



Sport and Recreation Infrastructure Report

September 2025



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Land Acknowledgement

We respectfully acknowledge that the land known today as the Yukon is the traditional and ancestral territory of the Yukon First Nations, who have lived, stewarded and thrived on this land for time immemorial.

There are 14 Yukon First Nations and 11 are self-governing, making the Yukon home to almost half of all self-governing agreements for First Nations in Canada. Each Nation has a distinct culture, language and relationship to the land that continues to this day.

We honour the traditional territories of all Yukon First Nations, including:

- Carcross/Tagish First Nation
- Champagne and Aishihik First Nations
- First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun
- Kluane First Nation
- Kwanlin Dün First Nation
- Liard First Nation
- Little Salmon/Carmacks First Nation
- Ross River Dena Council
- Selkirk First Nation
- Ta'an Kwäch'än Council
- Teslin Tlingit Council
- Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in
- Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation
- White River First Nation

We recognize their deep and enduring connection to the land, water and all living things, and we commit to learning from and working alongside First Nations in the spirit of reconciliation, respect and shared responsibility.



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Executive Summary

This report presents a comprehensive benchmarking analysis of sport and recreation infrastructure across Yukon communities, comparing them with national (Statistics Canada) and U.S.-based (National Parks and Recreation Association) standards, as well as with communities with similar populations and other characteristics. It also identifies key trends shaping the future of recreation in the North and includes a decision-making framework to guide infrastructure investment.

When compared to local, national and international standards, the Yukon has a relatively high per-capita provision of sport and recreation amenities across nearly all categories. A few specific gaps were revealed, most notably in outdoor pickleball and tennis courts, and certain outdoor amenities in smaller communities. However, the northern context, including long winters, isolation, travel distances, the ongoing work of Truth and Reconciliation and trends shaping northern recreation, requires additional nuance. Yukon communities are unique and require a case-by-case understanding of their circumstances. Benchmarks are useful for broad comparison but should not supersede local needs and priorities. Local context is paramount.

Emerging recreation trends, such as the need for inclusive and culturally relevant infrastructure, responses to climate change and support for informal recreation, underscore the importance of thoughtful planning. This includes prioritizing maintenance over expansion, embedding reconciliation principles and ensuring facilities are multi-use, sustainable and community driven.

A decision-making framework and assessment tool is provided to evaluate and prioritize investments, focusing on operational viability, community need, strategic alignment and sustainability.



Background

Following the March 2023 Government of Yukon mandate to "work with all levels of government, including First Nations and municipalities, to understand future sport infrastructure needs and explore partnership opportunities," the Sport and Recreation Branch launched a territory-wide assessment project with the following objectives:

- Understand the current state of sport and recreation infrastructure in the Yukon;
- Identify infrastructure gaps across communities; and
- Recommend next steps for planning and investment.

Phase 1 focused on creating an inventory database of all sport and recreation infrastructure owned or operated by the Government of Yukon, municipalities, First Nations, federal departments (e.g., Parks Canada) and non-profit organizations. Private amenities were not included.

More than 800 individual sport and recreation infrastructure amenities have been inventoried. These were categorized into six broad groupings with 68 different amenity types (Table 1).

Table 1. List of infrastructure types.

Courts (outdoor)	Outdoor spaces	Water
Basketball	Ball diamond	Beach
Pickleball	Bike park	Boat launch
Tennis	Broomball	Dock
Volleyball	Campground	Pool
	Dock	Pool apartment
	Dog space	Splash park
Indoor	Field	Swimming - natural
Auxiliary building	Firepit	Water slide
Bowling	Fitness station	
Climbing wall	Garden	Ice surface
Community centre	Golf	Curling
Dry floor	Golf - disc	Rink - indoor
Fitness centre	Kitchen shelter	Rink - outdoor
Gym	Lawn	Skating loop
Gymnastics	Outdoor pavilion	
Hall		

Kitchen	Park
Library	Playground
Lounge	Shooting range
Meeting room / office	Skateboard
Multipurpose room	Track - running
Playground	Trail
Recreation centre	
Rink	Winter
Senior's centre	Biathlon
Squash court	Ski (downhill)
Track	ski chalet
Washrooms	Toboggan / sledding hill
Weight room	Trail - dog sled
Youth centre	Trail - xc ski
Youth lounge	Warming hut

Two summary documents were produced:

- Yukon-Wide Sport and Recreation Infrastructure: Preliminary Summary Data Tables (Feb. 2025)
- Whitehorse Area Sport & Recreation Infrastructure: Preliminary Summary Data Tables (Feb. 2025)

This infrastructure database is a living tool. Work is ongoing to geo-locate each asset for integration with GeoYukon, update trail information, validate and expand data entries—including general condition status, where information is available—and account for infrastructure changes over time. The data does not reflect the condition or remaining lifespan of amenities. The master database is maintained by the Sport and Recreation Branch.

This report is Phase 2, which involved analyzing the inventory through comparisons to relevant benchmark data to produce key findings that can inform trend tracking for infrastructure development; a strategic framework for future infrastructure additions; and principles for project evaluation and funding prioritization. Yukon's geographic isolation, small, dispersed population and long winters all shape infrastructure needs.

Baseline documents

Several foundational and guiding documents provide the policy context for interpreting the inventory data and shaping future planning. At the national level, the following documents offer overarching goals, values, and equity considerations that can be factored into infrastructure decision-making:

- the Framework for Recreation in Canada;
- the Common Vision for increasing physical activity and reducing sedentary living in Canada: Let's Get Moving;
- the Canadian Sport Policy; and,
- the Indigenous Sport Policy: "The Spirit of Sport – Active Together: A National Strategy for Indigenous Peoples' Participation in Sport, Physical Activity, and Recreation in Canada."

At the Yukon level, additional context can be found in:

- the Renewed Yukon Active Living Strategy;
- the 2SLGBTQIA+ Action Plan;
- the Territorial Youth Strategy; and,
- the "Pandemic impacts on rural recreation in the Yukon Territory."¹

These baseline documents ensure that infrastructure development aligns with broader objectives such as inclusion, reconciliation, active living, and community well-being. They help frame how sport and recreation infrastructure can be prioritized, evaluated and funded across diverse Yukon communities.

¹ <https://www.viurrspace.ca/items/8b3f1890-e071-4ea1-bcb6-1f53fc581c80>

Benchmarking

Community size stratification

Yukon communities were divided into four different classifications based on population: Category A (population >2,500, 1 community), B (1,000 to 2,500, 3 communities), C (200 to 1,000, 11 communities) and D (<200, 6+ communities, settlements and other areas) (Table 2). Category E is for areas without a nearby settlement or community, such as for Yukon and national parks.

Table 2. Communities by population and Category class

Community	Population ²	Category
Whitehorse Area	36,387	A
Dawson City	2,418	B
Watson Lake (including Upper Liard)	1,480	B
Haines Junction	1,048	B
Marsh Lake	757	C
Carmacks	603	C
Teslin	516	C
Mount Lorne	498	C
Carcross	492	C
Mayo	468	C
Faro	441	C
Tagish	422	C
Ross River	399	C
Pelly Crossing	396	C
Old Crow	247	C
Mendenhall	138	D
Burwash Landing	118	D
Beaver Creek	102	D
Other (Keno, Champagne, Braeburn, Swift River and Stewart Crossing)	80	D
Destruction Bay	63	D
Johnson's Crossing	51	D
Areas away from settlements/communities	n/a	E
Yukon TOTAL	47,124	

² <https://yukon.ca/sites/default/files/2025-04/fin-population-report-q4-2024.pdf>



Methodology

Comparing Yukon sport and recreation infrastructure to what is available in other jurisdictions occurred through benchmarking using both national-level information that was available for both Canada and the United States, as well as by identifying comparable communities for the Category A and B size classes. Benchmark communities were not identified for Category C and D communities due to the overall lack of comparable and relevant information available for these small community sizes.

In Canada, Statistics Canada has broad information about sport and recreation infrastructure throughout Canada. Two main Statistics Canada databases exist: for 2025 and for 2022. These differ from each other in that the 2025 database has broad sport and recreation infrastructure categories, but information can be separated by urban Canada and rural Canada. For the 2022 database, information exists about a larger variety of sport and recreation infrastructure, but it is not divided into urban and rural communities. Rather, information is available at the level of the province or territory.

In the United States, the National Parks and Recreation Association (NPRA) has the 2025 NPRA Agency Performance Review which includes reported data from more than 1,000 jurisdictions that includes number and type of a variety of sport and recreation facilities.

At the community level, comparable communities were identified across Canada as well as in Alaska that shared similarities such as population size and geographic location (including if acting as a regional service centre). Information about each benchmark community's sport and recreation infrastructure was done through internet research, using municipal information as well as broader information available about each community. Benchmark community information was compared to infrastructure information for Yukon communities available through the Sport and Recreation Inventory.



National Level Benchmarking

2025 Statistics Canada Data

Every two years, Statistics Canada performs an inventory of core public infrastructure assets.³ The 2025 inventory includes sport and recreation infrastructure in seven broad categories, with information available at the national level, as well as separated for urban municipalities and rural municipalities. Three comparisons with this national level data were made: Yukon-wide with Canada-wide (Table 3), Canadian urban municipalities with Whitehorse (Table 4) and Canadian rural municipalities with Yukon Category B, C, and D communities (Table 5).

For each comparison, the number of people per amenity was calculated. Smaller numbers indicate more amenities per person. A comparison between Canada and Yukon data was made by calculating a multiplier, which shows by what factor any given Yukon amenity is either greater or less than the Canadian comparison. A multiplier of 1 indicates that they are available per person at an equivalent level. Multipliers greater than 1 indicate that the Yukon has more amenities per person for that category. Multipliers less than 1 indicated that the Yukon has fewer amenities per person for a given category.

Table 3. Comparing Yukon-wide to Canada-wide

Sport and Recreation Infrastructure classification	Yukon-wide # people / amenity	Canada-wide # people / amenity	Multiplier
Community centres ⁴	1,071	7,878	7.4
Curling facility	3,927	59,801	15.2
Indoor pools	6,732	54,525	8.1
Other outdoor sports facilities	327	884	2.7
Outdoor specialty areas (off-leash dog parks, skateparks)	655	5,739	8.8
Parks (sports fields, children's parks, nature parks)	284	698	2.5
Total Ice facilities	785	18,657	23.8

³ <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/cv.action?pid=3410028701>

⁴ Community centres include multi-purpose sports centres, seniors centres and youth centres.



Table 4. Comparing Whitehorse to Canadian urban municipalities

Sport and Recreation Infrastructure classification	Whitehorse # people / amenity	Canadian urban municipalities # people / amenity	Multiplier
Community centres	7,277	12,845	1.8
Curling facility	36,387	126,095	3.5
Indoor pools	36,387	56,999	1.6
Other outdoor sports facilities	520	5,783	11.1
Outdoor specialty areas (off-leash dog parks, skateparks)	1,040	10,602	10.2
Parks (sports fields, children's parks, nature parks)	455	898	2.0
Total Ice facilities	983	27,363	27.8

Table 5. Comparing Category B, C, and D communities to Canadian rural municipalities

Sport and Recreation Infrastructure classification	Category B, C, and D communities # people / amenity	Canadian rural municipalities # people / amenity	Multiplier
Community centres	275	2,258	8.2
Curling facility	976	14,930	15.3
Indoor pools	1,790	44,267	24.7
Other outdoor sports facilities	163	3,971	24.4
Outdoor specialty areas (off-leash dog parks, skateparks)	290	5,617	19.4
Parks (sports fields, children's parks, nature parks)	262	728	2.8
Total Ice facilities	467	6,519	14.0

For each sport and recreation infrastructure classification group, and for each comparison, the Yukon has more amenities per person than Canada. Multipliers ranged from 1.6 (i.e. the Yukon has 1.6 times the indoor pools per person in Whitehorse compared to other Canadian urban municipalities) to 27.8 (i.e. the Yukon has 27.8 times the ice facilities per person in Whitehorse compared to other Canadian urban municipalities).

2020 Statistics Canada Data

In 2022, Statistics Canada released data on a 2020 inventory of publicly owned culture, recreation and sport facility infrastructure in Canada. This dataset has more detailed



infrastructure categories than the 2025 Statistics Canada data, but it isn't separated into urban and rural areas. The 2020 dataset has 15 different categories for infrastructure, compared to seven categories in the 2025 data. As for the 2025 Statistics Canada dataset, number of people per amenity and a multiplier between Yukon and Canadian data were calculated (Table 6).

Table 6. Comparing Yukon-wide and Canada-wide sport and recreation infrastructure

Sport and Recreation Infrastructure classification	Yukon-wide # people / amenity	Canada-wide # people / amenity	Multiplier
Indoor gymnasiums	1,122	37,212	33.2
Outdoor speciality areas	646	10,398	16.1
Curling rinks	3,927	57,281	14.6
Indoor fitness areas	3,366	45,486	13.5
Outdoor ice arenas	1,071	9,714	9.1
Community centres (senior and youth centres)	1,047	8,028	7.7
Playgrounds	339	1,826	5.4
Indoor ice	3,142	16,165	5.1
Indoor racquet courts	23,563	101,043	4.3
Pools (all)	6,732	21,686	3.2
Rectangular sports fields (natural turf)	1,520	4,257	2.8
Ball diamonds	1,386	3,856	2.8
Indoor walking/jogging tracks	47,126	118,315	2.5
Outdoor tennis and/or pickleball courts	9,425	5,666	0.6
Outdoor spray parks/splash pads/wading pools	47,126	13,209	0.3

The 2020 data show that for 87% of the categories (13 of the 15 categories), the Yukon has more sport and recreation infrastructure per person than Canada as a whole. The two categories that the Yukon has less than the national average are:

- Outdoor tennis and/or pickleball courts; and,
- Outdoor spray parks/splash pads/wading pools.



2025 United States National Recreation and Parks Association (NPRA) Agency Performance Review Data

The United States National Recreation and Parks Association (NPRA) is a comprehensive source of data benchmarks and insights for the parks and recreation sector in the United States. It allows the sector to compare with peer agencies, improve operations and better serve their communities.⁵ The most recent review was conducted in 2025, which highlights the metrics they identify as most critical. Twenty-two of these metrics were comparable to the Yukon context. The NPRA data set has categories of community size for populations of 20,000 to 50,000 and for populations of less than 20,000. These were compared to Whitehorse (Table 7) and Category B, C, and D communities (Table 8), respectively. Ratings were assigned as follows:

- “+” for multipliers greater than 1.2 (i.e. the Yukon has more amenities per person)
- “=” for multipliers between 0.8 and 1.2 (i.e. levels are roughly equivalent)
- “-“ for multipliers less than 0.8 (i.e. the Yukon has less per person).

Table 7. Comparing Whitehorse to NPRA communities with populations between 20,000 and 50,000

Amenity Type	Whitehorse # people / amenity	NPRA # people / amenity (population 20,000 to 50,000)	Multiplier	Rating
Ball diamond	2,426	3,408	1.4	+
Basketball	3,308	8,000	2.4	+
Dog space	18,194	26,534	1.5	+
Field	2,274	4,002	1.8	+
Fitness station	6,065	21,468	3.5	+
Golf	36,387	31,132	0.9	=
Golf - disc	9,097	32,519	3.6	+
Pickleball	0	7,333	n/a	-
Playground	535	3,320	6.2	+
Pool	36,387	34,619	1.0	=
Recreation/community centre	36,387	28,481	0.8	=
Rink - indoor	9,097	25,374	2.8	+
Rink - outdoor	1,103	21,428	19.4	+
Seniors centre	36,387	34,058	0.9	+
Skateboard	36,387	35,000	1.0	+

⁵ <https://www.nprpa.org/publications-research/ParkMetrics/>

Splash park	36,387	29,804	0.8	+
Squash court	0	15,655	n/a	-
Tennis	9,097	6,284	0.7	-
Track - indoor	36,387	33,431	0.9	=
Track - outdoor running	36,387	21,217	0.6	-
Volleyball	18,194	16,487	0.9	=
Youth centre	36,387	32,798	0.9	=

Table 8. Comparing class B, C and D communities to NPRA communities with populations of less than 20,000

Amenity Type	Category B, C and D communities # people / amenity	NPRA # people / amenity (population <20k)	Multiplier	Rating
Ball diamond	565	1,958	3.5	+
Basketball	767	4,479	5.8	+
Dog space	0	10,188	n/a	-
Field	716	2,578	3.6	+
Fitness station	0	8,274	n/a	-
Golf	3,579	10,984	3.1	+
Golf - disc	1,342	9,402	7.0	+
Pickleball	10,737	3,483	0.3	-
Playground	173	2,000	11.5	+
Pool	1,074	9,745	9.1	+
Recreation/community centre	1,193	9,938	8.3	+
Rink - indoor	976	8,054	8.3	+
Rink - outdoor	976	8,338	8.5	+
Seniors centre	2,684	13,966	5.2	+
Skateboard	1,074	10,776	10.0	+
Splash park	0	13,391	n/a	-
Squash court	5,369	7,692	1.4	+
Tennis	3,579	3,500	1.0	=
Track - indoor	0	11,625	n/a	-
Track - outdoor running	0	6,129	n/a	-
Volleyball	10,737	7,057	0.7	-
Youth centre	1,534	15,475	10.1	+

When comparing to the NPRA benchmark communities, both Whitehorse and the Category B, C, and D communities have overall more amenities per person than the comparable communities in the U.S. Whitehorse has either more than or equivalent



amenities per person for 82% (18) of the sport and recreation amenities for which data exists (Figure 1). The amenities that Whitehorse had less than the NPRA benchmarks were:

- Outdoor pickleball courts (Whitehorse has none);
- Indoor squash/racquet courts (Whitehorse has no public courts, while private courts are available, they were not included in the inventory);
- Outdoor tennis courts (Whitehorse has one set of 4 courts); and,
- Outdoor running tracks (Whitehorse has one).

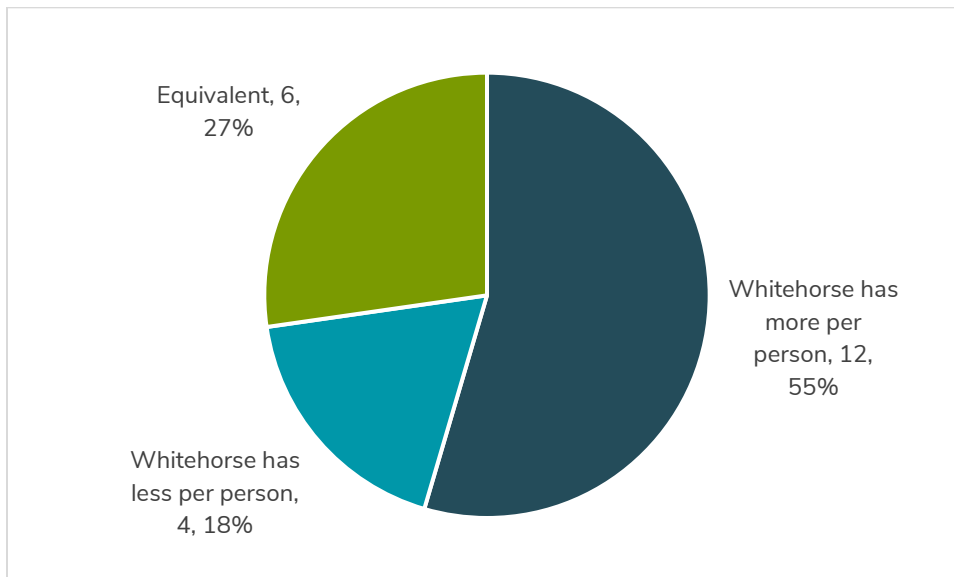


Figure 1. Number and percent of amenities that Whitehorse has either more than, equivalent, or less than NPRA benchmark communities with populations of 20,000 to 50,000.

All of the Category B, C and D communities were combined to compare to the NPRA benchmark communities with a population of less than 20,000 people. For these, Yukon communities had either more or equivalent amenities per person for 68% (n=15) of the amenities assessed (Figure 2). The seven amenities which the communities had less than the NPRA benchmark communities were:

- Dog parks (none in communities),
- Outdoor fitness stations (none in communities),
- Outdoor pickleball courts,



- Splash parks (none in communities),
- Indoor tracks (none in communities),
- Outdoor tracks (none in communities), and
- Outdoor volleyball courts.

The comparisons must be viewed knowing that the NPRA data sets included communities up to 20,000 people, and all of the Category B, C, and D communities have populations of less than 2,500 people.

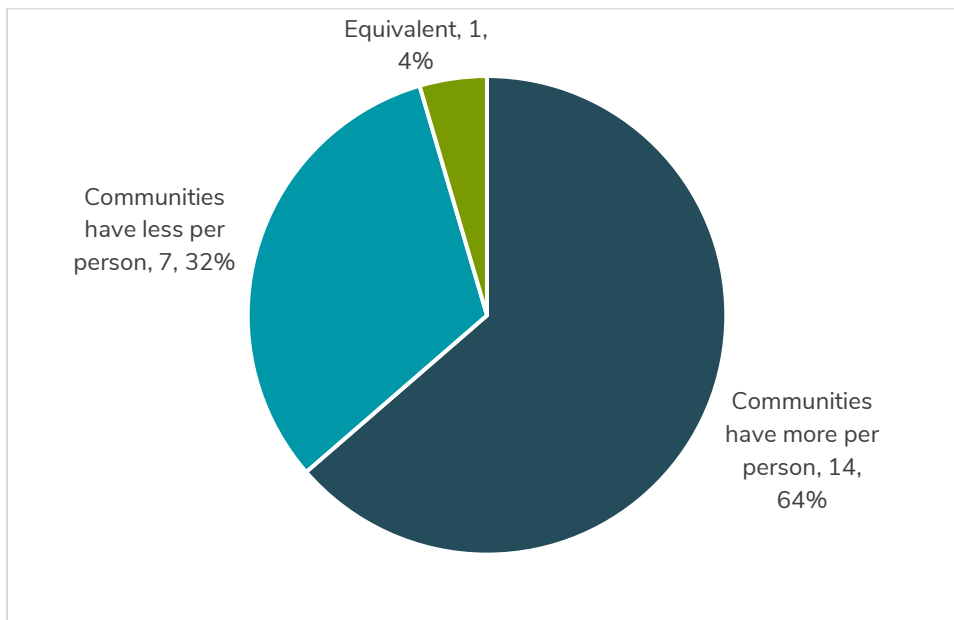


Figure 2. Number and percent of amenities that Yukon size class B, C and D communities have either more than, equivalent, or less than NPRA benchmark communities with populations of less than 20,000.

Community Level Benchmarking

Category A Community: Whitehorse

Three reference communities were identified as benchmarks for Whitehorse, the Yukon's only Category A community: Yellowknife, NWT; Smithers, BC; and Campbell River, BC. These were chosen as they all had similar populations, acted as a regional service centre and were relatively isolated from the next closest population centre.



Yellowknife is the capital of NWT and a northern city which acts as a regional service centre. The population of Yellowknife is 20,340.

Smithers, while having a population of 5,378, serves the Bulkley Valley which has a total population of 37,737.

The population of Campbell River is 35,519 and it serves the broader Strathcona District, which has a total population of 48,150.

Table 9 shows the comparison of the benchmark communities with Whitehorse. A total of 27 different sport and recreation amenities were assessed for the benchmark communities and compared to Whitehorse.

The table includes the average number of people per amenity for the three benchmark communities as a whole as well as for Whitehorse, and a comparison to Whitehorse with a multiplier.

Multipliers less than 0.8 indicate that the benchmark communities have more of that amenity per person. From 0.8 to 1.2, Whitehorse has a roughly equivalent amount of the amenity. For multipliers greater than 1.2, Whitehorse has more of the amenity per person than the benchmark communities.

Table 9. Comparison of benchmark communities with Whitehorse

Amenity Type	Benchmark # people / amenity	Whitehorse # people / amenity	Multiplier	Rating
Ball diamond	5,902	2,274	2.6	+
Basketball	13,278	3,308	4.0	+
Bike park	53,114	7,277	7.3	+
Climbing wall	53,114	18,194	2.9	+
Racquet courts (indoor)	26,557		0.0	-
Curling	35,409	36,387	1.0	=
Disc golf	26,557	9,097	2.9	+
Dog space	11,803	18,194	0.6	-
Field	4,426	2,274	1.9	+
Gymnastics	35,409	36,387	1.0	=
Gymnasiums	2,529	1,654	1.5	+
Rink - indoor	15,175	9,097	1.7	+
Rink - outdoor	15,175	1,103	13.8	+
Parks	1,634	758	2.2	+

Pickleball (outdoor)	26,557		0.0	-
Playgrounds	2,260	535	4.2	+
Pools	26,557	36,387	0.7	-
Recreation/community centres	21,245	36,387	0.6	-
Seniors centre	35,409	36,387	1.0	=
Skateboard park	26,557	36,387	0.7	-
Splash park	106,227	36,387	2.9	+
Tennis (outdoors)	8,171	9,097	0.9	=
Track - indoor	53,114	36,387	1.5	+
Track - outdoor	35,409	36,387	3.9	=
Volleyball (outdoor)	15,175	18,194	0.8	=
Weight room	21,245	18,194	1.2	=
Youth centre	106,227	36,387	2.9	+

Of the 27 amenity types, Whitehorse had either equal (52%) or more than (26%) the benchmark communities for 78% (n=21) of the types (Figure 3).

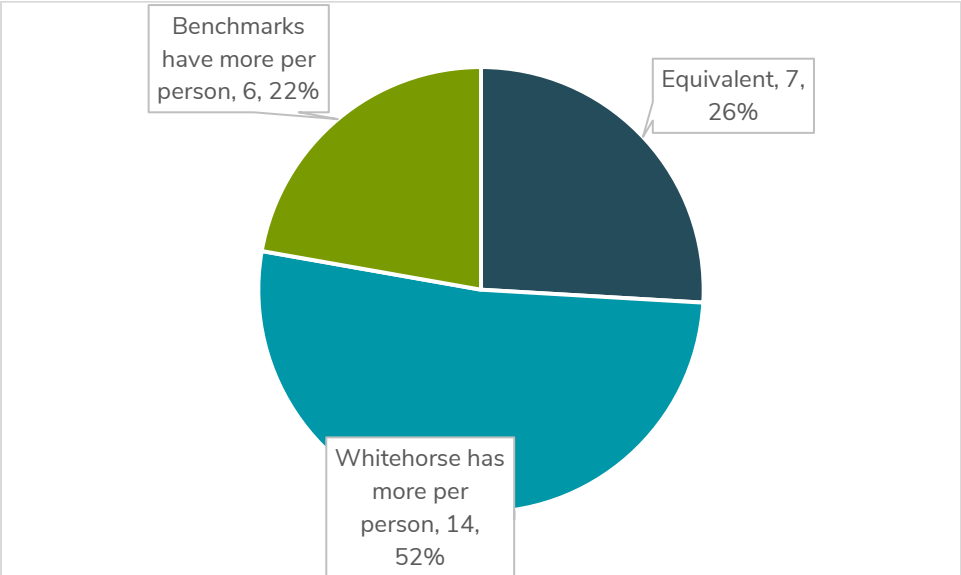


Figure 3. Number and percent of amenities that Whitehorse has either more than, equivalent, or less than an average of the identified benchmark communities.

The amenity types that Whitehorse had significantly less of when compared to the benchmark communities were:

- Dedicated racquet indoor courts (Whitehorse has none)⁶; and,
- Outdoor pickleball courts (Whitehorse has none).

⁶ Note that privately owned facilities were not included in the inventory or for comparisons.



Relatively close to equivalent are dog spaces, pools, recreation/community centres and skateboard parks, all of which have a multiplier of 0.6 or 0.7.

Amenities that are equivalent (multiplier between 0.8 and 1.2) between Whitehorse and the benchmark communities are:

- Curling rinks;
- Gymnastic centres;
- Seniors centres;
- Outdoor tennis courts;
- Outdoor tracks;
- Outdoor volleyball; and
- Weight rooms.

Amenities that Whitehorse has significantly more of on a per person basis (multiplier greater than 1.2) are (with their multipliers):

- Rinks – outdoor 13.8;
- Bike parks 7.3;
- Playgrounds 4.2;
- Basketball 4.0;
- Climbing wall 2.9;
- Disc golf 2.9;
- Splash park 2.9;
- Youth centre 2.9;
- Ball diamond 2.6;
- Parks 2.2;
- Fields 1.9;
- Rink – indoor 1.7;
- Gymnasiums 1.5; and
- Track – indoor 1.5.



Category B Communities: Dawson City, Watson Lake and Haines Junction

Three benchmark communities were chosen to compare with the Yukon's three Category B communities. They are Haines, Alaska (population 2,014); Skagway, Alaska (population 1,119); and Fort Simpson, NWT (population 1,100). These communities are all northern and have comparable population sizes and degrees of isolation from other population centres to the Yukon Category B communities.

Table 10 shows a comparison of infrastructure between the three benchmark communities and the three Yukon Category B communities for 18 different types of amenities.

Table 10. Comparison of benchmark communities with the three Category B communities.

Amenity Type	Benchmark # people / amenity	Category B # people / amenity	Multiplier	Rating
Bball diamond	540	989	0.5	-
Climbing wall	4,323		0.0	-
Community hall or recreation centre	1,441	824	1.7	+
Curling	4,323	1,649	2.6	+
Disc golf	1,441	1,237	1.2	+
Field	1,081	1,237	0.9	=
Golf	2,162	4,946	0.4	-
Gym	618	989	0.6	-
Ice	4,323	1,237	3.5	+
Park	432	550	0.8	=
Playgrounds	480	236	2.0	+
Pool	2,162	2,473	0.9	=
Running track	4,323		0.0	-
Seniors centre	4,323	2,473	1.7	=
Skateboard park	1,441	1,237	1.2	=
Tennis	4,323	4,946	0.9	=
Weight room	1,441	1,649	0.9	=
Youth centre	4,323	1,237	3.5	+



Comparing Yukon Category B communities to the benchmarks, Yukon communities had either equivalent (33%) or more (39%) of 71% of the 18 amenities examined. Five amenity types were higher per person in the benchmark communities than the three Category B communities.

The five amenities that benchmark communities had more of were:

- Ball diamonds;
- Climbing walls;
- Golf;
- Gyms; and
- Running tracks (outdoors).

Of these, Yukon Category B communities did not have any climbing walls or running tracks, and golf is only available in Dawson City (which has roughly twice the population of the other two Category B communities). Most infrastructure amenities were equivalent between the benchmarks and Yukon Category B communities:

- Fields;
- Parks;
- Pools;
- Skate parks;
- Outdoor tennis; and
- Weight rooms.

Yukon Category B communities exceeded the benchmark communities in the number of infrastructure amenities per person for:

- Community halls / recreation centres;
- Curling;
- Disc golf;
- Ice surfaces;
- Playgrounds;
- Seniors centres; and
- Youth centres.

Category C Communities

Category C Communities are the Yukon's 11 communities that range in population from 247 (Old Crow) to 757 (Marsh Lake). Benchmark communities were not chosen as comparators due to the lack of reliable, relevant and available information about comparable communities in this size category. The Yukon's Category C communities vary from each other widely and include communities that are either municipalities or unincorporated. Some are very remote, and others are within a reasonable driving distance to Whitehorse. Some are in communities with schools and so have access to shared school facilities, and others are not. Some are very rural and spread out, and others have a defined townsite. Rather than compare to benchmarks, the Category C communities were assessed together to identify sport and recreation infrastructure amenities that were the most common (Table 11).

Table 11. Number and percent of Category C communities with at least one of each identified amenity.

Amenity	#	%
Playground	11	100%
Rink (indoor or outdoor)	11	100%
Recreation/community centre or hall	9	82%
Gym	9	82%
Ball diamond	8	73%
Field	8	73%
Weight room	8	73%
Basketball (outdoor)	7	64%
Pool	5	45%
Skateboard	5	45%
Curling	4	36%
Golf - disc	4	36%
Youth centre/lounge	4	36%
Climbing wall	2	18%
Golf	2	18%
Tennis	2	18%
Pickleball	1	9%
Senior's centre	1	9%
Squash court	1	9%
Volleyball (outdoor)	1	9%

All of the Category C communities had at least one playground and ice rink. Communities had either indoor (45%) or outdoor (45%) ice rinks, and one community had both an indoor and outdoor rink.

Nine of the communities (82%) had a community recreation centre or hall. The two communities that do not have a hall are Carcross and Tagish. The Tagish community hall was lost to a very recent fire (March 2025), and plans are underway to replace it. The Carcross hall has reached the end of its useable lifespan and the community is currently working to replace it, as they've identified it as a core amenity needed for their community.

The other amenities available in most of the communities were a gym, ball diamond, playing field and weight room. These were each available in either nine or eight of the 11 Category C communities. Every community that has a school has a gym and a field, except for Marsh Lake which does have a gym, but no school. 64% of communities have outdoor basketball nets.

The remaining sport and recreation infrastructure amenities that were assessed in the communities were present in five or less of the communities and are community-specific and responsive to community context, needs, interests and capacity.

Category D Communities

Category D communities are the Yukon's smallest communities that each have a population of less than 200 people. They are all unincorporated. Five communities were assessed with respect to their sport and recreation infrastructure: Beaver Creek, Burwash Landing, Destruction Bay, Keno and Mendenhall (Table 12). Upper Liard is not included as it is very close to Watson Lake. Johnson's Crossing does not have any identified sport and recreation infrastructure. Champagne is included with Haines Junction.

Table 12. Number and percent of Category D communities with at least one of each identified amenity.

Amenity	#	%
Hall	5	100%
Playground	4	80%
Gym	3	60%

Rink (indoor or outdoor)	3	60%
Ball diamond	2	40%
Curling	1	20%
Basketball (outdoor)	1	20%
Field	1	20%
Seniors centre	1	20%
Skateboard	1	20%
Weight room	1	20%
Youth centre	1	20%

All of the Category D communities had a hall or other equivalent gathering space. 80% had a playground. The one community (Keno) without a playground also does not have any children who live there. Most (60%) had a gym and an ice rink, including one indoor ice rink. All other assessed amenities occurred in just one community each.

Discussion

Benchmarking Summary

At every level of benchmarking, the Yukon had generally higher levels of sport and recreation amenities per person than the comparators.

2025 Stats Canada: The Yukon had more sport and recreation infrastructure per person than the national levels in every broad amenity category and at every level: Yukon-wide, urban municipalities (Whitehorse), and rural municipalities (all other communities).

2020 Stats Canada: The Yukon had more sport and recreation infrastructure per person than the national levels in 13 of the 15 amenity categories. The remaining two were:

- Outdoor pickleball/tennis courts; and
- Outdoor splash/spray parks.



2025 US NPRA – Whitehorse compared to communities with populations of 20,000 to 50,000 people: Whitehorse has either more than or equivalent amenities per person for 82% (18) of the sport and recreation amenities assessed. The amenities that Whitehorse had less than the NPRA benchmarks were:

- Outdoor pickleball courts (Whitehorse has none);
- Indoor squash/racquet courts (Whitehorse has none; private courts, while available, were not included in the inventory);
- Outdoor tennis courts (Whitehorse has one set of 4 courts); and
- Outdoor running tracks (Whitehorse has one).

2025 US NPRA – Yukon Category B, C and D communities compared to NPRA communities with less than 20,000 people. Yukon communities had either more or equivalent amenities per person for 68% of the amenities assessed). The seven amenities which the communities had less than the NPRA benchmark communities were:

- Dog parks (none in communities);
- Outdoor fitness stations (none in communities);
- Outdoor pickleball courts;
- Splash parks (none in communities);
- Indoor tracks (none in communities);
- Outdoor tracks (none in communities); and
- Outdoor volleyball courts.

Category A Community Comparison

The amenity types that Whitehorse had significantly less of when compared to the benchmark communities were:

- Dedicated indoor courts (Whitehorse has none); and
- Outdoor pickleball courts (Whitehorse has none).

Relatively close to equivalent are dog spaces, pools, recreation/community centres and skateboard parks, all of which have a multiplier of 0.6 or 0.7.



Category B Community Comparison

Comparing Yukon Category B communities to the benchmarks, Yukon communities had either more than or the equivalent of 71% of the amenities examined. Five amenity types were higher per person in the benchmark communities than the three Category B communities:

- Ball diamonds (present in all Yukon Category B communities);
- Climbing walls (none in Yukon Category B communities);
- Golf (only in Dawson City, of the three Yukon Category B communities);
- Gyms (present in all Yukon Category B communities); and
- Outdoor running tracks (the Yukon has one outdoor running track in Whitehorse).

Category C Communities

Assessing the Yukon's Category C communities as a group, core sport and recreation infrastructure emerged as being present in almost every community:

- Playground
- Ice rink/surface (indoor or outdoor)
- Community hall
- Weight room
- Gymnasium
- Ball diamond
- Playing field

Various additional amenity types occurred in communities as responsive to local community contexts. Community halls were presented in nine of the 11 Category C communities, being absent in Tagish and Carcross. Tagish recently lost their community hall due to a fire, and the community hall in Carcross has reached the end of its lifespan. Work is underway in both communities to replace these important community assets.



Category D Communities

Core sport and recreation infrastructure in the Category D communities are:

- Community hall
- Playground (in communities with children)

Most Category D communities also had a gymnasium and ice rink.

Benchmarking Discussion

When looking at the benchmarking data as a whole, the amenities which seemed most underrepresented in the Yukon were tennis and pickleball courts. For example, the territory's only outdoor pickleball courts are in Carcross. Tennis courts are in four Yukon communities, but it should be noted that access/cost was not included in the benchmarking analysis.

While indoor-court-specific spaces were identified as being fewer than the benchmarks, it is important to note that multi-use indoor spaces are available in Whitehorse for tennis and pickleball.

Parks and trails were not assessed in the benchmarking analysis due to the strongly rural and wilderness nature of the Yukon. All Yukon communities are surrounded by wilderness, so comparing parks is less of a useful metric. Information about trails is still under development at the territory level, so less useful as a metric for comparing with other jurisdictions, either at a national or community level. However, trails are an important outdoor sport and recreation amenity for multiple activities and throughout the year for cross-country skiing, dog sledding, walking, hiking and bicycling.

The high prevalence of ice surfaces at all sizes of communities highlights the northern context with long winters. Not assessed, though important for winter physical activity, are downhill ski areas; not enough comparable information was available.

Note that private sport and recreation amenities are not included in the analysis. Some types of amenities are more commonly available privately, such as weight rooms.



Also not assessed in this report was the condition of the sport and recreation amenities. Some amenities, while present in communities, may be nearing the end of their usable lifespans and replacement might be considered.

Benchmarking can provide a broad basis for comparison when assessing sport and recreation infrastructure, but its limitations are especially pronounced in a northern Canadian context. Benchmark data often rely on inconsistent or incomplete sources, with different measurement sets using varying definitions and classifications for infrastructure types, usage, and service levels. In some cases, the data may be outdated, inaccurate, or not reflective of the unique geographic, cultural, and demographic realities of northern communities. As such, benchmarking should not be used as a standalone tool for detailed analysis or decision-making. Instead, any meaningful assessment must be conducted on a community-by-community basis, considering the specific type and function of each type of sport and recreation infrastructure and the local context in which it operates.

Issues and Trends Impacting Recreation

Several key trends, issues and challenges are shaping the sport and recreation sector across Canada and are particularly relevant in the northern Yukon context.

Truth and Reconciliation

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) acknowledges the historical and ongoing harms inflicted upon Indigenous Peoples, particularly through the residential school system. Its 94 Calls to Action provide a framework for rebuilding respectful relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples based on recognition, justice and accountability. In the sport and recreation context, this requires embedding reconciliation into infrastructure planning and decision-making—working collaboratively with Indigenous governments, supporting culturally relevant and land-based programming and creating spaces that are inclusive, safe and responsive to Indigenous needs. Sport and recreation infrastructure can serve as a platform for cultural revitalization, community healing and meaningful inclusion when guided by the principles of respect, partnership and Indigenous rights.



Physical Inactivity Among Girls and Women

Despite growing awareness, many girls and women remain insufficiently active and are less active than boys and men. This highlights the need for recreation infrastructure that is welcoming, safe and designed to address barriers to participation. Solutions may include improved lighting, private change rooms, women-focused programming, accessible locations and spaces which support a broader range of non-competitive and social activities to engage diverse interests.

Gender Equity and Inclusion

Ensuring equitable access to sport and recreation requires inclusive design, programming, and policy. Infrastructure should support multi-use, flexible spaces with universal design features, gender-neutral change rooms, and intentional planning that reflects the needs of girls, women, and gender-diverse individuals. Inclusive environments contribute not only to higher participation but also to stronger community well-being.

Staffing and Volunteer Challenges

Across the Yukon, communities face persistent challenges with staffing and volunteer capacity. Recruiting and retaining qualified recreation staff is increasingly difficult, while volunteerism continues to decline. This places pressure on recreation leaders and limits program delivery. Infrastructure that is low-maintenance, adaptable for unstaffed or drop-in use and supported by clear systems for scheduling, lighting and safety can release some pressure where there are reduced levels of staff.

Aging Infrastructure and Rising Costs

Many existing facilities—such as arenas, pools and community halls—are aging beyond their useful life, with limited budgets for maintenance, upgrades or replacement. The cost of operations and maintenance continues to rise. Construction and transportation costs continue to rise in northern regions. As a result, investment should focus on maintaining critical assets rather than expanding infrastructure. New builds should be energy-efficient, climate-resilient and supported by clear long-term plans (with associated budgets) for ownership, operations and maintenance.



Climate Change

Climate change is increasingly impacting the viability and sustainability of recreation infrastructure in the North. Thawing permafrost, extreme weather and shorter ice seasons threaten the usability of facilities and increase maintenance costs. Planning must account for environmental risks and integrate climate-adaptive design, materials and site selection strategies to ensure long-term functionality and safety.

Rise in Self-Organized Recreation

Participation in informal, drop-in and self-organized recreation is on the rise, driven by changing lifestyles, reduced program delivery capacity and a growing preference for flexible options. This trend is especially relevant in the North, where staffing limitations make structured programming more difficult. Investment should prioritize outdoor and multi-use facilities that support spontaneous or low-barrier recreation. Examples include trails, skateboard parks, bike parks, outdoor rinks, disc golf and multi-use courts for basketball, tennis or pickleball.

Transportation and Access Barriers

Geographic isolation, lack of public transit and seasonal travel constraints make access to recreation facilities a major challenge in many northern communities. This reinforces the need for small-scale, local, walkable infrastructure and creative solutions such as mobile recreation equipment, pop-up programs and regional sharing of specialized facilities.

Mental Health and Community Well-Being

Recreation infrastructure plays an increasingly vital role in supporting mental health, especially in remote and northern communities where residents may experience high rates of isolation, trauma and depression. Facilities should be designed to foster social connection, emotional support and cultural expression through spaces like wellness rooms, gathering areas and culturally safe environments for youth and Elders alike.

In northern Yukon, sport and recreation infrastructure must be inclusive, adaptable and community driven. To respond effectively to current challenges and opportunities, infrastructure planning must prioritize equity, sustainability, reconciliation and long-term viability. These trends highlight the need for holistic, flexible approaches that



recognize the realities of life in the North and ensures that facilities are not only functional, but also resilient, culturally relevant and aligned with community values and needs.

Considerations for Sport and Recreation Infrastructure

When planning future investments in sport and recreation infrastructure, multiple criteria should be taken into consideration to ensure that investments are strategic, community-driven, equitable and sustainable over the long term. Suggested criteria include the following:

1. Infrastructure Type

- **Maintenance over Expansion:** Priority will be given to projects that maintain and upgrade existing infrastructure rather than create new facilities, unless a compelling and unmet need is clearly demonstrated.

2. Long-term operational sustainability

- **Identified Owner/Operator:** A designated organization must commit to owning, operating and maintaining the infrastructure upon completion.
- **Operations and Maintenance Plan:** A comprehensive plan should be in place, including:
 - Projected annual expenses;
 - A feasibility study;
 - Identified funding sources; and,
 - Long-term sustainability measures.

3. Demonstrated Community Need

- **Community Support and Consultation:** The project should be:
 - Supported by the community;
 - Informed by extensive stakeholder engagement; and,
 - Included in relevant long-term community plans.

4. Strategic Fit and Gap Analysis

- **Filling Identified Gaps:** The project should address gaps in core sport and recreation infrastructure relative to:
 - Community population; and,



- Existing facilities and services, both in the community and those within a reasonable distance.

5. Alignment with Trends and Priorities

Projects should align with current best practices and policy goals in recreation, including:

- Equity and Inclusion:
 - Supports Truth and Reconciliation;
 - Increases gender equity, especially for self-identified women and girls;
 - Benefits underserved or marginalized populations; and,
 - Reduces barriers due to cost, transportation, or accessibility.
- Physical and Mental Health:
 - Promotes physical activity;
 - Supports mental well-being; and,
 - Supports community health.
- Environmental and Financial Sustainability:
 - Is low maintenance.
 - Minimizes long-term costs via energy efficiency; and,
 - Incorporates climate-resilient design.
- Flexibility and Year-Round Use:
 - Multi-use and adaptable across seasons, ages and activities; and,
 - Enables drop-in and unstructured play.

Decision-Making Framework

A structured weighted decision-making framework offers several key benefits for sport and recreation infrastructure planning and can act as a reference point when comparing different amenity options.

A decision-making framework can increase objectivity, transparency and consistency in the decision-making process to ensure that resources are allocated effectively to meet community needs and maximize public benefit. By assigning weights to different criteria, it ensures decisions are aligned with strategic goals and priorities, while also



promoting consistency and reducing the impact of biases. This approach leads to more informed and effective choices, ultimately improving outcomes.

A Sports and Recreation Infrastructure Project Assessment Tool was developed by the sport and recreation branch in 2020 (Appendix A.) This tool includes pre-screening and a weighted assessment. This tool, with updating for the current context, can be used to provide more insight into decision-making.

Conclusion

Yukon's sport and recreation infrastructure is generally well-developed compared to national and international benchmarks, especially given its population and geography. A few gaps are noted, such as for outdoor pickleball and tennis courts, and for communities that do not have community halls or gathering spaces in place.

Recreation infrastructure in the North must be responsive to unique social, economic and environmental realities. Prioritizing community-identified needs, maintaining existing facilities, embedding reconciliation and inclusion and planning for long-term viability will ensure infrastructure is not only equitable and accessible, but also culturally relevant and resilient.

Future investments can be informed by a structured, weighted decision-making framework, ensuring that each project aligns with overarching goals of sustainability, equity and local empowerment. Ultimately, each community is distinct – local context must be paramount. Prioritization must focus on understanding and responding to the unique situation of each community.



Appendix A. 2020 Sports and Recreation Infrastructure Project Assessment Tool

The Sports and Recreation Infrastructure Project Assessment Tool was developed by the sport and recreation branch in 2020. It has two parts: a screening checklist and an assessment matrix. A summary is provided below. The full tool, with accompanying spreadsheet, is housed at the sport and recreation branch.

This Screening Checklist identifies preliminary work that must be completed before a project is considered for assessment.

Screening Questions	Yes	No
Is the project proposal in line with the established Sport and Recreation Branch mandate and strategic plan goals?		
Is the project endorsed by or included in the community/municipal sport and recreation long-term plan?		
Has a needs assessment/feasibility study been completed?		

The assessment matrix scores projects from one to five for ten criteria. Each score is multiplied by the weight and added together. The maximum value for a project is 500.

Criteria/Score	5	3	1	Weight
Population and level of organization	Community is a municipality with a well-established and functioning mayor and council. The population is Greater than 2500 and growing.	Community is a small municipality (<2500) or an unincorporated community that has a significant population and is projected to grow. The unincorporated community has a well-established Local Advisory Council (LAC), Local Authority for Recreation (LAR), and/or First Nation organization.	Community is a small unincorporated community (<200) or non-recognized rural cluster. The LAC and/or LAR is immature or lacks the capacity, or there is no organized community leadership or First Nation Council in the area.	8.3
Financial Sustainability	Organization has provided a detailed operating budget and explanation of costs within the project application, demonstrates long-term financial viability and self-sufficiency, including	Organization has an idea of budget but details are not certain and a plan to cover these costs is in development, demonstrates limited financial viability and self-sufficiency and will	Organization does not understand operating costs or a plan, uncertain long-term financial viability and ongoing need for external and consistent funding from YG. Organization is unable	8.3

	the ability to meet long-term, ongoing operational needs. Organization has made a significant capital contribution	require external contributions to meet ongoing operational needs. Organization has made a small to moderate capital contribution.	to make any capital contribution.	
Organizational Capacity for Implementation	Organization possesses the leadership (board and management) and capacity necessary to play a significant role in the capital project and ongoing operations of the asset, broad based community support and participation, financial sustainability and organizational longevity/history.	Organization possesses several of the qualities listed under 5, however there are reasons for concern such as those listed under 1.	Organization is relatively new (less than 2 years), does not possess significant leadership or operational capacity to participate in a project of this scale nor play a role in ongoing operations of the asset, has limited community support and its financial sustainability is uncertain.	13.9
Basic and Enhanced Services (New vs existing infrastructure)	No similar infrastructure exists in the community. The proposed project would fill a gap in basic infrastructure. Existing infrastructure is approaching the end of its lifespan or has become unsafe. This infrastructure will play a very important and wide-spread role in athlete and sport development and/or significantly increase recreational opportunities for a large portion of the local population.	Basic services are provided, however improvements to existing basic infrastructure or replacement basic infrastructure is required to meet increasing or changing demands. This infrastructure will play a moderate role in athlete and sport development and/or moderately increase recreational opportunities.	Enhanced services are provided, similar infrastructure exists in the community and the proposed project would not significantly expand the depth or range of service provision. This infrastructure will play little role in expanding athlete and sport development or recreational opportunities beyond what already exists.	16.7
Broad community use	Proposed infrastructure is likely to be used by or provide benefits to a broad subsection of the community population.	Proposed infrastructure is likely to be used by or provide benefits to a moderate subsection of the community population/multiple groups, with occasional use by a broad subsection of the community population for infrequent events, etc.	Proposed infrastructure serves a special interest group or provides benefits to a small subset of the general community population.	11.1
Benefits for under-represented sectors of the population	Proposed infrastructure includes several elements* benefiting multiple under-represented sectors of the population.	Proposed infrastructure includes some elements* benefiting one or two under-represented sectors of the population.	Proposed infrastructure includes little to no elements* benefiting under-represented sectors of the population.	8.3
Games hosting ability and local economic development	Project directly addresses an identified infrastructure gap in Yukon's ability to host a sport event it has committed to, e.g. Arctic Winter Games, Canada Games, etc. Project significantly increases Yukon's capacity to host both single and multisport games/events. Project has	Project does not directly address an identified infrastructure gap in Yukon's ability to host a sports event it has committed to; however, it does enhance its ability to host single events or multisport games. There is potential for increased tourism revenues.	Project does not directly address an identified infrastructure gap in Yukon's ability to host a sports event it has committed to; however, it does enhance its ability to host single sport games. There is little to no identified potential for increased tourism revenues.	8.3

	significant potential to draw in tourism revenues from visitors attending sporting events hosted at the proposed infrastructure site.			
Project readiness	Project proposal has successfully undergone a feasibility study, has a detailed plan and does not require further study. Applicable funding is available and allocated.	Project proposal has successfully undergone a feasibility study and includes a detailed plan, but requires further consideration. Applicable funding may be available, but is not yet be allocated.	Project is not ready to move forward and requires in depth consideration. Applicable funding is not available.	2.9
Risk	Organization has addressed any major risks identified during the project review. Project does not present significant environmental, financial, or social risks. Public support for the project is broad based. Project scope and budget is clear and appropriate. Project costs are unlikely to go over budget or past schedule. Project is not controversial.	Project is generally supported with some concerns, poses some environmental or social risks or is likely to go over budget. Project scope is reasonable, but some unknowns exist. The budget is reasonable. Project solution is likely to address some risks effectively.	Project is controversial, poses significant environmental and/or social risks and is likely to go over budget. Project solution identified may be ineffective - i.e. uses inappropriate technology, scope is insufficient, inefficient (too large), unknown, or inappropriate to address the issue. Proponent will have difficulty in managing or maintaining the project over the long term (insufficient funds or resources identified for operation / management / maintenance).	22.2

Reviewing and updating the 2020 tool as necessary, to ensure that current recreation priorities and trends are reflected and weighted appropriately, should occur before using the tool to assess proposed projects. The basic screening checklist should include the requirement of the identification of an owner/operator for any proposed amenity, with a feasible long-term operations and maintenance plan in place.

