



Tool Enhancement Assessment Framework



VERSION 1.0

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1. Introduction

The National Australian Built Environment Rating System (NABERS) is a performance-based rating system for buildings. A NABERS rating assesses the actual environmental impact of operating a building.

NABERS responds to emerging technical issues and enhances the existing NABERS tools periodically to improve functionality, meet industry needs, align with current industry standards and improve environmental outcomes.

This document outlines the criteria NABERS uses to assess and prioritise tool reviews and enhancements. Upcoming tool development projects will be published in the NABERS Tool Development and Review Plan, available on the NABERS website at www.nabers.gov.au.

2. Purpose of the Assessment Framework

The purpose of this framework is to establish evidence-based assessment criteria for assessing proposed enhancements to NABERS tools and determining the best way to improve a NABERS tool.

Conducting a Tool Enhancement Assessment on a proposed change will result in one of the following outcomes:

- **Minor Ruling:** A change to the Rules (NABERS Rules for Collecting and Using Data) for performing a rating that has an insignificant impact on processes or star ratings.
- **Major Ruling:** A change to the Rules that has a moderate to major impact on processes and star ratings.
- **Tool Review:** There are two types of tool reviews - a review of the benchmarks in a tool that may lead to a change in those benchmarks and the resultant star ratings; and a review of the overall effectiveness of a tool which may lead to significant changes to the tool.
- **No change:** The assessment determines that no change is necessary beyond communications to stakeholders to improve their understanding of the Rules.

3. Roles in the Assessment Framework

3.1 National Administrator

The NSW Office of Environment and Heritage is the National Administrator of the NABERS program and is responsible for assessing proposed tool enhancements.

The National Administrator is responsible for developing and implementing minor rulings that do not significantly alter rating results, processes, or data collection rules. Moderate to major changes to the Rules and Tool Reviews must be approved by the NABERS National Steering Committee.

3.2 Auditors, Assessors and Customers

NABERS auditors may be consulted by the National Administrator on technical aspects of proposals to enhance existing tools. Assessors and customers may also be consulted in line with the Stakeholder Consultation Policy, which is available on the NABERS website.

3.3 Stakeholder Advisory Committee

The NABERS Stakeholder Advisory Committee, made up of key industry representatives, will be informed and consulted on proposals to enhance the existing tools during committee meetings or via out of session consultation papers in line with the Stakeholder Consultation Policy.

3.4 Technical Working Group

A Technical Working Group may be consulted on technical aspects of proposals to enhance existing tools in line with the Stakeholder Consultation Policy.

3.5 National Steering Committee

The NABERS National Steering Committee has responsibility for overseeing the strategic direction of the NABERS program and approving proposals to enhance existing tools where they require:

- A tool review;
- An alteration to the benchmark or star rating of the tool;
- A Ruling that may significantly affect ratings.

4. Assessment Criteria - Tool Enhancements

4.1 Triggers

A tool enhancement is typically triggered by:

- Industry feedback provided through:
 - ruling Requests;
 - new tool requests;
 - technical enquiries from NABERS assessors;
 - industry reviews;
 - the NABERS Stakeholder Advisory Committee; and
 - other forums.
- National Administrator proactive improvements in response to:

- new methods, technologies and building occupancy practices;
- persistent issues from Level 2 Audits;
- low market uptake of a tool; and
- development of new NABERS tools that have implications for existing tools.

4.2 Assessment Criteria

Assessment of a proposed tool enhancement will be conducted by the National Administrator by reviewing the information and evidence against the following criteria:

1. **Environmental benefit**
2. **Technical accuracy**
3. **Market acceptance**
4. **Equity**
5. **Program purpose**

The first four criteria are equally weighted, and the score for the fifth criterion is a percentage applied to the total score of the other four. The final score assists the National Administrator to prioritise enhancements against other proposals and planned projects in the NABERS work plan.

4.2.1 Data sources

Data sources for conducting assessments using this framework will include data provided by proponents; outcomes from new or previous stakeholder consultations; survey data; information provided by building owners and other key stakeholders; available business, energy and buildings data; results of desktop data analyses; and other reliable reference sources.

4.2.2 Environmental Benefit

Environmental benefit is a measure of how the enhancement will improve the tool's use in reducing environmental impact. This criterion assesses the potential for environmental improvement across the relevant sector with the tool enhancement (for example tonnes CO₂-e reduction or water kL saving). This may be in the form of improved efficiency in energy and water use, waste minimisation or improvement to the occupant's environment.

4.2.3 Technical Accuracy

Technical accuracy is a measure of how the enhancement will improve the rating's representation of the actual operation of a building. This criterion assesses how the enhancement:

- impacts on the accuracy of the benchmark and star rating;
- overcomes measurement issues by allowing new technologies/ techniques;
- improves the availability of reliable data;
- reduces difficulties in the rating process;
- is simple and feasible;

- may be implemented and with what resources.

4.2.4 Market Acceptance

Market acceptance measures industry demand for the enhancement and the willingness of the market to accept the enhancement. This criterion assesses the:

- level of support from key NABERS stakeholders and customers;
- potential benefit to users of the tool;
- number of ratings and building types affected;
- impact that the enhancement may have on the value or perceived value of NABERS ratings to industry.

4.2.5 Equity

Equity is a measure of fairness that allows the reliable comparison between buildings within the sector. This criterion assesses whether the enhancement:

- advantages or disadvantages any particular NABERS customers;
- improves fairness when rating buildings;
- will impact star ratings equally across all regions and climate zones, as it is a national tool;
- improves or diminishes the transparency of the rating results.

4.2.6 Alignment with Program Purpose

Program purpose is a measure of how well the proposed change follows the NABERS philosophy of benchmarking a building's environmental performance. This criterion allows the National Administrator to assess whether the new tool fairly compares buildings within the same sector and creates a meaningful market driver for investing in improvements to the environmental performance of buildings.

4.3 Stakeholder consultation

The National Administrator may consult with NABERS auditors, assessors, customers and other stakeholders as required in line with the Stakeholder Consultation Policy during the assessment stage of a proposal.

5. Approval Process

A proposed enhancement must be assessed as having merit for it to proceed to development, consultation and approval. An enhancement will follow one of two approvals paths: for Minor Rulings or for Major Rulings and Reviews.

5.1 Minor Rulings

Enhancements that change or clarify the interpretation of a rule or the way data is collected that have an insignificant impact on rating processes or star ratings are considered minor enhancements.

Minor enhancements that are assessed as having merit are developed internally by the NABERS National Administrator, with advice from NABERS auditors as required. Proponents of minor enhancements that were assessed as not having merit will be informed of this outcome and the reasons for this decision.

More detail on this process is available in the 'Guideline for Ruling Requests and Technical Advice', which is available on the NABERS website.

5.2 Major Rulings and Tool Reviews

Enhancements that alter a benchmark or star rating, significantly impact on rating results, NABERS customers or industry or affect any tools under the Commercial Building Disclosure program are considered to be moderate to major enhancements.

Major Rulings and Tool Reviews that are assessed as having merit will be consulted on in line with the Stakeholder Consultation Policy and presented to the National Steering Committee for approval along with a Tool Enhancement Plan. Approved Rulings and Reviews will be scheduled and publicly listed in the Tool Development and Review Plan available on the NABERS website.

The outcome of all assessments of moderate to major enhancements will be reported to the National Steering Committee and proponents of enhancements that were assessed as not having merit will be informed of this outcome and the reasons for this decision.

6. Process overview - Tool Enhancements

| | Step | Reference |
|---|---|--|
| 1 | <p>The National Administrator begins the Tool Enhancement Assessment in response to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Industry feedback• Technical enquiries• Ruling requests• Technology changes• Market performance of the tool• Level 2 audit results• New tool development | Section 4: Assessment Criteria – Tool Enhancements |

| Step | Reference |
|--|---|
| <p>2 The National Administrator analyses the information and evidence and scores each of the assessment criteria according to the strength of the supporting evidence. A total score for the enhancement is calculated.</p> <p>New or previous stakeholder consultation, surveys of auditors, assessors or customers, results of desktop data analyses and other reliable reference sources may be referenced.</p> | <p>Section 4: Assessment Criteria – Tool Enhancements</p> |
| <p>3 The National Administrator classifies enhancements as Minor Rulings or Major Rulings and Reviews.</p> <p>Minor Rulings are undertaken in line with the <i>Guideline for Ruling Requests and Technical Advice</i>.</p> <p>The National Administrator reviews Major Rulings and Reviews. Stakeholders are consulted as necessary and a recommendation is submitted to the National Steering Committee.</p> | <p>Guideline for Ruling Requests and Technical Advice (at www.nabers.gov.au)</p> <p>Section 5: Approval Process</p> <p>Stakeholder Consultation Policy (under development)</p> |
| <p>4 The National Steering Committee decides on tool enhancements and prioritises the approved enhancements within the NABERS work plan. Approved enhancements are added to the Tool Development and Review Plan.</p> | <p>Tool Development and Review Plan (under development)</p> |