

# Local infrastructure benchmark costs tool

4 December 2025

## Purpose of the tool

The local infrastructure benchmark costs tool has been developed to assist councils, developers, and consultants with forecasting infrastructure costs to include in a contributions plan, where the council wishes to base their estimates on [IPART's benchmark costs for local infrastructure](#). The benchmarks can help councils prepare cost estimates for infrastructure items, especially at the early stages of development, and will inform IPART's assessment of reasonable costs.

In assessing whether the proposed development contributions are based on a reasonable estimate of the cost of the proposed infrastructure, IPART staff may use the tool to compare the costs in submitted contributions plans against IPART's benchmark costs.

The tool is provided to assist councils and other stakeholders using the benchmarks. Please refer to [IPART's reviews of contributions plans](#) and our assessment [Information Paper](#) for detailed information on how reasonable cost is assessed.

## Our local infrastructure benchmark costs

Our benchmark costs only cover standard local infrastructure items within the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure's [essential works list](#). The list of benchmarked items is not exhaustive, and councils may include non-standard items in their contributions plans that we have not benchmarked and are not included in the tool. These non-standard items must be consistent with the essential works list and have nexus established.

Our benchmark costs may not always be appropriate for use, due to the site-specific nature of construction costs. During our assessments, we may consider it more appropriate for councils to provide additional information, such as procuring independent advice from an accredited quantity surveyor, which takes into consideration the unique circumstances of the development. These independent costings should be used in contributions plans if available. This helps tailor cost estimates for a plan to prevent significant over or under recovery on infrastructure spend. Our benchmark costs are general in nature and councils should consider the benefits and risks of using benchmarks over site-specific costings.

## What the tool does

Based on inputs from the user, the tool calculates the benchmark works costs for transport, stormwater, and open space items. The tool shows cost breakdowns for items across each infrastructure category and can roll up individual costs to the project level.

## How the tool works

The tool is based on the typical layout of councils' contributions plan works schedules. It shows the base construction benchmark cost and total benchmark cost (after adjustment factors have been applied) for local infrastructure items selected by the user.

The user will be required to input the following information:

- summary inputs, such as location and relevant financial year
- selection of local infrastructure items and relevant sub-items
- application of adjustment factors, such as waste disposal and site constraints.

The tool includes separate works schedule worksheets for transport, stormwater, and open space. It can also compare the benchmark costs against the councils' costings or independent quantity surveyor costings.

If the user includes work projects in the 'Total project costs worksheet', then individual local infrastructure items can be attributed to work projects. The tool then rolls the total benchmark costs for those items up to the project level in the 'Total project costs worksheet'. That is, multiple individual items across different infrastructure categories can be attributed to a single major project. This can make the tool's outputs clearer by allowing users to consolidate individual item costs into total benchmark project costs.

After benchmark costs have been calculated, the tool also illustrates the cost composition for each local infrastructure item in the cost breakdown worksheets. These show the cost amount and proportion of the total cost that each cost element represents, assisting with cost analysis.

Summary tables are also calculated in the 'Summary' worksheet. These tables breakdown the overall costs that have been calculated in the tool for a high-level view.

Further detail on the structure of the tool can be found in the tool's 'Cover' worksheet.

## Contact us if you need help

If you need any assistance with using this tool to calculate contributions plan works costs or would like further information about how these costs compare with IPART's recently assessed plans, please contact us at: [localgovernment@ipart.nsw.gov.au](mailto:localgovernment@ipart.nsw.gov.au).