

COST ASSESSMENT GUIDELINES

FOR LOCAL SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT PLANNING

Third Edition, Revised October 2019



Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission Version 4

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1. Process Overview

1.1. Purpose of the cost assessment guidelines

The purpose of the cost assessment guidelines is to help local governments prepare cost assessments for their solid waste management plans (SWMP). Counties or cities should prepare their cost assessments so that impacts on solid waste haulers and their ratepayers are easy to determine. If a local government does not have Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission (UTC)-regulated collection companies in its jurisdiction, the commission will not review the plan. Instead, the Washington Department of Ecology will consider in its review whether or not the plan adequately meets the cost assessment requirements.

Every local government with a UTC-regulated collection company within its jurisdiction must complete a cost assessment pursuant to these guidelines and state law.¹

The cost assessment:

- is a comprehensive, system-wide review of a solid waste plan's costs,
- considers the dollar impact on ratepayers of the plan's recommendations, and
- provides sufficient information to estimate future rate levels over the plan period.

The cost assessment is beneficial to:

- local elected officials and staff who may use the cost assessment process as an evaluation tool for selecting preferred solid waste management system alternatives,
- UTC commissioners and staff who use cost assessments to obtain information about probable future rate increases and policy directions set by local governments,
- solid waste advisory committee members who can use cost assessments to evaluate solid waste systems and estimate costs of implementing proposed plans,
- UTC-regulated solid waste collection companies that can use assessments to plan for future capital and operating expenditures, and
- citizens who pay for solid waste management systems through solid waste collection bills and tipping fees and can use cost assessments to estimate future expense levels. This information can help the public provide input to local officials about their solid waste program preferences. The information can also further citizen understanding of the rate setting process.

1.2. The Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission

The UTC is composed of three commissioners who are appointed by the governor and confirmed by the Senate to six-year terms. The commissioners are supported by a staff of accountants, economists, engineers, consumer program specialists, and special investigators.

The commission regulates privately owned utility companies, including energy, telecommunications, natural gas, water, and transportation companies, including low-level nuclear waste, solid waste, and medical waste companies. The commission is primarily an economic regulator, but it also regulates the airporter, solid waste hauling, railroad, and oil and gas pipeline industries for safety.

Chapter 81.77 RCW sets forth the UTC's role in solid waste management. The commission grants authority to operate, approves rates, prescribes accounting formats, and requires regulated companies

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¹ RCW 70.95.090(8) and RCW 70.95.096

to file annual reports. However, RCW 81.77.22 provides exemptions from regulation for a municipality, or any solid waste or recycling company providing solid waste collection service under contract for a municipality. In addition, any recycling company providing service solely to commercial customers are federally exempt.

The commission's responsibility to approve rates makes the UTC directly accountable to ratepayers. The commission's goals are to ensure that rates charged by regulated companies are fair, just, reasonable, and sufficient. Cost assessments prepared according to these guidelines provide the commission with information it needs to understand how proposed changes to a local SWMP will affect future rates.

1.3. Relationship with the Washington Department of Ecology

The Washington Department of Ecology's *Guidelines for the Development of Local Solid Waste Management Plans*² and the UTC's *Cost Assessment Guidelines* are mutually supportive. Ecology's guidelines help a local government prepare its SWMP, while the UTC's guidelines help assess the costs of various alternatives considered in the plan.

The UTC reviews the draft local SWMPs autonomous of reviews performed by other parties. Once the UTC review is complete, staff prepares a letter with its recommendations for the commission to consider at an open meeting. Once the letter's recommendations are acknowledged at the open meeting, it is sent to the county or city and Ecology.

2. UTC Rate Setting Process

2.1. Rate Setting Process

UTC-regulated collection companies must file with the commission in order to change rates. The company must file its rate changes in a proposed tariff that the commission must receive at least 45 days before the proposed effective date. Commission staff reviews the company's justification to support the proposed rates as well as the company's books and records. After staff completes the audit and analysis, staff prepares a memorandum to the commissioners explaining findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

The commissioners consider the proposed rates at an open meeting, after reviewing staff's memorandum. The company, customers, and other interested parties may address their concerns to the commissioners in writing or during the open meeting.

Commissioners may approve proposed rates to become effective as scheduled or issue an order suspending the proposed rates in order to look further into whether the request is reasonable. Suspended rates do not become effective as requested, instead, the rates in effect at the time of filing, remain in effect until the commission approves a change.

If rates are suspended, the matter may require a formal hearing before an administrative law judge. This is a quasi-judicial proceeding with attorneys and witnesses providing sworn testimony. The administrative law judge issues a decision, based on the record. Parties can appeal to the commissioners for review, at the end of which the three commissioners issue their own decision. Additional appeals of the commission's decision would go through the court system.

² https://fortress.wa.gov/ecy/publications/summarypages/1007005.html

2.2. How the UTC Sets Rates

When requesting revised or new rates, a company must file a revised tariff along with detailed financial and operational data to demonstrate its proposed rates are fair, just, reasonable, and sufficient. Rates are set to recover the costs of providing service to customers. Although companies are entitled to recover appropriate expenses and earn reasonable returns, they are not entitled to recover imprudent or nonservice related costs.

The rate setting process allocates total company expenses to regulated activities (i.e., garbage service in an unincorporated county), by different service categories (e.g., garbage, recycling, organics), by different service levels (e.g., residential customers with mini cans or commercial customers with 32-gallon cans). The allocations may take place in several different levels.

In determining the company's gross revenues, an adjusted historical test period is used to forecast the period rates will be in effect. Staff adjusts the company's income statement for the test year in two ways: 1) Restating adjustments correct errors and departures from regulatory accounting practice; and 2) Pro forma adjustments revise historical amounts for known and measurable changes in revenue and expenses.

Cost Assessment Information

For the reasons outlined above, the UTC reviews the local SWMP's cost assessment and advises the local government of the probable effect the alternatives may have on rates charged by companies regulated by the UTC. This section identifies the information the UTC requires to accurately analyze the cost and rate impacts. UTC staff looks for evidence that the planning jurisdiction:

- considers solid waste management from a comprehensive, system-wide perspective,
- considers the cost impact of its decisions on ratepayers, and
- provides information sufficient to estimate future rate levels.

3.1. Information Needed

To determine the probable effect a SWMP will have on rates, the UTC requires the following information:

- current population and solid waste disposal quantities,
- detailed description of the existing comprehensive solid waste management system(s), including selected alternatives,
- proposed changes in the present solid waste management system(s),
- estimated cost requirements for each component of the solid waste management system(s) for years one through six, including the component costs of recycling programs,
- all sources of funding to be utilized to operate and pay for the system(s),
- the role of the UTC-regulated solid waste collection company(s), and
- information on all the solid waste collection companies in its area.

Factors impacting solid waste rates include population and the number of businesses, the weight of material collected, and collection time required for routes. In addition, the cost of local government programs and supporting infrastructure, and facilities also impact rates.

Expected cost variances over the plan period are important elements needed for assessing rate impacts. RCW 70.95.090(3) requires the local SWMP to contain:

- a six-year construction and capital acquisition program for solid waste handling facilities³, and
- a plan for financing both capital costs and operating costs of the proposed solid waste management system.⁴

The cost data should address capital costs and associated financing options for years one through six. For proper assessment of rate impacts, costs should include both direct and indirect cost information for each component of the solid waste facilities and system(s). All assumptions used to develop the cost data should also be included.

The questionnaire in Section Five outlines the information the UTC needs to assess changes in rates. Completing this questionnaire is not mandatory. We provide it as a tool to help ensure that each plan provides UTC staff the necessary information to complete their analysis. Local governments may use the questionnaire provided or submit comparable information in another form.

3.2. Planning Numbers and Rate Data

The SWMP guides decisions about future activities. Any plan that involves forecasting is subject to uncertainty. Population changes, economic growth or decline, housing construction, fluctuating interest rates, enforcement actions by state or local authorities, changes in state and federal law, and participation levels in recycling programs are just some of the variables in the solid waste equation that will vary between planning and implementation of solid waste programs.

These guidelines are intended to be flexible while assisting local governments in calculating rates based on assumptions outlined in their plan. To provide a clear rationale for its decisions, a local comprehensive SWMP should contain a statement of the county's goals, objectives, and policies. The plan should also contain explicit information on local conditions, various assumptions, and information on existing operations used to support the plan's cost conclusions. During its review, the UTC staff will use these same assumptions, along with current solid waste collection company statistics and data, to estimate changes in rates to customers the plan may cause.

3.3. Direct and Indirect System Costs

During its review, the UTC looks at both direct costs and indirect costs.

An example of a direct cost is a recycling program provided by a UTC-certificated hauler. In this case, the company recovers its program operation costs directly from ratepayers through collection rates. An example of an indirect cost is a surcharge or city tax. The SWMP should provide sufficient information for UTC staff to determine the probable rate impact such as the number of participating households, type and volume of materials collected, frequency of collection, the processing facility to which materials will be taken, and expected markets for recycled materials or costs of disposing nonmarketable recyclable materials.

³ RCW 70.95.090(3)(c)

⁴ RCW 70.95.090(3)(d)

4. UTC Cost Assessment Review

4.1. The Internal Process

State law requires local governments to submit preliminary draft SWMPs to Ecology for review.⁵ The commission reviews plan assessments of the impact solid waste collection costs will have on rates charged by solid waste collection companies regulated under 81.77 RCW. Commission staff must complete the review within 45 days of receiving the plan from Ecology.⁶

When the UTC receives a draft plan for review, staff assigns a docket number and schedules it for an open meeting. Once review is complete and the commission has acknowledged the staff recommendations, the review letter is sent to the local government and Ecology.

If UTC cannot make a cost assessment because of missing, imprecise, or unclear information, UTC staff will first contact the local government planner or, if necessary, the Ecology reviewer for clarification. If the local government planner or Ecology reviewer clarifies the information, the commission reviewer will make an assessment. If the commission reviewer still cannot make a cost assessment, the commission will state so in its review letter.

Solid Waste Cost Assessment Questionnaire

While the UTC prefers the local government submit information in the provided format, RCW 70.95.090 does not mandate the use of this questionnaire. The local government may provide the requested information in any format it chooses, but it is mandatory that a cost assessment is prepared. Complete and accurate responses will facilitate a quality cost assessment. If the local government does not have the information or does not know the answer, explaining that this information is unavailable is an acceptable response and allows the reviewer to understand areas that call for closer analysis and study.

Each major section of the questionnaire concludes with a subsection titled "References and Assumptions" that allows the local government a place to note sources and references the UTC should know about in preparing the cost assessment. In these sections, the county or city should also report any assumptions made while compiling questionnaire responses.

Once the cost assessment is complete, it may be included with the SWMP as a separate section or an appendix.

⁵ RCW 70.95.094

⁶ RCW 70.95.096

COST ASSESSMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

General Information

Plar	n prepared	for the County of	
Plar	n prepared	for the City of	
Pre	pared by		
Con	ntact teleph	one	
Con	ntact email		
Dat	e		
Yea	irs		
Thro	ughout this	document:	
Yea	r 1 (Base Ye	ear) shall refer to	
Yea	r 2 shall ref	er to	
Yea	r 3 shall ref	er to	
Yea	r 4 shall ref	er to	
Yea	r 5 shall ref	er to	
Yea	r 6 shall ref	er to	
Each	year shall r	efer to (check one)	
	П	Calendar year	January 1 – December 31
	_	Fiscal year	Such as July 1 – June 30
		r istai vedi	Such as july 1 – julie 30

1. Demographics

1.1. Population

1.1.1. Provide the total population of your County (excluding cities choosing to develop their own SWMP) for the base year and each of the following five years.

	Table 1.1.1.a.
Year 1	
Year 2	
Year 3	
Year 4	
Year 5	
Year 6	

1.2. References and Assumptions

2. Waste Stream Generation

Provide the information below related to solid waste and recycling. Disposal refers to those tons disposed of at a landfill, incinerator, transfer station, or any other form of disposal you may be using. If other, please identify.

2.1. Tonnage of Solid Waste Disposed

2.1.1. Provide the total tonnage of solid waste disposed of in the base year and each of the following five years.

	Table 2.1.1.a.
Year 1	
Year 2	

Year 3	
Year 4	
Year 5	
Year 6	
2.2. Tonna	ge of Recyclable Materials with a Market ⁷
2.2.1. Provide following five	e the tonnage of recyclable materials recycled in the base year and each of the years.
	Table 2.2.1.a.
Year 1	
Year 2	
Year 3	
Year 4	
Year 5	
Year 6	
2.3. Tonna	ge of Recyclable Materials without a Market
2.3.1. Provide following five	e the tonnage of recyclable materials disposed of in the base year and each of the years.
	Table 2.2.1.a.
Year 1	
Year 2	
Year 3	
Year 4	
⁷ RCW 90.95.090	(7)(c)

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Year									
Year	Year 6								
2.4.	2.4. References and Assumptions								
3.	Collection	n Programs	5						
3.1.	Regulated S	olid Waste C	Collection Pro	ograms					
	de information foiction for the ba		-			rating in your			
			Та	ble 3.1.a.					
UTC-F	Regulated Haule	er Name							
G-Certificate #									
G-Cer	tificate #		-						
		Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6		
Resid	ential	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6		
Resid # of c	ential ustomers	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6		
Resid # of c	ential ustomers age collected	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6		
Resid # of c	ential ustomers	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6		
Resid # of c Tonna	ential ustomers age collected	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6		
Resid # of c Tonna Comm	ential ustomers age collected nercial	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6		
Resid # of c Tonna Comm	ential ustomers age collected nercial ustomers	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6		
Resid # of c Tonna Comm	ential ustomers age collected nercial ustomers	Year 1		Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6		
Resid # of c Tonna Comm # of c Tonna	ential ustomers age collected nercial ustomers				Year 4	Year 5	Year 6		

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
Residential	icai i	icai z	icai 5	icai 4	i cai 5	icai o
# of customers						
Tonnage collected						
Commercial						
Commerciai						
# of customers						
Tonnage collected						
		Ta	ble 3.1.c.			
		TU	DIE 3.1.C.			
UTC-Regulated Haule	er Name					
						
G-Certificate #						
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
Residential						
# of customers						
" or customers						
Tonnage collected						
Commercial						
# of customers						
# OI CUSTOINEIS						
Tonnage collected						
Ü						

3.2. Cost & Funding for Solid Waste Programs

Provide information for solid waste programs that have been implemented and/or proposed. Include costs and proposed funding mechanism. If these programs are discussed in the SWMP, provide the page number in the draft plan on which it is discussed.

	Table 3.2.a.		
	Implemented		
Program	Cost	Funding	Page #

			·	
		Table 3.2.b.		
		Proposed		
	Program	Cost	Funding	Page #
			· ·	
3.3.	References and Assi	umptions		
1	Masta Padustia	n (Pocycling and Orga	anics)	
4.	waste neductio	n (Recycling and Orga	arrics)	
4.1.	Recycling			
4.1.1.	Regulated Recycling (Collection Programs ⁸		
	e information for each U ear and each of the follo		ny operating in your jurisdiction for	the

⁸ RCW 70.95.090(7)(c)

Table 4.1.1.a.							
		TUD	71C 4.1.1.U.				
UTC-Regulated Haule	r Name						
G-Certificate #	G-Certificate #						
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	
Residential	ieai i	rear z	Teal 3	1601 4	Teal 5	Teal 0	
# of customers							
Tonnage collected							
Commercial							
# of customers							
Tonnage collected							
		Tab	le 4.1.1.b.				
UTC-Regulated Haule	r Name						
G-Certificate #							
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	
Residential	rear 1	Year Z	Year 3	Year 4	rear 5	rear o	
# of customers							
Tonnage collected							
Commercial							
# of customers							
Tonnage collected							
		Tak	ole 4.1.1.c.				
UTC-Regulated Haule	r Name						
G-Certificate #							

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
Residential						
# of customers						
Tonnage collected						
Commercial						
# of customers						
Tonnage collected						

4.1.2. Recyclable Materials

Provide a list of recyclable materials to be collected in accordance with the SWMP. For each item, indicate if there is an active market and if the revenues exceed the cost of processing.

Table 4.1.2.a.				
Recyclable Material	Active Market	Revenues > Processing Costs		
	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No		
	☐ Yes ☐ No	□ Yes □ No		
	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No		
	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No		
	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No		
	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No		
	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No		
	☐ Yes ☐ No	□ Yes □ No		
	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No		
	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No		
	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No		
	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No		

4.1.3. Costs & Funding for Recycling

Provide information for recycling programs that have been implemented and/or proposed. Include costs and proposed funding mechanism. If these programs are discussed in the SWMP, provide the page number in the draft plan on which it is discussed.

	Table 4.1.3.a.		
	Implemented		
Program	Cost	Funding	Page #
			<u> </u>
			_
	Table 4.1.3.b.		
	Proposed		
Program	Cost	Funding	Page #
			<u> </u>
			<u> </u>
			_

4.2. Other Waste Reduction Programs (Organics, such as Yard Waste and Food Waste)

4.2.1. Regulated Organics Collection Programs

Provide information for each UTC-regulated company collecting organics operating in your jurisdiction for the base year and each of the following five years.

		Tab	le 4.2.1.a.			
UTC-Regulated Haule	r Name					
G-Certificate #						
Residential	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
Residential						
# of customers						
Tonnage collected						
Commercial						
# of customers						
						-
Tonnage collected				 -		
		Tab	le 4.2.1.b.			
UTC-Regulated Haule	r Name					
G-Certificate #						
G-Certificate #						
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
Residential						
# of customers						
Tanana sallastad						
Tonnage collected						
Commercial						
# of customers						
# of customers						-
Tonnage collected						

4.2.2. Costs & Funding for Organics Collection Programs

Provide information for programs for collecting organics that have been implemented and/or proposed. Include costs and proposed funding mechanism. If these programs are discussed in the SWMP, provide the page number in the draft plan on which it is discussed.

olemented ole 4.2.2.b. roposed	Funding	Page
roposed		
		_
	Funding	Page
<u> </u>		<u> </u>
_		

5. Disposal

- 5.1. Energy Recovery & Incineration (ER&I) Disposal Programs
- 5.1.1. ER&I Facilities:

	7	able 5.1.1.a.	
	Facility		Facility
Name			
Location			
Owner		_	
Operator			
5.1.2. Amoun	t Landfilled		
•	provide the estimated amount ach of the following five years.	of ash or mate	rials that cannot be processed for the
	7	able 5.1.2.a.	
Facility			
Year 1			
Year 2			
Year 3			
Year 4			
Year 5			
Year 6			
5.1.3. Costs &	Funding for ER&I Programs		
proposed fundir			ented and/or proposed. Include costs and in the SWMP, provide the page number
		Table 5.1.3.a.	
Due		mplemented	Eunding Des- #
Progra	am Co	ot .	Funding Page #

				-
		Table 5.1.3.b.		
		Proposed		
Pro	ogram	Cost	Funding	Page #
			•	
5.1.4. Ash	Disposal Expense			
Provide the	expected costs ash	disposal.		
		Table 5.1.4.a.		
	Δ.	and a sum to a final and a sum to a sum to a final and a sum to a final	Cook	
	А	mount of Ash	Cost	
Year 1				
	-			
Year 2				
Year 3				
V 1				
Year 4				
Year 5				
rear 5		· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·		
Year 6				

5.2. Land Disposal Program

5.2.1. Land Disposal Facilities

Provide the following information for each land disposal facility in your jurisdiction that receives garbage or refuse generated in the county.

	Table 5.2.1.a.	
	Facility	Facility
Name		
Location		
Owner		
Operator		
5.2.2. Regu	lated Disposal	
Provide the to	onnage disposed of at each facility by UTC-regul	ated haulers.
	Table 5.2.2.a.	
Facility		
Year 1		
Year 2		
Year 3		
Year 4		
Year 5		
Year 6		
5.2.3. Non-	Regulated Disposal	
Provide the to	onnage disposed of at each facility by other (nor	n-regulated) haulers and other contributors.
	Table 5.2.3.a.	
Facility		

Year 1				
Year 2				
Year 3				
Year 4				
Year 5				
Year 6				
Provide inforn	posed funding m	ER&I Programs isposal programs that have been is echanism. If these programs are of hich it is discussed.		
		Table 5.2.4.a.		
		Implemented		
Pro	gram	Cost	Funding	Page #
				·
		T. / / 5.0. /		
		<i>Table 5.2.4.b.</i>		
		Proposed		
Pro	gram	Cost	Funding	Page #
				

5.3. References and Assumptions

6. Administration Program

6.1. Costs & Funding for Administration Programs

Provide information for administration programs that have been implemented and/or proposed. Include costs and proposed funding mechanism. If these programs are discussed in the SWMP, provide the page number in the draft plan on which it is discussed.

	Table 6.1.a.		
	Implemented		
Program	Cost	Funding	Page #
	Table 6.1.b.		
Duoguose	Proposed Cost	Funding	Dogo #
Program		Funding	Page #

6.2. References and Assumptions

7. Other Programs

7.1. Programs

For each program in effect or planned that does not readily fall into one of the previously described categories please fill in the following table.

		7	Table 7.1.a.			
Program						
Page #				_		
Owner/Operator						
UTC Regulations	□ Yes	□No	☐ Yes	□No	□ Yes	□ No
Anticipated Yearly Costs						

7.1.1. UTC Regulation Involvement

If UTC regulation is involved, please explain the extent of involvement.

7.2. Costs & Assumptions of Other Programs

Provide information for other programs that have been implemented and/or proposed. Include costs and proposed funding mechanism. If these programs are discussed in the SWMP, provide the page number in the draft plan on which it is discussed.

	Table 7.2.a.		
	Implemented		
Program	Cost	Funding	Page #

	Table 7.2.b. Proposed		
Program	Cost	Funding	Page #

7.3. References and Assumptions

8. Funding Mechanisms

This section relates specifically to the funding mechanisms currently in use and the ones that will be implemented to incorporate the recommended programs in the draft plan. Because the way a program is funded directly relates to the costs a resident or commercial customer will have to pay, this section is crucial to the cost assessment process. Please fill in each of the following tables.

8.1. Facility Inventory

	Table 8.1.a. Facility Inventory								
Facility Name	Type of Facility	Tip Fee per Ton	Transfer Cost	Transfer Station Location	Final Disposal Location	Total Tons Disposed	Total Revenue Generated (Tip Fee x Tons)		

8.2. Tip Fee Component

Table 8.2.a.									
Tip Fee Components									
Tip Fee by Facility	Surcharge	City Tax	County Tax	Transportation Cost	Operational Cost	Administration Cost	Closure Costs		

8.3. Tip Fee Forecast

Table 8.3.a.							
Tip Fee Forecast							
Tip Fee per Ton by Facility	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	

8.4. References and Assumptions

Please provide any support for the information you have provided. An annual budget or similar document would be helpful.

8.5. Surplus Funds

Provide information about any surplus or saved funds that may support your operations.