# Practice Management Assessment Tool

Introduction & Instructions

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# Introduction

The Practice Management Assessment Tool (**Assessment Tool**) was developed by the Law Societies of Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba (the **Prairie Law Societies**). The primary goal of the Assessment Tool is to encourage firms and lawyers to examine their practice management systems, evaluate their firm policies and processes, identify gaps and address them to manage risks.

The Assessment Tool also allows the Law Society to better track trends and progress in the practice management areas it covers. The ratings users provide in the Assessment Tool are accessible to the Law Society in aggregate form only and will help identify areas where further resource development is required. Any comments users provide are anonymous. As such, the Assessment Tool process is an educational exercise and a learning opportunity for both lawyers and the Law Society.

You are encouraged to work with other lawyers or staff to complete the Assessment Tool as needed, but also to use the Assessment Tool to guide discussion within your firm about your current practice management systems.

# Content

## Sections, Objectives and Practices

The Prairie Law Societies believe that prudent law firms and lawyers put appropriate policies and procedures in place to ensure that legal services are provided in accordance with the objectives set out in the Assessment Tool (**Objectives**). The Objectives are grouped together under Practice Management Sections (**Sections**) that are aimed at implementing controls to manage risk for you and your firm; enhancing client services; promoting infrastructure that supports ethical practice; and contributing to the overall financial soundness and profitability of your firm.

While many of the Objectives relate to individual duties of lawyers under the Code of Conduct (**Code**), it is important to keep in mind that the Assessment Tool is aimed at assisting the law firm to improve practice management and develop a firm culture that promotes adherence to the Code for yourself and your colleagues. Nothing in the Assessment Tool negates the individual responsibilities of lawyers under the Code.

To assist you in assessing the strength of your policies and processes, the Assessment Tool includes a detailed list of practice examples (**Practices**) that highlight regulatory requirements and provide guidance on the types of policies, procedures, processes, methods, steps and systems that a prudent lawyer and law firm might employ to satisfy each Section and its associated Objectives. When considering your performance with respect to the Objectives under each Section, you should reflect on the related Practices that are provided as guidance and examples of measures that could be put in place to improve your performance on each Objective.

The Practices you ultimately decide to use in your firm will be dependent on your practice setting and whether you have any staff working with you. In the Assessment Tool, you will be asked to assess your implementation of each of the Practices on a scale of 1 (Resources/support needed) to 5 (No supports needed). **The rating you indicate for each**

**Practice will help the Assessment Tool determine the most useful resources for you to be included in the curated list of free resources.** For the purposes of the Workbook, you are only asked to consider the overall rating for each Objective.

You will be asked to consider whether there are areas requiring your attention for each Section and note any particular areas of success, to assist you in developing a plan to improve in those areas and reduce risk for you and your firm.

Most of your initial work with the Sections, Objectives and Practices will take place under the Dashboard page. As you complete each Section of the Assessment Tool, you will be able to view, download and print a report outlining your ratings for each Practice.

### Priorities

For each completed Section of the Assessment Tool, you can view a snapshot of the Objectives and Practices receiving the lowest scores under the Priorities page, to help you quickly identify where to focus your efforts.

### Resources

For each completed Section of the Assessment Tool, you can also access a list of suggested resources under the Resources page for any identified gaps in policies and procedures to manage risk or to improve practice management, where necessary. Resources are drawn from the existing body of Law Society resources material and a variety of other practice resources from various providers.

The Assessment Tool platform has built-in logic that uses your ratings to curate a resource list. This list is an important return on investment of your time to do the assessment. **How you rate the Practices directly determines the resources the platform will provide at the end.** The lowest rated Practices are prioritized and resources relating to those Practices are suggested. An assessment with flat ratings (i.e., all 3s and 4s), makes it difficult for the Assessment Tool to prioritize and determine which resources are most beneficial for the user. **To receive the most benefit out of the assessment process, it is important to use best efforts in the rating process and use the full 1-5 range. A rating of 1 is not a negative result; rather, it indicates to the Assessment Tool what Practices you most want or need resources and support on**.

The Law Society of Alberta will strive to keep this list up to date, but some resources may become unavailable, as they are hosted on websites external to the Law Society. If you notice that a link is no longer working, are aware of additional resources that you think would be beneficial to include with the Assessment Tool or have any questions regarding existing resources, please let us know via email.

## Workbook

The **Workbook** is an optional tool to use when completing the Assessment Tool. The Workbook sets out additional content that will allow you to learn more on any topic you choose. In the online Assessment Tool, each Section will have links to relevant Workbook content that will open in a new tab in your browser and allow you to explore further information and resources related to each of the Objectives. The Workbook contains all the information in the Assessment Tool in a single document that can be saved or printed; opening the Workbook in another

application is not recommended as you may encounter formatting issues. The Workbook also contains a larger collection of resources pertaining to each Objective.

Consider the following actions you can take using the Workbook to enhance the clarity and utility of the Assessment Tool:

- You may want to review the Workbook to get a full sense of the nature and scope of the assessment in advance of completing the Assessment Tool.

- You may review the relevant Sections of the Workbook for additional information and guidance as you work through the assessment.

- You may want to review all of the resources relating to each Objective in the Workbook, beyond those resources curated to your responses using the online Assessment Tool.

- You may circulate the Workbook to staff, if any, who have feedback about your practice management systems.

- You may use the Workbook as a learning tool to educate colleagues and staff, if any, about firm best practices.

- You can build on the Workbook's guidance and Resources to create your own set of practice management materials.

Keep in mind that any information you include in the Workbook will not be saved to the Assessment Tool. It is recommended that you include all important information in the Assessment Tool to receive a snapshot of your Priorities and curated list of Resources, and so that you can track your progress as you redo Sections in the future.

After completing the Assessment Tool, you will:

- have a better idea of how you meet your regulatory and professional obligations;

- have chosen priorities for potential development;

- be acquainted with resources that could help you; and

- have given feedback to make this process work better.

Don't forget that other resources are available to help:

- Law Society staff, including  Practice Advisors, Practice Management and Trust Safety

- The Code of  Conduct and Rules of the Law Society of Alberta

- Experience of others – contact colleagues directly or participate in Mentor Connect or Mentor Express.
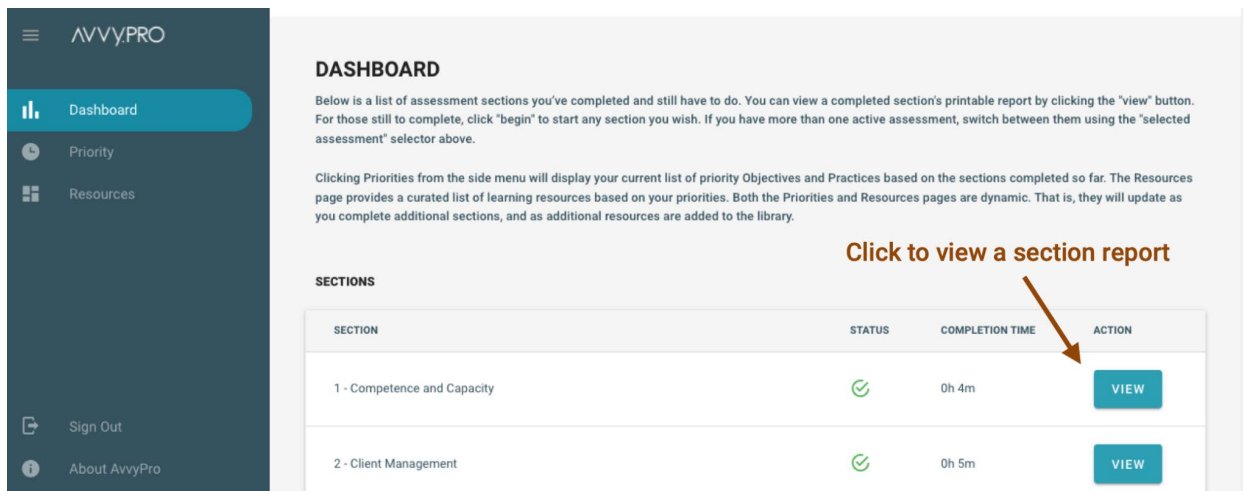
# How to Use the Assessment Tool

1.  **Getting Started**:

    a.  The minimum user system requirements to run the Assessment Tool's application (AvvyPro), are a computer or mobile phone device, an up-to-date standard web browser and a reliable connection to the internet. See the User Manual for details on the required operating systems and internet browsers. If you experience problems connecting to the platform or issues with its operation, send an email to support@avvy.pro with details.

    b.  Go to https://lsa.avvy.pro/ to access the AvvyPro platform.

    c.  You will be asked to select the version of the Assessment Tool that applies to you, either the sole practitioner, firm or individual lawyer version.

    d.  The first time you access the platform you will be asked to complete the registration process by providing your email address, name and firm name. Once you have registered once, you will not need to do so again.

    e.  Clicking "register" will automatically log you into the selected platform for the first time, and a secure linked email will be sent to your inbox. AvvyPro does not use traditional username/password authentication. Instead, your email inbox is your "key" to the platform. The next time you want to return to your assessment or dashboard, clicking this unique link logs you back into the platform. You can bookmark and use this link as many times as you like for the next seven days, at which time for security reasons it will expire. Generating a new link is easy; just re-enter your email address in the sign-in area and a new seven-day link will be sent to your email. Don't share links with anyone who is not part of your assessment process.

    f.  Please note, if you log out of the Assessment Tool and want to sign in again, you will need to enter your email address and a link will be sent to your email to access your unique Assessment Tool.

    g.  You are now able to begin the assessment process starting with Section 1, competence and capacity. Follow the navigation tips provided in the Assessment Tool to complete this Section. The first time you complete this Section you will be asked for some basic demographic information regarding your firm or practice, to assist in refining the resources that best serve your needs.

    h.  If a practice is not applicable to your circumstances, skip that practice and make a note in the text box at the end of the Objective why you skipped the practice.
    i.  Once Section 1 is complete, you can access your ratings under the Dashboard page in the left side menu, the suggested priorities based on your ratings under the Priority page, and a curated list of resources under the Resources page. You can then access Section 2, and the remaining Sections in any order you choose from the Dashboard page.

2.  **Providing feedback**: You are invited after each Objective to provide anonymous written comments that the Law Society can review. Questions, feedback or suggestions related to the content or resources can also be emailed to Education at any time.

3. **Saving your results:** When you click the submit button at the end of a Section your results are automatically saved. Your answers will not be saved if you exit a Section part way through completing the Objectives and Practices. **Do not use the back button or refresh your browser** - it will eject you out of the assessment and you will need to start over.

4. **Seeing/editing previous questions**: You can use the arrow buttons in the bottom right corner of the screen to scroll back and forth within each Section, or use scrolling to go back up the list of questions to review or change your inputs. The enter key takes you to the next Objective.

5. **Downloading and printing your results**: You can download and print your results for each Section from the Dashboard page. View the Section you want to download and print and click the "Print/Download Report" button at the bottom of the page. We do not recommend opening

6. **Submission**: Once you have completed a Section of the online assessment, you can redo the Section and generate a new report. You may want to do this either because you spotted something incorrect, or to re-assess a Section and generate more relevant resources. It is recommended that you download and print your results before redoing a Section as your previous answers will be erased from the platform. To access the redo feature:

   a. From the Dashboard page, view the section you want to redo:

b.  At the bottom of the section report page, click the "redo" button to redo that section of the assessment:

**Click to erase and re-do section**



RE-DO SECTION & GENERATE NEW REPORT

PRINT/DOWNLOAD REPORT