

A guide
to achieving a
whole of organisation
approach to
Best Value



*Department for
Victorian Communities*



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Acknowledgements

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Foreword

Best Value Victoria was introduced in 2000 to improve the delivery of Local Government services by making them affordable and more responsive to local needs and to encourage Councils to engage with their communities in shaping Councils' services and activities.

The Best Value Principles are enshrined in the Local Government Act and must be applied to all services and activities. In addition, Councils must report to their communities at least once a year on the application of the Principles. The legislation required that the Principles be applied to all Council services by December 2005. Beyond that date, Councils have greater flexibility in applying the Principles but must continue to do so and must continue to report to their communities at least annually on such application.

Since the introduction of Best Value Victoria, Councils have demonstrated a range of innovative and constructive approaches in applying the Principles to their individual organisations. Accordingly, in its 2004 Annual Report, the Best Value Commission recommended that the Ministerial Program and Reporting Codes be revoked and a voluntary Best Value guide be developed.

Following acceptance of this recommendation by the Minister for Local Government, the Corporate Planners Network, a special interest group of LGPro, formed a Best Value Practitioners Interest Group to begin development of suitable guidelines.

Local Government Victoria was represented on the Group and this partnership approach also extended to the Best Value Commission which has been heavily involved in providing input into the Guidelines.

The Guide to Achieving a Whole of Organisation Approach to Best Value is a valuable reference for Councils in taking a more integrated approach to Best Value. The development of the Guide also reflects the Government's commitment to working in partnership with Local Government.

We commend this document to you and hope that you find it a valuable tool in building on the benefits that Best Value has brought to the Local Government sector and to Victorian communities so far.

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1 Introduction

These guidelines have been developed by the Best Value Practitioners' Interest Group in a unique partnership between the LGPro Corporate Planner's Network, the Best Value Commission and Local Government Victoria. The guidelines have been developed following extensive consultation throughout the sector, including consultation sessions held in rural and metropolitan Victoria, the LGPro Conference in February 2006 and the LGPro Corporate Planner's Forum in March 2006. The contents of the guidelines have also been influenced by responses to a survey sent out to councils across Victoria which asked for feedback on councils' future application of Best Value.

Guide Background and Purpose

The Best Value legislation and its application across Victorian local government in the past five years has been widely viewed as successful in delivering both service improvements and a better alignment of services to changing community needs. The focus of the next stage of Best Value is to build on this success by encouraging a 'whole of organisation' approach to Best Value, where the Best Value principles are incorporated into an organisation wide improvement framework.

The contents of this guide are based on the following three principles:

- an organisation wide improvement framework is critical to sustaining a culture of high performance and improvement;
- organisational improvement frameworks can be strengthened and made more relevant to local government by incorporating the Best Value principles, and
- the Best Value principles can be implemented most effectively when they are built into an organisation wide improvement framework.

A key purpose of this document is to provide guidance and support material to assist Councils in developing or enhancing their formal or informal improvement and planning frameworks to effectively incorporate the Best Value principles.

The Best Value approach taken in Victoria is significantly different to that applied in the United Kingdom. Perhaps the most fundamental difference is the means by which local authorities in the United Kingdom are required to demonstrate Best Value compliance – through an audit process implemented by an external auditor. The Best Value Commission in Victoria continues to support a less compliance driven approach for Victorian local government, with the intention that the sector develop its own solutions to achieve and demonstrate performance improvement.

These guidelines support this flexible and practical approach and the partnership formed to develop the guidelines reflects the initiative and commitment of the State and Local Government sectors to a shared vision for delivering Best Value for Victoria.

2 The Best Value Framework

2.1 The Best Value Legislation

The Best Value Victoria Policy was introduced by the Victorian State government in 1999 and incorporates the following six Best Value Principles:

- All services must meet quality and cost standards.
- All services must be responsive to community needs.
- A service must be accessible to those for whom it is intended.
- A council must achieve continuous improvement in its provision of services.

- A council must develop a program of regular consultation with its community in relation to the services it provides.
- A council must report regularly, at least once a year, on its achievements to its community in relation to the Best Value Principles.

In 2005 two Ministerial Codes supporting the Best Value legislation (the *Code of Reporting* and the *Best Value Program Code*) were revoked, but the Legislation remains in place.

2.2 Best Value Compliance

The Best Value Legislation was designed to encourage the adoption of a consistent set of principles across the sector, whilst also allowing Councils the flexibility to meet the unique needs of their own communities. This flexibility is reflected in the requirements to comply with this legislation.

The key to compliance is that each council is required to report regularly (at least once a year) to the community on its achievements in relation to the Best Value principles. There is no specific guidance on what this reporting must entail, but many councils are reporting on achievements against each principle in their Annual Reports, in separate Best Value Annual Reports or in regular updates to the community. More detailed discussion on reporting options is available in the Section 8 - 'Reporting Performance'.

Whilst not specified in the current legislation, the Ministerial Response to the Best Value Commission's 2004 Report stated that councils will also need to continue to publish *to the community the plan* for applying the Best Value Principles to services.

This practice has been strongly supported by the Best Value Commission during the development of these guidelines and is considered a best practice approach to the application of Best Value.

Local Government Victoria, Department for Victorian Communities (LGV) from time to time may request information from councils in regard to compliance with the Best Value legislation including:

- information relating to Council's Best Value programs and service reviews: and/or
- information relating to how Councils have complied with the reporting requirements

It is critical that councils recognise while the compliance requirements are very flexible, the Best Value Legislation still remains a statutory obligation. Each council needs to be able to demonstrate that it is effectively applying the Best Value principles. If this flexible legislative tool is not seen as achieving its goals, especially following the removal of the Ministerial Codes of Practice, then future State governments may want to bring in more prescriptive requirements.

Figure 2.1 – Extract from the Local Government Act 1989

<p style="text-align: center;">Division 3—Best Value Principles</p> <p>208A. Best Value Principles to be followed A Council must comply with the Best Value Principles.</p> <p>208B. Best Value Principles The Best Value Principles are —</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">(a) all services provided by a Council must meet the quality and cost standards required by section 208D;(b) subject to sections 3C(2)(b) and 3C(2)(c), all services provided by a Council must be responsive to the needs of its community;(c) each service provided by a Council must be accessible to those members of the community for whom the service is intended;(d) a Council must achieve continuous improvement in the provision of services for its community;(e) a Council must develop a program of regular consultation with its community in relation to the services it provides;(f) a Council must report regularly to its community on its achievements in relation to the principles set out in paragraphs (a), (b), (c), (d) and (e). <p>208C. Factors that may be looked at in applying the Principles In applying the Best Value Principles, a Council may take into account, among other factors —</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">(a) the need to review services against the best on offer in both the public and private sectors; and(b) an assessment of value for money in service delivery; and(c) community expectations and values; and(d) the balance of affordability and accessibility of services to the community; and(e) opportunities for local employment growth or retention; and(f) the value of potential partnerships with other Councils and State and the Commonwealth governments; and(g) potential environmental advantages for the Council's municipal district. <p>208D. Quality and cost standards</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">(1) A Council must develop quality and cost standards for the provision of any service it provides for its community.(2) A quality or cost standard must set out the performance outcomes determined by the Council in relation to each service.(3) In developing quality and cost standards a Council must take into account the factors listed in sections 208C(a), (b), (c), (d) and (e).(4) A Council may develop different quality and cost standards for different classes of services. <p>208E. When the Best Value Principles are to be implemented <i>No longer applicable</i></p> <p>208F. Standards to be publicly available A Council must ensure that any quality or cost standards it adopts are available for inspection by the public.</p> <p>208G. Report on Best Value Principles compliance At least once every year a Council must report to its community on what it has done to ensure that it has given effect to the Best Value Principles</p>

2.3 Why Best Value?

The State Government's objectives in introducing the Best Value principles and legislation were to foster the following features within local councils:

Local accountability – Councils are accountable to their own communities for the provision of services and the performance of the organisation in accordance with the Best Value Principles.

Whole-of-organisation response – Council implementation of the Best Value Principles should be a whole of organisation response applied through its corporate planning responsibilities and including all its services and functions.

Consultation on performance – A council demonstrates its accountability for the implementation of the Best Value Principles by measuring and reporting on its performance to its community against objectives and targets that are set by the council after consultation with its community.

Best Value outcomes – The Best Value Principles framework will deliver enhanced service and organisational performance across the local government sector and the sector should be able to demonstrate to the State Government that it has achieved these objectives.

Benefits, not costs – Implementation of the Best Value Principles framework will not incur costs that outweigh the benefits of applying the Best Value Principles framework, particularly in relation to small rural Councils.

Encourage innovation – The Best Value Principles framework encourages councils to adopt innovative and creative responses to service delivery, including a range of partnering relationships.

These objectives highlight the importance Best Value puts on *planning, delivering and improving* council services. Best Value is intended to be applied on a whole-of-organisation level, and as such affects all aspects of council business and personnel, from the councillors through to service providers, in all services including the governance aspects of council.

The processes and tools which support Best Value - such as consultation, use of performance measures, carrying out reviews, and reporting back to the stakeholders – have long been considered good practice. Best Value however offers a method to bring these together in a more coordinated way to assist councils to achieve high quality outcomes for their communities.

2.4 Taking Best Value beyond compliance

To date Best Value has been used by many councils as a tool to review individual services, and to then identify service improvements. While this role for Best Value continues to be critical, there are limitations to only applying Best Value in this way. Service reviews are one-off periodic reviews, while a strategic continuous improvement approach requires review to be incorporated into the on-going management cycles of councils. Further, service reviews do not necessarily identify improvements in the way in which departments or services interact.

Those councils which have achieved the implementation of Best Value with the greatest benefit have done so by incorporating the Best

Value principles into a broader improvement framework. Doing so ensures the principles are implemented consistently and effectively, and as such provides a mechanism by which councils can ultimately achieve service excellence. A broader improvement framework which includes planning, implementation, review and improvement cycles will be far more effective in creating and sustaining a continuous improvement structure and culture.

Councils continue to have the option to take a limited compliance approach to Best Value. Doing so however will not deliver the full benefits to councils which the Best Value framework offers. This view forms a fundamental basis to the purpose and contents of this guide.

2.5 Best Value and Continuous Improvement

The Best Value outcomes are achieved for the benefit of all stakeholders – community, customers, employees, government – when the whole organisation is working in the most effective and efficient manner possible.

There are several ways to achieve this state of operational excellence, however best practice organisations have:

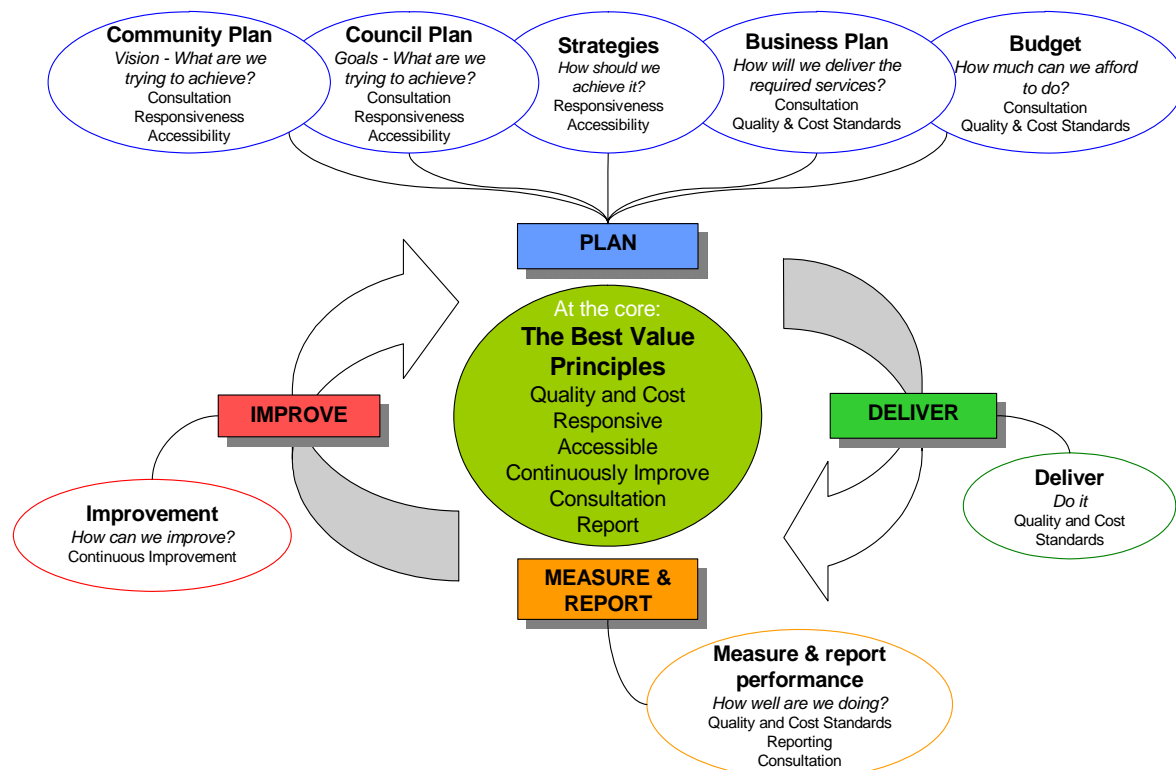
- a set of guiding principles
- an ongoing improvement process
- application of the principles and improvement process to the three levels of an organisation: the organisational level, the process or activity level, and the individual level and
- organisational alignment, so that all activities are aligned to the mission and vision of the organisation. This occurs through a linked planning process.

Best Value as an Improvement Framework

The Best Value principles provide a framework of “**What**” to consider when delivering or improving any activity, process or service in a local government organisation. The framework is an improvement structure and process which offers specific benefits to local governments.

The following diagram illustrates our perspective of the Best Value improvement framework and the supporting processes. Further sections of this guide have been structured to reflect the stages presented in this diagram.

Figure 2.2 – A Best Value Improvement Framework



The Best Value framework is largely based on the principles of continuous improvement, and presents a method by which local government can systematically improve performance and service delivery. While the emphasis might change depending on the level of organisation to which they apply, the underlying principles remain as:

- consult with stakeholders
- respond to stakeholder needs
- be accessible
- employ quality and cost standards
- measure Performance
- continuously improve
- report transparently to stakeholders

The principles of continuous improvement, including a customer focus, change by design and systems thinking form the basis to performance management and measurement frameworks. Effective organisational frameworks demonstrate the following features:

- they are organisation-wide and cross-functional
- they work at both a strategic and operational level
- they are achievable and sustainable
- they are not overly bureaucratic
- the benefits outweigh the costs
- they produce results

An obvious example is the Australian Business Excellence Framework (ABEF), which is designed to assist organisations to improve management and leadership practices, assess the performance of their leadership and management systems, build those results into strategic planning processes and benchmark where their organisation stands in terms of the marketplace and competitors. Some other examples of performance management frameworks and improvement processes are:

ISO 9001 Quality System – Global standard and approach for quality management systems. The standard focuses on the management of processes and documentation in order to meet customer needs and expectations.

The Balanced Scorecard – A strategic management system which encourages focus on the strategies and performance measures which drive success. It requires a balance between the financial perspective with other perspectives, such as business processes, people, environment and governance.

EFQM Excellence Model – Organisational improvement framework for assessing strengths and areas for improvement across the spectrum of an organisation's activities (similar to the ABEF)

Business Planning Model – Involves using the Business Planning process as the vehicle for identifying and documenting function and service improvement opportunities.

Six Sigma - A disciplined data driven approach and methodology for eliminating the defects in processes.

Lean management – An approach to management which focuses on identifying and eliminating non value adding activities. Typically non value adding is defined as those activities or processes which do not add value for the customer, either directly or indirectly.

Value management – Organisational improvement framework incorporating a toolbox of proven methods that aim to optimise customer outcomes within the resources available.

These frameworks have various strengths and weaknesses, and organisations should select a framework which suits their features and reflects the preferred culture. Councils should bear in mind that the view of the Best Value Commission is that these frameworks on their own do not necessarily assist councils in achieving their governance responsibilities. In part a response to this observation, a fundamental premise of these guidelines is that performance management and measurement frameworks can be improved, for local government, by incorporating the Best Value principles.

A Continuous Improvement Process and Tools

Achieving Best Value requires an ongoing *process* of performance review and improvement.

Therefore a proactive intentional *improvement process* is also required to support the Best Value improvement framework. The improvement process tells us “**How**” an organisation can improve. There are a number of variations to the improvement cycle.

In general the four steps to improvement are:

- Plan some activity or service
- Implement the plan
- Check its outcome against expectations
- Act to improve performance and the cycle continues.

The effective implementation of continuous improvement also relies on a range of techniques and tools such as (but not limited to) benchmarking, process review, activity based analysis, performance measurement and cause and effect analysis.

2.6 Best Value and Governance

Assisting councils to achieve on-going performance improvement is an important aim of the Best Value legislation. The Best Value legislation also aims to ensure local government maximises its governance obligations as a democratically elected body. Best Value’s emphasis on consultation with the community is intended not only to ensure councils understand the community’s needs for services, but also to achieve good governance, of inherent value in itself.

The Good Governance Guide 2004 describes the ultimate benefits good governance provides to a community - *“When local governments practice good governance, their communities are more connected and engaged, better services are provided, and there is more effective use of resources. In meeting the highest standards of public accountability, good governance produces better outcomes.”*

A Role for Councillors in Best Value

Councillors set the policy framework for Best Value. Although they are not required to be involved in the application of Best Value in detail, the policies they make in relation to the built environment, land use planning, infrastructure, asset management and other council responsibilities set the guiding framework, or vision for the delivery of services. A sound performance improvement framework is required to refer back to the vision of an organisation and ensure the practical delivery of services reflects this vision.

“Engaging councillors in aspects of the Best Value process will demonstrate and support good governance and will assist councillors to make decisions strategically in terms of future service delivery and to reflect community expectations”. – Best Value Commission 2004 Annual Report.

There are a number of ways in which councillors can be involved in Best Value, from informing consultation processes to sitting on Best Value review panels. The approach taken to councillor involvement will vary across councils, and will also change depending on the service or issue at hand.

3 Best Value and Organisational Planning

3.1 Performance Management Frameworks help organisations plan effectively

All councils develop a number of strategies and plans, from the Community Plan through to the Business or Service unit and individual work plans. Only a few councils however have achieved a linked approach between these plans – for many councils the plans stand alone and it is not clear how they depend on or support one another.

Performance management frameworks perform the critical role of creating links between individual, service and corporate objectives as articulated in the different levels of plans. They do this by offering a structure in which to:

- consider and rank priorities with reference to an organisation's vision;
- link priorities at different levels (i.e. the strategic and operational),
- monitor and measure priority achievement;
- ensure a balanced approach to measurement;
- report only on the measures which are important.

An example of this familiar to local government is the Balanced Scorecard, which uses a cascading goal/ objective tool. A key to this approach is that each lower level objective should support or relate back to a higher level objective. The Balanced Scorecard also provides a method by which organisations can look beyond the traditional financial measures, to consider other perspectives such as governance, people and the environment.

3.2 Best Value can improve Council Planning Processes

The Best Value legislation stresses the importance of consultation, and being responsive to community needs. It also emphasises the importance of accessibility. All of these principles can be applied to both improve the way in which councils plan, and the quality of the plans themselves. This is summarised in Figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1 - How the Best Value principles can add value to Council planning processes

Planning document	Best Value Principle	How the Best Value principles can add value to the planning process or planning document:
Community Plan/Longer Term Vision (eg Vision 2020) Council's longer term vision documents should be formed by consultation processes.	Consult with the community	A key focus of the Best Value legislation is to encourage all plans to be developed in consultation with the local community and other stakeholders.
	Be responsive to community needs	As the documentation of the Council's longer term vision for the community, the Community Plan should, by its very definition, reflect the current and proposed future community and user needs.
Council Plan The Council Plan plays a critical role in documenting the outcomes to be achieved by service delivery, and the performance indicators by which the achievement of these outcomes will be measured.	Consult with the community	The outcome measures should be linked to the Council plan goals. The Council Plan also documents the scope of services as agreed in consultation with the community, Councillors and staff.
	Responsive to community needs	The Council Plan documents Council's understanding of the community's needs and expectations. The Council Plan should also document mechanisms/strategies by which Council will plan for and manage changing community and user needs.
	Continuous improvement	Best Value can be included as a Council Plan objective, to achieve continuous improvement.
Strategic Resource Plan The strategic resource plan details how the Council Plan objectives will be resourced, and is to be updated annually	Quality and cost standards	In considering appropriate resources to achieve objectives, Councils should assess value for money in service delivery, taking into account affordability and accessibility of services.
Service/Business Plan The service or business plan outline the strategies and actions to be taken to achieve the Council Plan goals and objectives	Consult with the community	Many councils also use the process of developing the service/business plan to consult further on the needs of specific service users or beneficiaries
	Responsive to community needs	The service/business plan documents the service scope. The service scope should reflect the needs of the general community and service users, within the resources available.
	Quality and cost standards	The service/business plan documents the standards to which the service will be delivered. These performance standards should at least address service quality (defined with reference to 'best on offer'), and service cost.
	Be accessible	The service/business plan should identify any barriers to accessibility, and ensure the barriers are addressed through actions.
	Continuously improve	The service/business plan should document continuous improvement strategies and actions, and measures of performance improvement achievement.

4 Consultation and Engagement

Effectively implementing the Best Value principles of responsiveness, accessibility, continuous improvement and reporting all require effective consultation. Indeed consultation is fundamental to achieving the outcomes intended by the Best Value framework.

A challenge for local government is to further embed consultation as common or normal business practice. With the considerable weight it gives to consultation, the Best Value framework offers a mechanism by which councils can achieve this.

Consultation is also an important input to achieving continuous improvement, and can add value to all stages of the improvement process. During the planning stage for example, consultation ensures we understand the community's needs; to accurately measure performance we must seek feedback from the service beneficiaries on how they perceive and experience the service; and in developing and maintaining effective approaches to reporting we must continually ask the community whether the information we are providing is relevant and accessible.

4.1 What is consultation?

Consultation is the process applied to understand the perspective of stakeholders. Consultation can range from passive information provision and communication, through to high levels of participatory decision making, depending on the level of engagement appropriate to the issue. In all its forms, effective consultation provides an opportunity for evidence based consideration of issues, and therefore validates decision making. Consultation should be considered a process to inform decision making, not an outcome on its own.

Consultation is especially helpful in:

- Scoping and identifying requirements
- Testing new ideas and strategies
- Setting long term priorities and resources allocation
- Measuring service user satisfaction
- Engaging the community in decision making
- Measuring community satisfaction with service direction
- Understanding the community and its priorities

4.2 Consultation at the organisation and service levels

Consultation delivers benefits at both the organisation and service levels of a council.

At the organisational level

Councils should take a strategic rather than ad-hoc approach to consultation. Doing so can be achieved by developing an organisation wide consultation plan, which defines the purpose of consultation for the organisation, identifies consultation priorities, and documents a consultation implementation schedule.

The organisation should formally consult with its stakeholders – the community, service customers, employees, service partners and other levels of government – on a regular basis to identify their requirements and expectations. At the organisation level this often occurs through annual community consultations or surveys.

At the service or process level

The Best Value Principles apply to both internal services and external services. Internal and external service providers should consult regularly with their customers (or those who receive the service) to identify their requirements and expectations. This should occur through formal planned consultations and informal feedback on service performance.

4.3 What is engagement?

Engagement is an outcome which can arise out of consultation processes, or other interactions occurring between a local government and its community, such as participation and the gathering and provision of information.

Engagement is achieved when the community is and feels part of the overall governance of that community. Local governments have an important role in building stronger communities, and engaging communities is a key means to doing so.

4.4 Best practice features of consultation

The Community Consultation Resource Guide presents seven principles which underlie all good consultation practice. These are:

Focus – Everyone should be clear on why consultation is being undertaken.

Inclusiveness, accessibility and diversity – All affected parties must be consulted.

Provision of information – Information must be made available, in an appropriate form, to those participating in the process.

Timing – The consultation must be timed to ensure the results of the consultation are able to influence the policy, planning and decision making process.

Responsiveness and feedback – Consultation should be transparent and open and all issues raised should be responded to by the council.

Evaluation – Consultation processes should be evaluated following the completion of the decision making process.

Resourcing – Adequate resourcing is fundamental to achieving effective consultation.

Some additional issues to consider include:

Maintaining confidentiality and privacy – Consider what is required to comply with privacy legislation.

Avoiding bias in consultation research – Consider who should be conducting the research to avoid potential bias.

Figure 4.2 presents methods to achieving some of these best practice principles in consultation.

Figure 4.1 - Achieving Best Practice Principles in consultation

Best practice feature practice or principle	How?	Consider...	Outcome achieved
Understand the community	By collecting detailed statistical data for community profiling. Use of census information	What existing research results are available?	Understand trends, changes and long term goals Starting point for new research
Provide feedback opportunities and effective levels of participation	Often Councils hold consultation events such as community meetings, master plan displays, Metropolitan Strategic Statement consultations, however the community may have varying levels of interest and preferences for responding or participation. Determine the most appropriate and effective pathway for community input by considering community preferences. Find ways that are as accessible and as relevant as possible in order to best engage participants.	Demographic Access Geography Medium Cost	Engagement
A willingness by Council to respond to consultation	Consider how gathered feedback will be taken on board and responded to. Determine the weight it will be given in shaping service delivery.	Purpose of consultation	Genuine utilisation of consultation data
Apply a breadth of consultation approaches and methods	Councils need to determine the approach most suited to their community and resources. Some options: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Methods which directly engage the respondents (phone, intercept, door to door and mail out surveys). • Group Interaction with interested target groups such as focus/discussion groups. • On site communication and engagement for two way interaction on issues such as listening posts. • Advertising the issue or the topic plan and solicit feedback. • Key stakeholder interviews. • Use of general events such as festivals and gatherings. • Relational consultation linking to and building on an event which is dealing with an existing topic. 	Choose the approach or method most suitable to the target group.	Maximised participation levels

Consultation Tools

There are a number of consultation tools available, such as:

Surveys, including:

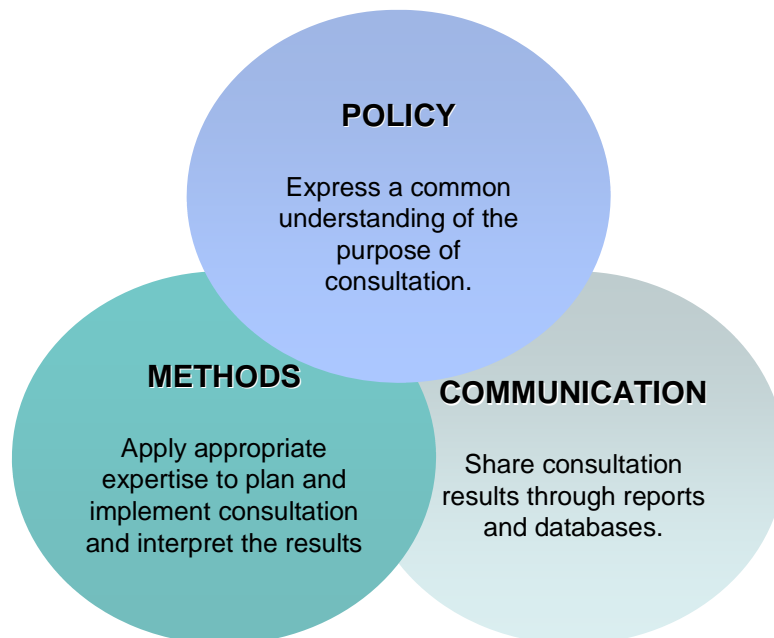
- Telephone
- Mail
- Face to face
- Web surveys
- Site and event specific surveys
- Intercept surveys

Other tools, often used to collect qualitative data include:

- Stakeholder groups
- Focus groups
- Forums
- Individual Depth Interviews
- Telephone focus groups
- Workshops

Effective use of consultation will be greatly assisted by a shared organisational understanding of its meaning and how consultation can be applied. A good practice cross-organisational approach to consultation should be supported by policy, protocols, and communication tools which support one another.

Figure 4.2 - A good practice approach to consultation



5 Delivering Services

5.1 Introduction

An important difference between the current Best Value legislation and the Compulsory Competitive Tendering legislation which preceded it is the change in assumptions regarding both the means of achieving and definition of value for money in government service delivery. As a sector we have become more adept at taking into consideration factors other than the least cost when measuring value for money and efficiency.

As a sector we are also continuing to develop our thinking on how to demonstrate we are delivering services in the most cost effective way while achieving the desired standards and impact.

To contribute to the thinking on this issue, this section of the Guide explores the definitions of value for money and efficiency in government service delivery, and some options by which councils can demonstrate they have achieved these.

5.2 Defining Quality

Defining quality of services can be complex, particularly for services which produce intangible outcomes or impacts which are difficult to measure. Arriving at a definition of quality for services with intangible outcomes can in part be achieved by measuring community satisfaction with a service. In some cases this will be insufficient on its own, as clients may not have all the information required to assess whether a service is of reasonable quality.

Indeed, defining quality of services can also require a technical knowledge of the service and service deliverables, including the ability to assess whether the service inputs or service delivered is 'fault free'. So a service provider needs to understand how a service is viewed by the service users, and whether the service is technically correct or free of faults. With this all of this knowledge, a service provider can then establish a range of service standards which articulate the level to which a service is to be delivered.

Establishing service standards

A standard may be concerned with the level of quality, timeliness, cost, accessibility, satisfaction, affordability or a combination of these. The Best Value legislation specifies that standards must address both quality and cost at a minimum, however good practice in service standards requires that all of these elements of a service be addressed. Doing so ensures a comprehensive approach to measuring the service.

A key purpose of service standards is to inform reporting on performance to the community and other service stakeholders. To ensure reporting on what is considered relevant, service standards should be either developed or finalised in consultation with service users, beneficiaries and other stakeholders.

What is value for money?

Assessing 'value for money' means allocating equal importance to both the cost *and* quality of a service or function. Delivering a service at the lowest cost possible can only be considered a reasonable approach if the service also achieves the outputs and outcomes to the required quality and achieves the impact the service is designed to achieve. The service users and communities' perception of quality is of key consideration in achieving value for money, and therefore the service must also meet the standards required by the service users or community. In summary then, value for money is achieved when a service delivered to the desired standards at the lowest possible cost.

How is value for money measured?

Best Value does not require councils to competitively tender or outsource services as a means to demonstrate competitive pricing or efficiency in service delivery. Best Value does however require councils to apply performance measurement approaches to demonstrate that services are being delivered to the highest quality standards possible, and in the most efficient manner.

Certainly market testing and outsourcing of services remain valid options for councils to consider, but the way in which a service should be defined, delivered and then measured, is influenced by a breadth of factors beyond cost. Benchmarking services quality and costs remains an important tool to measure whether value for money is being achieved.

5.3 Efficiency in Government

In July 2004 the Department of Treasury in the United Kingdom commissioned a review of public sector efficiency. This review defined improvement in efficiency as those reforms to delivery processes and resource utilisation which:

- Maintain the same level of service provision while reducing the resources needed or deploying fewer staff;
- Result in additional outputs, such as enhanced quality or quantity of service, for the same resources; or
- Remodel service provision to enable better outcomes.

Reforms were only considered to improve efficiency if they reduced resources but at least maintained or improved service quality.

Planning and Delivering Efficiencies

Rather than cuts in services and budgets, a more sophisticated approach to improve efficiency should include innovation in service delivery, investment in technology, rationalisation of council office functions and organisational development.

The approach a council uses to ensure it meets efficiency targets is a matter for that council - there are no "one size fits all" solutions. The process for planning and delivering efficiency is the same as the improvement process, in that it follows the plan, deliver, measure and report, improve cycle:

- Identifying the opportunities for efficiency gains;
- Implementing actions to achieve them;
- Monitoring progress on implementation; and
- Measuring and reporting the gains that are achieved.

While the detail of applying this process is for individual councils to determine, the following issues should be considered:

1. Support from Management

The responsibility for delivering efficiency gains belongs to everyone within a local government organisation, but management play a key role by providing direction and support. Everyone needs to understand the benefits that can be accrued from efficiency gains in terms of improving the service(s) offered to the customer and releasing resources that can be reinvested in frontline services, and that these gains cannot be delivered in isolation. It must be remembered that efficiency is not just about money, but about doing things better and 'smarter'.

2. Identifying Opportunities for Gains

A key step in planning to improve efficiency is to identify the actions needed to obtain efficiency gains. Efficiency planning should be integrated into service planning and service reviews as part of normal business processes. It can also form part of Council's annual strategic/business/budget planning process.

When identifying for opportunities for improvement, councils should identify the areas where performance is low, relative to costs, and not just look at areas where the costs appear high.

3. Monitoring Achievement

Councils need to ensure there is adequate monitoring of the impact of efficiency initiatives in order that any negative results to service delivery are identified and addressed promptly. Effective risk management approaches will also assist in doing this.

Demonstrating Efficiency

A demonstration of efficiency requires evidence that a service is achieving its goals and outcomes, to the quality standards established, at the lowest practicable cost. Investigation of the efficiency of a service should be a key focus of service reviews, and improvement initiatives to achieve greater efficiencies should form part of an improvement action plan.

Beyond addressing the issue of efficiency in service reviews, councils can also demonstrate efficiency by:

- conducting performance, process and outcomes benchmarking;
- market testing and competitive tendering;
- publicising the results of service reviews, including performance improvements achieved;
- reporting on efficiency performance measures;
- surveying to gain feedback on satisfaction of the service users on the efficiency issue;
- forming purchasing cooperatives to gain better pricing of purchased goods and services;
- combining to deliver services on a regional basis to achieve economies of scale in service delivery costs, such as regional libraries;
- implementing shared service arrangements in order to reduce administration costs;
- investing in technology to support new service delivery models, such as one stop shop call centres, internet facilities and self service options.

6 Measuring Performance

6.1 Best Value and performance measurement – a focus on outcomes

In its 2004 Annual Report, the Best Value Commission (BVC) states:

“there is now the opportunity for the Best Value process to mature to focus more on outcomes, rather than just quality and cost standards. The Commission recognises that standards are only one element of continuous improvement. A greater emphasis on developing outcome measures will further drive continuous improvement in service delivery and planning”

In this report the BVC also comments that a move to more outcomes-based reporting on performance would better demonstrate councils’ achievements to their communities. Developing service outcome measures provides a means by which we can measure these achievements. Measuring services at the outcome level can provide a more meaningful and bigger picture view of service effectiveness. This is particularly true for services which do not produce tangible

outputs, or whose activities have a longer term impact.

The current focus on measuring outcomes and impact is also being assisted by the notion of community participation and citizen engagement, with councils taking a stronger leadership role in the development of long term visions for their communities.

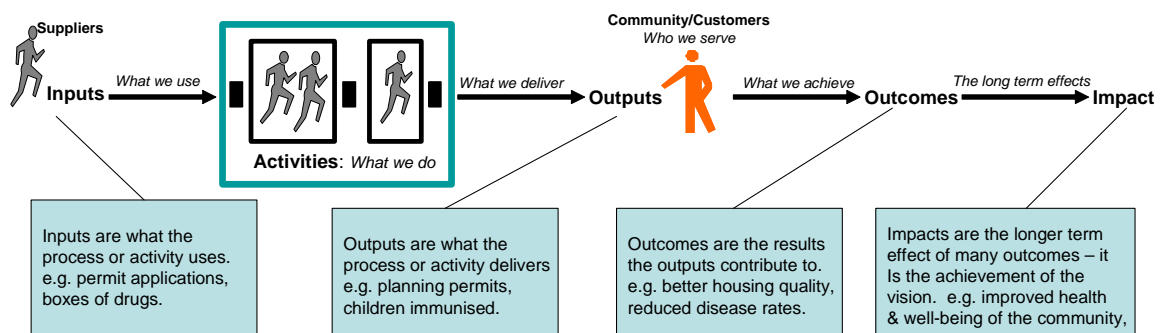
Historically, local government has achieved high standards of measurement of services with tangible outputs, but like other sectors, we still struggle to measure longer term and less tangible outcomes and impacts. The BVC has recognised this factor, and encourages the sector to continue to develop our approach to this area.

So how can the Best Value framework assist us to respond to this challenge? The answer to this question lies somewhat in understanding the relationship between measure types – the hierarchy of measures.

6.2 Measure Types – Input, Output and Outcome

Achieving an integrated approach to performance measurement requires an understanding of the ‘hierarchy’ of performance measure types – input, output and outcome.

Figure 6.1 - The service delivery model



Input measures measure the inputs to a process or service, like number of people, number of permit applications etc. Input measures are usually easy to collect and relate to the process rather than the service customer. Input measures are often quality measures which ensure the inputs to the process have no errors or deficiencies. Sometimes the unit cost of an input is important where the item is costly, or where an item is critical in the process the timeliness of the delivery may also be important to monitor.

Output measures measure how well the process outputs are delivered to the customer (internal or external). Output measures are usually:

- Cost - how much does the process or service cost to deliver?
- Time - whether outputs are delivered in a timely manner to the customer or community, and how long they wait to be served.
- Accessibility – the availability of the service to those who want to use it.
- Quality - how good the output is.

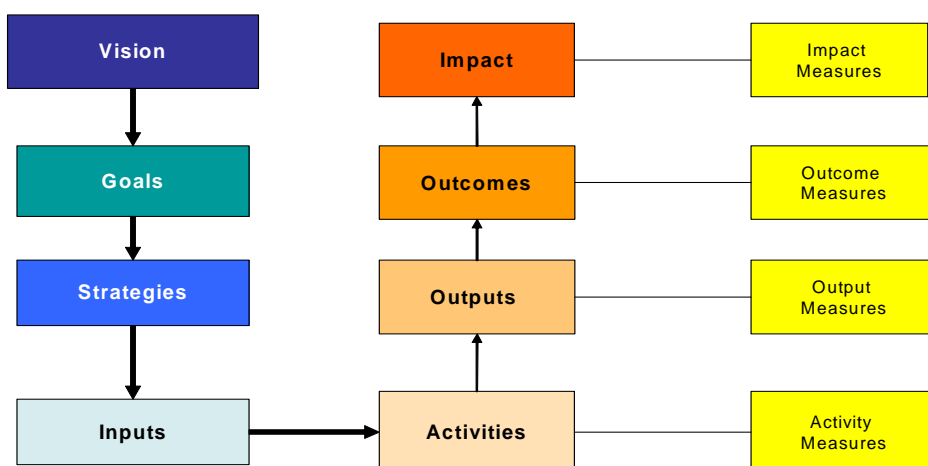
- Affordability –whether the price is affordable, either by Council or by users where there is a charge for the service.
- Customer service - how satisfied are customers with the service they receive.

Outcome measures measure how well the objectives of the service are being achieved. These must be measured separately from the service outputs, as they represent the achievement of service objectives, not just whether the service outputs have been delivered.

Adequately measuring service quality and the achievement of service outcomes requires an understanding of the goals of delivering a service, and a combined approach of identifying and objectively measuring the quality of the service inputs, processes and outputs, and finally by measuring the service user and/or community's satisfaction levels.

As illustrated by Figure 6.2, measures at the output level are more likely to be both quantitative and qualitative, but as we move to higher levels of strategy, outcomes measures become more qualitative in nature.

Figure 6.2 - Relationship between levels of strategies and measure types.



6.3 The importance of measuring performance

By definition an organisation which continuously improves, achieves enhancement of performance standards on an on-going basis. For an organisation to achieve continuous improvement however, a number of enablers need to be in place, including:

- an improvement framework
- an improvement process
- improvement methods and tools
- a performance measurement system
- a culture of improvement

For an organisation to improve, it must first have a clear view on how it currently performs. Conceptually, understanding this link between performance measurement and achieving continuous improvement is simple. Putting this concept into practice however presents numerous challenges, particularly for complex organisations like local governments. In spite of this challenge, performance measurement is of course a fundamental support needed to enable effective performance management.

The Best Value framework emphasises the importance of measurement and reporting on measurement results. The following table demonstrates the important role performance measurement plays in achieving the two Best Value principles of Cost and Quality Standards and Continuous Improvement.

Best practice features of a performance management and review system

What are the features of an integrated performance management and review system? Best practice systems demonstrate that they:

- have an analysis and learning base (strong evidence base for decision making);
- have a visible link between organisational strategy and personal performance;
- clearly articulate strategy;
- involve the community in the formation of goals, outcomes and measures;
- provide the basis for a continuous improvement cycle;
- integrate performance monitoring and reporting into corporate processes;
- integrate performance tools;
- measure performance at both the strategy and operational level;
- are simple and transparent.

Within the overall performance management and review system, individual measures should aim to be:

- relevant to what the organisation is aiming to achieve;
- focussed on value adding activities;
- attributable – the activity measured must be capable of being influenced by actions which can be attributed to the organisation or individual, and it should be clear where accountability lies;
- well defined – with a clear, unambiguous definition so that data will be collected consistently, and the measure is easy to understand and use;
- timely – producing data regularly enough to track progress and quickly enough for the data to be useful;
- reliable – accurate enough for the intended use and responsive to change
- comparable with either past periods or similar programs elsewhere;
- verifiable with clear documentation behind it, so that the processes that produce the measure can be validated.

In practice it can be difficult to devise performance indicators that satisfy all these criteria and trade-offs will be necessary. The overall set of measures should aim to give a balanced picture of performance reflecting all aspects of an organisation's activity, both internally and externally with partners. For more detailed guidance on establishing a performance management framework, refer to the *Performance Monitoring and Reporting Guidelines* – prepared by the Victorian Corporate Planner's Network.

Figure 6.3 – Best Value is enabled by Performance Measurement

Best Value Requirements	Verification	Vehicle/Tools
Meet Quality and Cost Standards		
Scope and identify services	The existing service scope has been agreed in consultation with Councillors, management and staff.	Community Plan Neighbourhood Plan Council Plan Direction setting meeting with Councillor(s) Business Unit Plan
Set performance standards and review services against 'best on offer'	Performance standards have been set through a process which critically examined the department's/unit's mission, goals, objectives and strategies and translated them into KPIs. and performance and/or processes have been compared with appropriate public and private sector organisations, through formal or informal benchmarking or tendering.	Council Plan Performance Management System Benchmarking Market testing Community Consultation
Assess value for money in service delivery, taking into account affordability and accessibility of services	Service levels achievable with current and future funding have been assessed in the service review and are considered adequate.	Service capacity statement
Establish a performance measurement system to set and measure outcomes	Performance measurement is continued routinely and includes appropriate outcome measures as well as output and efficiency measures.	Business Unit Plan
Continuously Improve		
Achieve above the quality and cost standards previously set	Performance measurement planned in Business Unit Plan and implemented in practice.	Business Plan
Raise quality and cost standards	Performance measurement planned in Business Unit Plan and implemented in practice.	Business Plan
Improve accessibility to services by the community	Performance measurement planned in Business Unit Plan and implemented in practice.	Business Plan
Improve services to meet identified community needs	Performance measurement planned in Business Unit Plan and implemented in practice.	Business Plan

7 Reviewing Services

7.1 Current Legislative Requirements

The current Best Value legislation contained in the Local Government Act 1989, section 208B (e) requires a council to report regularly to its community on its achievements in relation to the (Best Value) Principles section 208B, and similarly in section 208G. These include:

208B (b), Services provided by a Council must be responsive to the needs of its community,

208B (c), Services provided by a Council must be accessible to those members of the community, for whom the service is intended,

208B (d), Council must achieve continuous improvement in the provision of services for the community.

208G, At least once every year a Council must report to its community on what it has done to ensure that it has given effect to the Best value Principles.

While the requirement to carry out service reviews according to a predefined schedule has been

removed following the revocation of the Best Value Ministerial Code of Program, the on-going review of services is strongly implied in the remaining legislation and openly supported in reports and statements by the Best Value Commission, including the Commission's 2004 Annual Report. This perspective is strongly supported in this guide – the planned and consistent reviewing of services is a critical requirement for achieving a high standard of continuous improvement.

The non-prescriptive nature of the current legislation on how councils demonstrate achievement of the Best Value Principles provides an opportunity for the sector to review past practices and to redefine what is meant by a 'service review'. It also presents us with the opportunity to better integrate service review into our business planning and continuous improvement frameworks.

7.2 Approaches to Service Reviews

When planning for service reviews councils will want to consider:

- the organisation's strategic approach to review and the link with review at a service level
- the frequency and scope of reviews
- the tasks to be undertaken to achieve an effective service review, that is a review which considers the Best Value principles and any other factors relevant to the particular service under consideration
- the cost benefit of a review

Reviewing services – at what level?

Since the introduction of Best Value councils have approached the scoping of reviews in many ways - some have reviewed their services on an individual basis therefore carrying out a significant number of reviews, others have packaged services together and implemented fewer reviews.

Many councils are now taking a more innovative approach to this issue, and some further options identified for constructing reviews include:

- Services assessed by reference to Council's business or improvement framework elements – such as People, Leadership, Place, Strategy Processes and Governance;

- Strategies assessed by reference to Council's commitment to the community, as articulated in the Council Plan and/or Community Plan strategies where implementation activity and achievement responsibilities can be linked to council services.
- Cross cutting service reviews based on a 'theme' – for example a vegetation management theme would include a cross section of environmental services, including tree management, asset management services and planning services. The outcomes of such a review would feed into council's planning and delivery decisions around vegetation management, to ensure that as an organisation the council is utilising its resources on this subject in the most efficient and effective manner.
- Service reviews grouped on Council key result areas – such as Governance, Infrastructure, Sustainability, and Community Health.
- Service reviews included as part of the annual business planning process. Some councils have expanded the typical 'SWOT' analysis or environmental scan to include an assessment of how the service performs against the Best Value principles.

The frequency and scheduling of reviews

The removal of the Code for the Best Value Program means a council can now determine its own schedule of service review. This provides significant opportunity for councils to take a more innovative and locally relevant approach to scheduling reviews.

When determining the frequency of service reviews some issues to consider include:

- How frequently the service has been reviewed in the past;
- The availability of service related data – i.e. customer survey and other performance measurement results; demographic information; consultation findings; benchmark results;
- Service user and service provider expectations regarding service review frequency and approaches;
- Changes in the service user or service provider profile;
- Changes in the relevant service sector, including technology, legislation, best practice approaches, new market players;
- Financial changes, including changes in the cost of delivering a service, funding availability;
- Changes to service delivery models or channels, such as public private partnerships, outsourcing arrangements or greater scope for the use of technology;
- Factors of a political nature which may impact on need to review a service (including a new policy set by the elected Council);
- The incidence and level of community engagement.

Councils are trialling a range of options for scheduling reviews. Some of these include:

- Reviewing all services on an annual basis, aligned with the business planning process. In this approach services are grouped together

for service reviews in the same way in which they are grouped for business planning. The business planning process itself includes a high level review of services, and includes criteria to assist the relevant service managers to make decisions regarding the need for a more in depth or targeted review;

- Developing a schedule of service reviews on a service by service basis, based on the factors outlined above. When this approach is applied councils need to also develop a process to revisit the service review schedule on a regular basis, checking whether environmental factors have changed which may justify a more or less frequent review for a particular service;
- Reviewing services as part of the council strategic planning cycle – this could include for example reviewing all services over the four year cycle, and linking the results of the reviews back into the development of the Council Plan.

The scope and depth of Best Value service reviews

Despite the changes to the Ministerial program and reporting codes, an important principle regarding service reviews still applies: they remain the key means by which councils can verify they have achieved the Best Value principles, and in achieving the Best Value principles councils can also demonstrate they have achieved best practice standards in relation to service performance.

Figure 7.1 outlines how service reviews can check or verify that the Best Value principles have been achieved. In this context verification means the best practice features to be identified by service reviews when measuring the achievement of the Best Value principles.

Figure 7.1 – Relevance of performance measures to Best Value Principles

Best Value Principle	Best Value Tasks	Service Reviews should verify that...
Meet Quality and Cost Standards	Set performance standards	Performance standards have been set through a process which critically examined the mission, goals, objectives and strategies and translated them into community friendly KPIs.
	Review services against 'best of offer' (benchmark with public and private sector)	Performance and/or processes have been compared with appropriate public and private sector organisations, through formal or informal benchmarking and tendering.
	Assess value for money in service delivery, considering affordability and accessibility	Service levels achievable with current and future funding have been assessed in the service review and are considered adequate.
Be Responsive to Community Needs	Identify and assess current and future community needs	Needs analysis considers current and future needs for the service, up to 3-5 years ahead.
	Assess whether needs are being addressed within available resources	Performance measurement coupled with the results of benchmarking comparisons indicates adequate fulfilment of community needs, or a plan has been drafted to address service gaps.
	Establish mechanisms to plan for and manage changing community and user needs	A community consultation and needs analysis plan has been created and is part of the action plan tabled at the service review.
	Explain to users what they can expect from the services	A Service Charter has been developed and is available to clients of the service.
Be Accessible	Identify barriers to accessibility	Needs analyses have addressed accessibility issues adequately – physical, geographical, cultural, gender and language.
	Create plan to improve accessibility	Accessibility gaps identified are addressed in the action plan tabled in the service review.
Continuously improve	Achieve above the quality and cost standards previously set	A performance management system is in place and measurements indicate improving performance.
	Raise quality and cost standards and improve community consultation	Improving performance is reflected in raised service standards over a period of time.
	Improve accessibility to services by the community	Accessibility has been improved over a period of time.
	Improve meeting community needs	Identified gaps in the service are closed or there is an Improvement Plan to do so.
Consult with the community	Identify groups to consult.	Target groups are identified in the consultation plan.
	Carry out program of consultation	The consultation plan is carried out.
	Use the results of consultation to modify and improve and improve services.	Service improvements are planned and carried out in response to feedback from consultation.
Report to the Community	Report on achievements against Best Value principles.	The outcomes of the Service Review are accepted by Council and Council reports to the community on the Best Value reviews achievements.

Taking action to improve

The results of performance measurement activities, including service reviews, should be used to drive improvement. Doing so requires the establishment of processes to act on improvement opportunities. A number of improvement frameworks and models incorporate processes to implement improvements, and many performance improvement tools are specifically designed to improve the quality of services to customers by improving service processes or practices.

Broadly speaking, implementing a service improvement program should include the following seven steps. The activities carried out in each step will vary depending on the improvements or change required, and the culture of the organisation.

- Build the implementation team (a team based approach delivers sustainable change)
- Consult all affected stakeholders
- Plan the change program
- Document improved service standards and procedures
- Deploy procedures and train staff
- Train customers and suppliers
- Recognise and reward success

As has been common practice in the past, a key output of a service review should continue to include the documentation of improvement opportunities, including an improvement plan outlining timelines, resources and responsibilities.

The issue of reporting on the outcomes of service reviews is covered in the next section of this guide – ‘Reporting Performance’.

8 Reporting Performance

8.1 Current Legislative Requirements

The Local Government Act 1989 includes the following requirements in relation to reporting:

- 208B (f), a Council must report regularly to its community on its achievements in relation to the principles set out in 208B paragraphs (a), (b), (c), (d), (e). – (includes the requirement to report on Council's achievement in meeting its nominated quality and cost standards).
- 208F, A Council must ensure that any quality or cost standards it adopts are available for inspection by the public.
- 208G, At least once every year a Council must report to its community on what it has done to

ensure that it has given effect to the Best Value Principles.

The key to compliance is that each council is required to report regularly (at least once a year) *to the community* on its achievements in relation to the Best Value principles. There is no specific guidance on what this reporting must entail, but the spirit of the legislation is to ensure councils demonstrate to stakeholders their approach to improving service delivery. This section of the guidelines discusses options for reporting, and how this reporting might be integrated with a more general approach to reporting on performance.

8.2 Reporting to the community

The purpose of Best Value reporting to the community and other stakeholders is to provide a report on service performance, improvements made, and the outcomes and benefits that have been achieved through the effective delivery of services. To achieve this purpose, the Best Value reports, in what ever form chosen should include:

- Council's plan for applying the Best Value principles to services (this may also be included in the Council Plan),
- the achievements resulting from improvement initiatives in service delivery
- a statement on the quality and cost standards applied and achieved at the service level.

- inclusion in the Council's community newsletter,
- regular media releases through local papers,
- local radio releases,
- direct mail out to community groups and organisations.

Councils may decide to report on the achievement of Best Value on a service by service basis, and report only to the stakeholders relevant to that service. Alternatively councils may decide to produce a general Best Value report, which presents a summary of the Best Value achievements for all services.

Format for Reporting

The removal of the Ministerial Code of Reporting has also provided councils with greater flexibility in the format used for Best Value reporting. Some options for reporting on Best Value achievements to the community are:

- a Best Value Report,
- a section in the Annual Report,

Reporting to Government

Councils have been asked to keep Local Government Victoria informed of progress with the ongoing application of Best Value Victoria. Information sought by Local Government Victoria each year will enable the Department for Victorian Communities to get a sector wide view of the approach to Best Value and to highlight training needs or areas for improvement.

8.3 The Role of Performance Management Frameworks

Performance management frameworks can assist with Best Value reporting in three ways. Firstly the performance measurement processes within management frameworks can provide performance data; secondly the performance management framework should offer a process by which unsatisfactory performance is improved; and thirdly, performance management frameworks can present an approach for reporting to stakeholders.

Considering the Best Value principles when developing and implementing performance management frameworks will greatly assist councils to use the practices in these frameworks to meet Best Value requirements, including the reporting requirements.

9 Further References

9.1 Corporate Planners Guides

This guide is one of a series produced by the Victorian Corporate Planners Network – A Special Interest Group of Local Government Professionals Inc. At the time of publication, two further guides have been completed to draft stage. These guidelines are available from the LGPro website at:

http://www.lgpro.com/sigs/Corporate_Planners_Network/Articles/

Title	Description
Council Plan Development Guide	<i>Guidelines for meeting Council obligations in Council Planning.</i>
Performance Measurement Guide	<i>Guidelines to measuring performance in local government.</i>

9.2 Case Studies

To support these guidelines, the authors have compiled a series of case studies to assist the sector in the application of the Best Value Principles as part of their ongoing continuous improvement efforts. A summary of some example case studies can be found in the table below. Further information about these and other case studies can be found on the LGPro website at:

http://www.lgpro.com/sigs/Corporate_Planners_Network/Resources/Case_Studies/

Title	Description
Best Value principles by planning for continuous improvement City of Boroondara	The City of Boroondara developed a process that incorporates the principles of Best Value into a continuous improvement approach. This resulted in the revision of annual Departmental Business Plans to include a continuous improvement model and the principles of the Best Value review process.
Language Aides Scheme – Meeting the Best Value Principle of Accessibility & Responsiveness City of Darebin	The Language Aides Scheme was developed to effectively address the needs of residents who prefer to use a language other than English in their communications with Council. It operates through the use of bilingual staff who have been trained to assist residents in languages other than English, over the phone or face to face.
Ongoing Monitoring of Performance Indicators Warrnambool City Council	It became clear early in the Warrnambool Best Value process that monitoring the ongoing KPIs from each of the service reviews would be difficult. In response, a number of the KPIs were revised with more of a 'business' focus, and perhaps in an effort to make them more useful to managers.
Snapshot Project – Ways of engaging the community Bayside City Council	In early 2006 the Bayside City Council distributed 100 cameras to the community, and asked them to answer questions about living in Bayside using photographs accompanied by a short explanatory paragraph. The responses received were used to inform Council about what is valued by the community and their areas of concern.
Use of the Australian Business Excellence Framework as part of a Continuous Improvement Plan Moreland City Council	In reviewing the Best Value legislation and deciding on how to use Best Value as a tool to improve its services, a process was developed that used the ABEF. All services within Council undertook customer research, developed a systems view and undertook a comprehensive assessment of operations.

As part of its ongoing support to the sector, the Guidelines Working Group are seeking case studies from councils that showcase the way in which local governments have been effectively implementing elements of Best Value into their organisations and communities. We are interested in examples of proposed future application of the Best Value Principles. Please submit your own case study here:

http://www.lgpro.com/sigs/Corporate_Planners_Network/Resources/Best_Value/

9.3 Background Material

The following list provides a summary of resources used to develop these guidelines, and some additional sources of information on the topic of performance management.

Title	Description
A Fairer Victoria – DPC, 2005 www.dpc.vic.gov.au	Outlines 14 Strategies to achieve a fairer Victoria.
Actions for Community Strengthening with Local Government. – DVC, 2005 www.dvc.vic.gov.au	Proposes a range of actions for local government to implement to achieve community strengthening.
Benchmarking – A Practical Guide for Local Government, 2001, DOI	A step by step guide to carrying out benchmarking in local government.
Best Value and Performance Improvement Circular, 2005 Office of Deputy Prime Minister – UK	Guidelines on implementing Best Value in the Local Government sector in the UK.
Community Consultation Resource Guide and Consultation and Engagement Website, VLGA www.vlgaconsultation.org.au	Consultation resource, including guidelines and tools.
Community Strengthening and Role of Local Government – a VLGA response. VLGA, 2004 www.vlga.org.au	Paper critical of models presented and argues that it fails to understand local government's key role in community strengthening
Community strengthening and the role of local government a discussion paper – LGV, 2004 www.dvc.vic.gov.au	Documentation of international research on the role of local government in community strengthening. Overview of international trends in the debate.
Draft Briefing – Priorities and Prioritisation www.idea.gov.uk	A guide for local government in prioritising focus and services.
Efficiency in Practice – Society of Local Authority Chief Execs and Senior Managers – UK	UK Local Government response to the Review of Public Sector Efficiency. Primarily deals with efficiency in procurement.
Good Governance Guide 2004, LGV www.dvc.vic.gov.au	Provides combination of principles and practical advice to achieving good governance in local government.
Growing Victoria Together – DPC, 2005 www.growingvictoria.vic.gov.au	Vision statement which sets out 10 goals to achieve the State government vision.
Guide to Performance Management www.idea.gov.uk	A Manager's guide to selecting a performance management approach.
Guidelines for Best Value Annual Report – Aug 2002, LGV www.dvc.vic.gov.au	Guidelines developed by LGV outlining Best Value reporting requirements. No longer compulsory.
Putting the Public First through Performance Management www.idea.gov.uk	A guide to ensuring a consultative approach is taken in developing and implementing a performance management model in local government.
Releasing Resources to the Front Line – Independent Review of Public Sector Efficiency, 2004, Sir Peter Gershon	Paper examining the topic of efficiency in the public sector.
Review of Performance Management and Improvement Tools, 2004 www.idea.gov.uk	An overview of some common models of performance management.
The Role of Elected Members in Best Value, Office of Deputy Prime Minister – UK.	Guide for elected members to local government in the UK.



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