to name a few.

### Typical projects include:

- energy
- industrial
- mines
- water management (i.e. water diversions and dams)
- wind power



## Process



For more detailed information about the Environmental Assessment process, please visit [saskatchewan.ca/environmentalassessment](http://saskatchewan.ca/environmentalassessment)

## Why are they important?

EAs consider potential environmental impacts and mitigation measures early in the project planning to ensure developments are safe and sustainable. Benefits include:

- **identifying and mitigating risks** to protect human health and safety;
- supporting a **practical, comprehensive and integrated approach to decision-making**;
- **increasing** accountability and **transparency** by providing opportunity for public input; and
- contributing to the protection of the province's **biodiversity**.

## When is an assessment required?

**When a project, operation or activity is likely to have a significant impact on the environment, an EA is required.**



### EAs may be triggered if a project could:

1. have an effect on any unique, rare or endangered feature of the environment;
2. substantially use any provincial resource in a way that would prevent using that resource for any other purpose;
3. cause the emission of pollutants or create byproducts, residual or waste products that require unregulated handling and disposal;
4. cause widespread public concern because of potential environmental changes;
5. involve a new technology related to the use of resources that may cause significant environmental change; or
6. necessitate a further development, such as an expansion or amendment to the original proposal, which is likely to have a significant impact on the environment.

## How does a project get approved?

The Minister of Environment decides whether a project may proceed to the permitting and licensing phase, and not every project gets approved.

Through the EA process, the Ministry of Environment's Environmental Assessment and Stewardship Branch works with the proponent to ensure that all pertinent environmental (ecological, socioeconomic and cultural) issues are addressed adequately and appropriately. If all the relevant environmental issues cannot be sufficiently mitigated by approval conditions, the approval will be denied.

### What does the Minister of Environment consider in making a decision?

- The Minister considers the technical review from the Saskatchewan Environmental Assessment Review Panel, along with comments from the public, when making a decision on the environmental acceptability of a project. The Minister may impose conditions to mitigate key environmental issues when granting approval.

## Applicant's responsibilities

- develop a proposal and application;
- prepare a Terms of Reference and Environmental Impact Statement where required;
- conduct a program of public involvement;
- engage with affected First Nations and Métis communities; and
- obtain a variety of other provincial, federal and local government permits and authorizations, in addition to an approval under *The Environmental Assessment Act* (Saskatchewan).



## Have your voice heard

During the EA process, Saskatchewan people are encouraged to participate by sharing their views on the proposed development and its potential for causing adverse environmental effects.

### Who takes part?

Landowners, community associations, municipal governments, First Nations, Métis communities, regional planning agencies, and special interest groups concerned with economic development, social change, environmental protection or resource management matters

**Scientific evidence + public comment = foundation of environmental assessment decisions.**

Submit comments and questions during the public comment period of a project to [environmental.assessment@gov.sk.ca](mailto:environmental.assessment@gov.sk.ca).



## Government's responsibilities

- screen the proposed project before the Minister of Environment determines if the applicant needs to conduct an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA);
- provide notice to the public that an EIA is underway and ensure there are opportunities for public participation;
- conduct a technical review of the project at all phases of the process;
- develop technical review comments to assist in the public review;
- fulfill the duty to consult with First Nations and Métis communities; and
- prepare a recommendation for the Minister to approve the project with terms or conditions, or to refuse the project.

## A project has been approved

**Projects are regulated by numerous provincial agencies through the construction, operation and decommissioning phases, to ensure the proponent has suitable safeguards in place to protect the environment.**

### Now what happens?

EA approval is not an approval to proceed with construction activities – it lets the proponent know that they may now proceed to get other permits and approvals that may be required by other provincial, municipal or federal legislation. Some of these requirements may include:

- permits to construct and operate the facility;
- a water rights licence;
- an aquatic habitat protection permit; and
- municipal development permits.

### What if the plan changes?

Further approval must be obtained should the proponent wish to make changes to a previously approved project.

The Saskatchewan Environmental Assessment process focuses on the well-being of the province's air, land, water and biodiversity to protect communities and support responsible economic development.

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