Self-Assessment Workbook
Measuring Success

QSTG

ENCOURAGING EXCELLENCE IN THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR

Acknowledgements

Contents   Page

An Introduction to Measuring Success –
A Self-Assessment Workbook

What is it? Why should you try it?

In recent years, the focus for voluntary and community organisations has shifted from whether to spend time managing quality to how to best manage quality. The need to demonstrate achievement and accountability to users, beneficiaries and other customer groups, donors, funders, statutory bodies and the general public has, in part, motivated this change.

To be able to move your organisation forwards, you need to know where it is now. You need to know where it works well (*Strengths*) and where it could work better (*Areas for Improvement*). When an organisation takes a snapshot of itself in this way, the process is often known as Self-Assessment. It is a way of checking that your organisation is ready and able to achieve its purpose.

This Workbook will help you to:

● recognise what you have achieved so far

● identify where you can make further improvements

● be clearer about how what you achieve is linked to how you go about achieving it.

Who is this Workbook for?

This Workbook is a simple tool designed as a first step for small organisations, departments of larger bodies, independent projects or individual managers. We recognise that universal solutions are often inappropriate and, after you've used this Workbook for the first time, you may want to adapt it to make it more suitable for you in terms of style, language etc. It is available both as a printed document and in a downloadable Word format from the NCVO website:
www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/SAworkbookWord

Where did the Self-Assessment Workbook come from?

This Workbook was developed by the Quality Standards Task Group (QSTG) at the NCVO (National Council for Voluntary Organisations) in consultation with a range of small voluntary organisations and umbrella groups. For more details about QSTG please see the inside back cover.

The approach employed in this Workbook is loosely based on the European Foundation for Quality Management's Excellence Model©, a framework that enables organisations to assess and diagnose their performance. A guide to the Model for the voluntary sector was published in May 2000 by QSTG. It is called *Excellence in View*. See page 20 for details of how to purchase this guide.

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Rona Parsons

Policy Officer

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Benefits of Self-Assessment:

- systematically examines everything the organisation does

- generates discussion that gets everyone involved in problem-solving, and sharing good practice and improvement ideas

- can improve communication and ease disagreements

- provides an opportunity to celebrate and build on achievements

- gives a focus for improvement

- offers no hiding place for problems

- is inclusive and democratic

- links what the organisation does with the results it achieves

- encourages organisations to look at the evidence they have that they are working well.

The Workbook is divided into four main parts.

Part 1 – Self-Assessment
This part is divided into seven sections that cover most of what your organisation does. You are asked to respond to three simple statements in each section and list your *Strengths* and *Areas for Improvement* (for help with this see page 2).

Part 2 – Prioritising Areas for Improvement
You may have produced a long list for Part 1. This section helps you to prioritise *Areas for Improvement.*

Part 3 – SMART Goals
This section helps you to turn your *Areas for Improvement* into goals for action.

Part 4 – Keeping track of SMART Goals
A tool for tracking progress towards your goals.

Completing the Workbook

You can do this on your own or in a group. Working on your own, it may take up to three hours. However, you do not need to finish it in one sitting. Working in a group will probably take longer but will also give you more thorough information and a better chance of long-term commitment to acting on the *Areas for Improvements* identified. If you decide to do the exercise as a group, it may still be worth asking people to work through it individually beforehand. You can then discuss the areas that are the source of the biggest differences in views or experience. Your group might include any or all of the following:

- trustees/committee members

- volunteers

- staff

- customers (for a definition see page 5)

- other relevant stakeholders.

Using the Self–Assessment Workbook

Some suggested ground rules[1]

- Be open and honest.

- Do not undervalue your strengths or be over-critical of what you do.

- If something is not working well, avoid blame but look for causes.

- Do not hide or ignore opportunities to change and improve.

- Be prepared to challenge what you do now. Is there a better way?

- Be ready to learn from good ideas and practices.

- Talk and listen to others – and learn from them.

- Be constructive, think about moving forwards not going over past mistakes.

- Follow through the ideas that you come up with, convert opportunities into actions.

- Use this workbook as a guide not a prescription.

- Don't expect quick fixes. Self-assessment is about a long-term commitment to improvement.

Identifying *Strengths* and *Areas for Improvement*

A successful self-assessment will be judged by the improvements that are achieved as a result. Developing clear Action Plans to implement these improvements starts with identifying specific, agreed and usable *Strengths* and *Areas for Improvement.* Having thought about or discussed what these are, try to write them down in a way that will allow you to be very clear about what was meant when you come to look back at your list in a week, a month or even six months' time! Here are some examples.

A *Strength* is:

- something you do well

For example: 'We hold a user conference every year and use it to help us plan.'

- your measurable successes or achievements

For example: 'We have beaten our target for income from voluntary contributions every year for the last three years.'

An *Area for Improvement* is not just another way of saying 'weakness'. Since your Action Plans will be based on these, it is important to understand this. An *Area for Improvement* may be about:

- a gap in the way you do things at the moment

For example: 'We have a customer complaints system, but don't always train our staff and volunteers in how it works.'

[1]Adapted from *What is Self-assessment?*© TQMI

● little or no evidence of performance

For example: 'We believe we are answering more telephone enquiries, but we have no clear records and we did not set any targets in this area.'

● addressing poor performance

For example: 'Volunteer absence rates are increasing, but we don't know why.'

● building on a strength

For example: 'The Director and Fundraising Manager have regular quarterly review meetings to check that targets are on track and that activities are in line with overall plans. This does not happen systematically in other areas.'

● how you compare with others

For example: 'We have an 88% satisfaction rating for our information service. This looks good, but we haven't compared ourselves with other types of information providers and we're not sure our customers have anywhere else to go.'

1 The Whole Picture

This section looks at how well your organisation is performing overall.

What are the main aims of your organisation?

Where do you stand today? Put an ✗ on the arrow for each statement
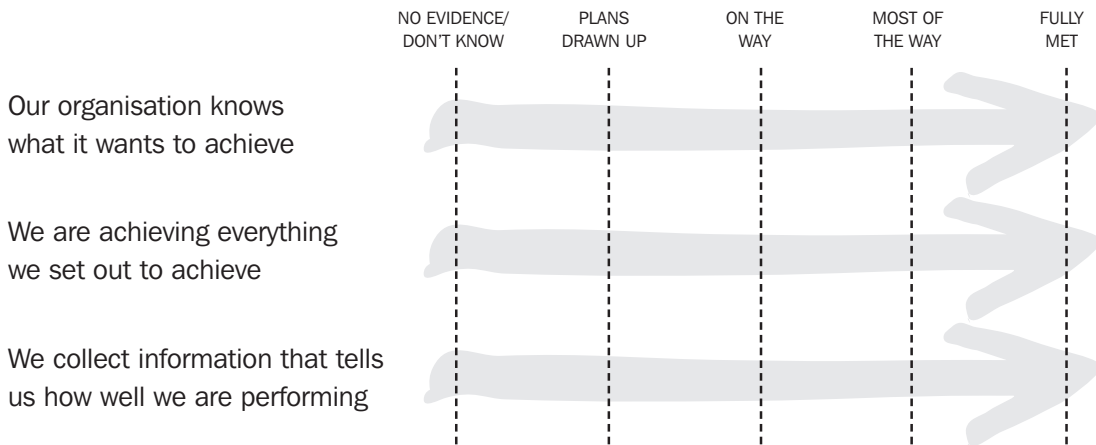
	NO EVIDENCE/ DON'T KNOW	PLANS DRAWN UP	ON THE WAY	MOST OF THE WAY	FULLY MET
Our organisation knows what it wants to achieve					
We are achieving everything we set out to achieve					
We collect information that tells us how well we are performing					

Think about where you put your crosses. What evidence did you base this on?

CHECK! Now you've thought about the evidence, do you need to review your ✗?

What are your *Strengths* in this area?

Areas for Improvement?

Any other issues arising from your thoughts or discussions? Collect them here.

2 Customers

Customers receive products and/or services from the organisation and could include service users, clients, beneficiaries, members, funders, the general public, other services, stakeholders and targeted groups. This section looks at what you are achieving for them.

Who are your customers or customer groups?

Where do you stand today? Put an ✗ on the arrow for each statement

	NO EVIDENCE/ DON'T KNOW	PLANS DRAWN UP	ON THE WAY	MOST OF THE WAY	FULLY MET
All our customers are highly satisfied with everything we do (e.g. products/services)					
All our customers feel positive about our organisation and how it works. (e.g. service/staff)					
We collect customer feedback regularly and use it to make improvements					

5

Think about where you put your crosses. What evidence did you base this on?

CHECK! Now you've thought about the evidence, do you need to review your ✗?

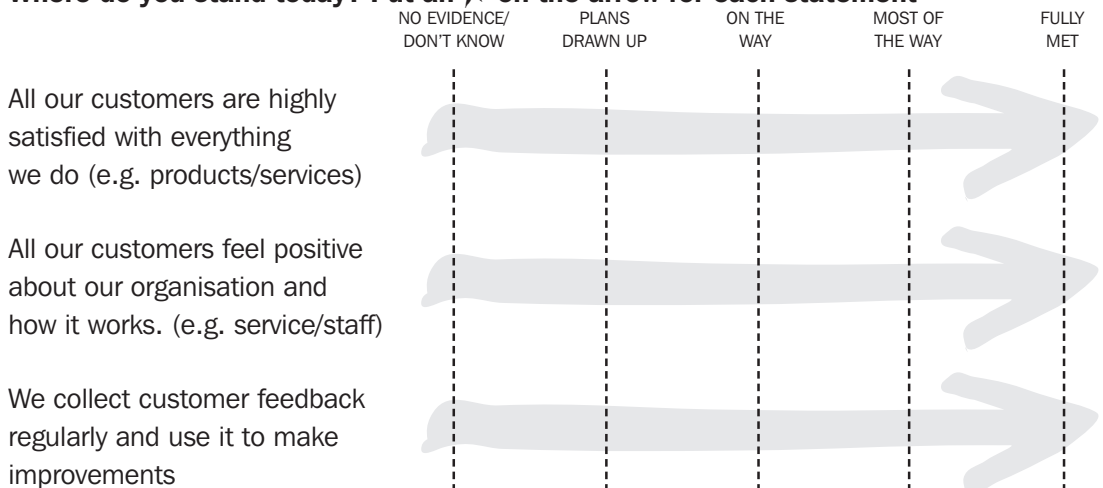What are your *Strengths* in this area?

Areas for Improvement?

Any other issues arising from your thoughts or discussions? Collect them here.

3 Leadership

Leaders set the future direction of the organisation, and engage people in improvement, development and change. This section looks at how well this works in your organisation.

Who are your leaders?

Where do you stand today? Put an ✗ on the arrow for each statement

	NO EVIDENCE/ DON'T KNOW	PLANS DRAWN UP	ON THE WAY	MOST OF THE WAY	FULLY MET
Leaders are involved in developing the organisation's mission, values and direction					
Leaders make sure that everything is working in the way it should					
Leaders make time for, and recognise, people's (staff and volunteer's) creativity, innovation, effort and achievements					

Think about where you put your crosses. What evidence did you base this on?

CHECK! Now you've thought about the evidence, do you need to review your ✗?

What are your *Strengths* in this area?

Areas for Improvement?

Any other issues arising from your thoughts or discussions? Collect them here.

4 Making Plans

This section looks at how your organisation plans what it does.

Who is involved in your planning?

Where do you stand today? Put an ✗ on the arrow for each statement

	NO EVIDENCE/ DON'T KNOW	PLANS DRAWN UP	ON THE WAY	MOST OF THE WAY	FULLY MET
We have a plan that sets out what we want to achieve and how we are going to do it					
Our plans are based on customers' expectations and needs					
We collect information that tells us whether or not, and how well, we are meeting our objectives					

Think about where you put your crosses. What evidence did you base this on?

CHECK! Now you've thought about the evidence, do you need to review your ✗?

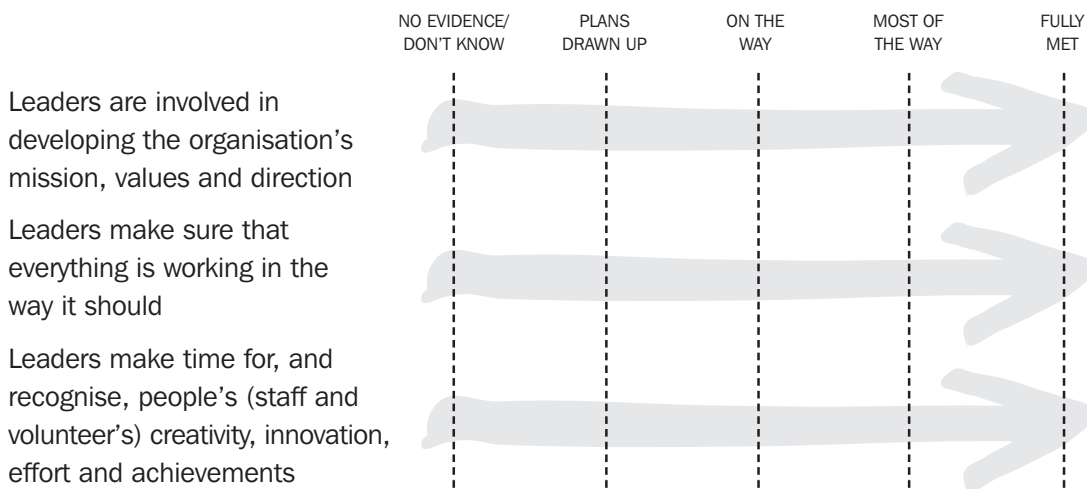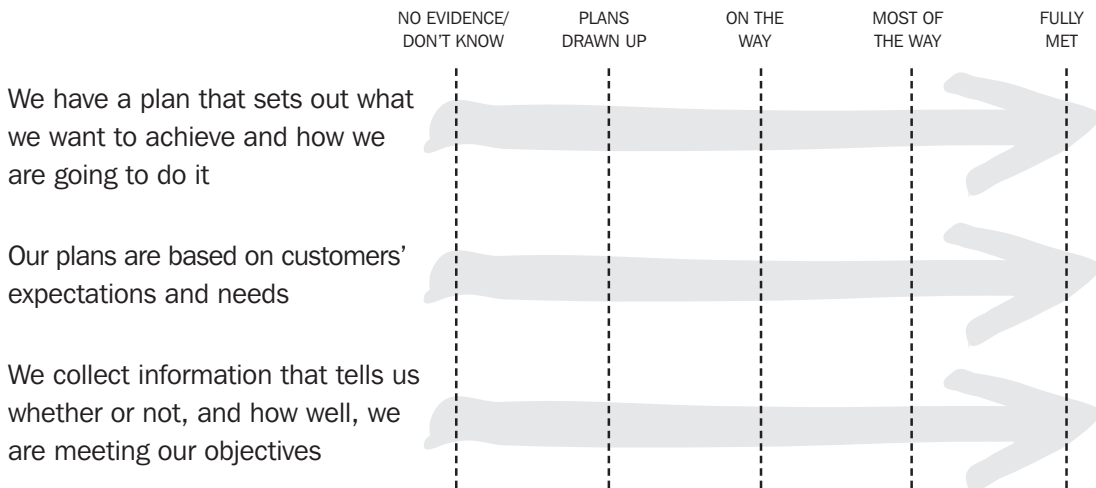What are your *Strengths* in this area?

Areas for Improvement?

Any other issues arising from your thoughts or discussions? Collect them here.

5 People

'People' includes anyone who works for your organisation in any capacity, e.g. full-time and part-time staff, volunteers, members, trustees, committee members, relief, project and temporary staff. This section looks at satisfaction and support.

Where do you stand today? Put an ✗ on the arrow for each statement

	NO EVIDENCE/ DON'T KNOW	PLANS DRAWN UP	ON THE WAY	MOST OF THE WAY	FULLY MET
We have agreed key policies or standards for managing people and these are reviewed regularly					
We are confident that everyone has the skills, knowledge and support they need to deliver our goals					
People who work for this organisation feel valued, recognised and rewarded for what they do					

Think about where you put your crosses. What evidence did you base this on?

CHECK! Now you've thought about the evidence, do you need to review your ✗?
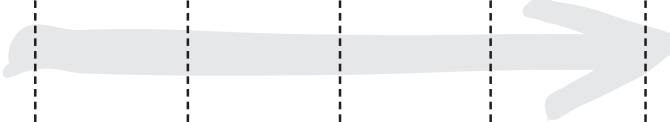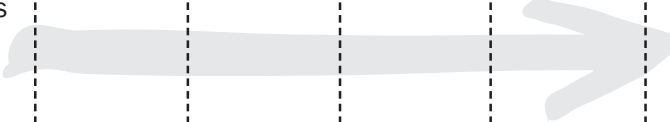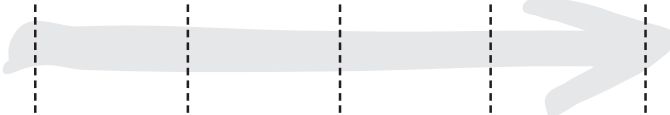
What are your *Strengths* in this area?

Areas for Improvement?

Any other issues arising from your thoughts or discussions? Collect them here.

6 Partnerships and Resources

This section looks at how you use your partnerships and resources to take you in the right direction. Partnerships could be with suppliers, purchasers, government organisations, other voluntary organisations, businesses etc. Resources include money, buildings, equipment, technology, information, materials etc, but not people as we looked at this 'resource' in the previous section.

Where do you stand today? Put an ✗ on the arrow for each statement

	NO EVIDENCE/ DON'T KNOW	PLANS DRAWN UP	ON THE WAY	MOST OF THE WAY	FULLY MET
We know who our key external partners are and work with them to improve what we do					
We are confident that all our resources are used efficiently to take us in the direction we want to go					
We have all the information we need to do our work					

Think about where you put your crosses. What evidence did you base this on?

CHECK! Now you've thought about the evidence, do you need to review your ✗?
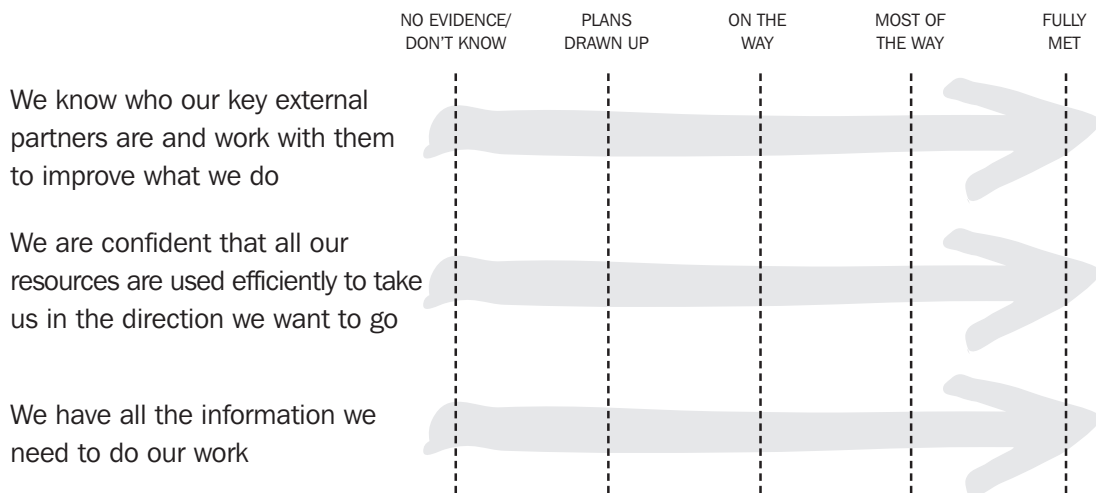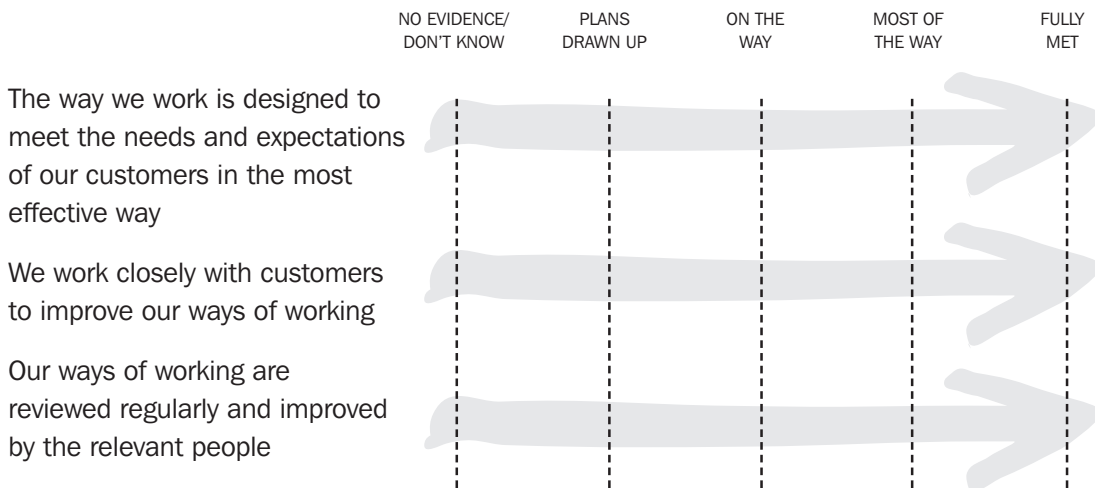
What are your *Strengths* in this area?

Areas for Improvement?

Any other issues arising from your thoughts or discussions? Collect them here.

7 Ways of Working

This section looks at how the ways of working in your organisation support customers' needs and your organisation's objectives (see page 5 to check how you have defined your customers). Ways of working can be divided into two broad areas: things to do with running the organisation, and things to do with delivering products or services.

Where do you stand today? Put an ✗ on the arrow for each statement

	NO EVIDENCE/ DON'T KNOW	PLANS DRAWN UP	ON THE WAY	MOST OF THE WAY	FULLY MET

The way we work is designed to meet the needs and expectations of our customers in the most effective way

We work closely with customers to improve our ways of working

Our ways of working are reviewed regularly and improved by the relevant people

Think about where you put your crosses. What evidence did you base this on?

CHECK! Now you've thought about the evidence, do you need to review your ✗?

What are your *Strengths* in this area?

Areas for Improvement?

Any other issues arising from your thoughts or discussions? Collect them here.

If you need more space to write down your responses, you can photocopy and use the Self-Assessment Continuation Sheet template on page 21.

You will now have worked through each of the seven sections in Part 1 and may well have identified around 20 or 30 *Areas for Improvement* – probably more if you worked in a group! However, most organisations/departments/projects find that it is best not to work on more than five or six improvements at once. This means that you will need to prioritise. To help you with this, we have identified eight factors you could take into account. Read through the list of statements below answering 'Yes' or 'No' for each of the *Areas for Improvement* you have identified. The more times you answer 'Yes' for any *Area for Improvement*, the higher its priority. On page 22 you will find a template that you can use to record the results of this exercise. Below we have given you an example of how this may work in practice.

Tip: There may also be some improvement ideas among the other issues you identified during your individual assessment and/or group discussion – remember to check the *'Any other issues…'* boxes in sections 1 – 7 of Part 1.

How to prioritise

Work through each *Area for Improvement* you have identified asking the following questions.

1 **Survival** – Is it important to our survival?

2 **Success** – Is it critical to our success and direction?

3 **Customers** – Will it deliver significant improvements for customers?

4 **Urgency** – Does it need to be done now, or can we wait 12 months to start?

5 **Resources** – Have we got, or could we have, the resources to do it?

6 **People** – Have we got, or could we have, the people to do it?

7 **Risk** – Would ignoring it be very risky?

8 **Easy** – Would it be straightforward and undemanding to do?

Tip: There may be priorities of your own that you want to add to this list.

How to prioritise – a worked example

Area for Improvement No.1 – HIGH PRIORITY

Having worked through a self-assessment exercise, the staff of a small advice centre found that they knew very little about how their service users feel about the service they receive. As an *Area for Improvement* this generated a 'Yes' response six times for the following reasons.

Survival   The funders need information on user satisfaction as part of the advice centre's grant conditions. Being able to supply it is essential to the organisation's financial security.

Success   The organisation has a mission to deliver 'user-led' services. Information on users' satisfaction will tell it how well it is achieving this.

Urgency   The funders have made it clear that they need more detailed information about service user satisfaction in order to meet next year's grant conditions.

Resources   There are resources available to provide every service user with a feedback sheet.

People   Case workers will be able to ask service users to complete the feedback sheets and a member of the administrative staff could analyse them.

Risk   Ignoring the issue could result in loss of grant income.

Area for Improvement No.2 – LOWER PRIORITY

Another *Area for Improvement* was the need for more background information on other services available locally for the centre's service users. This gained four 'Yes' responses for the following reasons.

Success   Providing better information for service users would increase their satisfaction and make the centre more successful.

Customers   Some of the centre's key customer groups have limited resources and/or mobility. Being able to get this information from one source would be a significant improvement for them.

Resources   The centre does have a computer it could use for storing the information.

People   The case workers are expected to collect information on local services as part of their job.

This section shows you how to turn high-priority *Areas for Improvement* into clear, achievable goals. The SMART acronym (see below) can be used to make sure that goals are realistic. A template for creating a SMART goal is provided on page 23.

SMART stands for:

Specific

Measurable

Achievable

Resourced

Time-bound.

The SMART goals that follow on from the identification of high-priority *Areas for Improvement* simply need to describe the next steps that will take the organisation towards improvement. The aim is to achieve steady progress rather than take large strides.

Producing a SMART goal

1 Look at all your high-priority *Areas for Improvement.* Identify and agree what would be the next best step towards producing an improvement for each one. This is your goal.

2 Give your goal a specific objective – the particular thing you would expect to achieve (e.g. to increase the number of service volunteers). Then define what your target would be (e.g. how many volunteers and of what type).

3 Work out how you are going to be able to measure and assess (a) progress towards achieving your goal, and (b) if, and how well, the goal has been met.

4 Be certain that your goal can actually be achieved – if not, you may need to adjust the goal. The goal should stretch the organisation but still be achievable. Look at the risks involved. Be sure about your people's skills and commitment. Will the goal be owned by those expected to deliver it?

5 Ensure that the resources needed to deliver your goal are available. These might include: people, skills, money, equipment, buildings, information, materials etc. If you are unsure about the availability of the resources you need, you may need to adjust the goal.

6 Set a clear time frame within which you would expect the goal to be achieved.

7 Keep a record of the goal as part of your improvement plan.

SMART goals – a worked example

The advice centre we looked at in our first worked example (see pages 15 – 16) recognises that getting more service user feedback is a high priority. It has turned this *Area for Improvement* into a SMART goal.

The goal: To improve understanding of service users' satisfaction by producing an annual 10-point customer satisfaction questionnaire for service users that achieves at least a 20% return rate. The results will be analysed and used for service planning and improvements.

This is a SMART goal because it matches the following criteria.

Specific The goal has two specific actions:
1 to produce a questionnaire,
2 to analyse and use the results.

Measurable It will be possible to measure how many completed questionnaires are returned, and to identify the lessons learned.

Achievable The service has the contact details of all service users so that the questionnaire can reach everyone.

Resourced The part-time administrator has agreed to make it part of her work. It will be distributed with other regular information to service users. A local college will help with the construction of the questionnaire. Stamped addressed envelopes will be provided for returns. The administrator is trained in the use of, and has access to, questionnaire software. Money has been identified in the budget to cover the necessary costs.

Time-bound It will take place once a year and be reported to the management team three months after the questionnaires have been collected and analysed.

Progress on the achievement of SMART goals needs to be kept under review and it is worth setting up a log that will help you to do this. Below is a format you could use, or adapt, for each goal in order to record progress. There is a template on page 24.

Tip: Agree a 'goal owner' – this could be an individual or a small group. This person or group would not be solely responsible for delivering the goal but for checking development, co-ordinating regular reviews and reporting on progress.

Where a goal is slipping, you may need to take some 'corrective action'. This may involve reviewing and adjusting

● the goal and/or targets

● the timetable

● the resources available

● the input of staff and volunteers

● anything else you listed under the SMART characteristics

● anything else that affects your ability to deliver the goal.

Keeping track of SMART goals – a worked example

Goal owner:	
Description of goal:	Improving understanding of service user satisfaction by producing an annual 10-point service user satisfaction questionnaire and analysing the results.

Set review dates	1 March	2 June	3 Sept	4 Dec

1st **Review target**: Outline questionnaire produced

On target: YES/NO (circle as applicable)

If NO, why:	The case worker responsible for liaising with the local college to develop the first draft was unable to find time to do it. The corrective action agreed was as follows.
Corrective action:	The production of the outline questionnaire will now be set as the target for the second review date in June. Subsequent targets will move forward accordingly.

Case Worker will transfer one of her cases to another team member to give her time to complete the task. |

◌ What Next?

This Workbook has been designed to give you a taste of the self-assessment process.

If you found the exercise useful and want to develop it further in your organisation there are a number of steps you could consider:

- talking to other organisations that use self-assessment
- attending training events on quality and self-assessment (contact your local CVS or NCVO for ideas)
- having people in your organisation trained as assessors on the EFQM Excellence Model© (courses availble from Charities Evaluation Services)
- undertaking a more detailed self-assessment
- using an expert from outside the organisation or training an internal facilitator
- creating an internal quality group
- getting in touch with your regional excellence organisation to find out if there are any ways in which they could support you; the British Quality Foundation (BQF) will have details of your nearest group.

Below we have listed a number of sources and materials that you might find useful.

Organisations

British Quality Foundation Tel: 020 7654 5000 www.quality-foundation.co.uk

Charities Evaluation Services Tel: 020 7713 5722 enquiries@ces-vol.org.uk

Institute of Quality Assurance Tel: 020 7245 6722 www.iqa.org

Regional excellence organisations (contact the BQF, see above, for details)

Publications

Approaching Quality – a guide to the choices you could make, QSTG. Available from NCVO Hamilton House Mailings, 01536 399 016, £7.50 plus p&p

Assessing for Excellence – a practical guide for self-assessment, BQF. Available from NCVO Hamilton House Mailings, 01536 399 016, £7.80 plus p&p

Directory of NCVO-Approved Consultants, NCVO. Available from NCVO Hamilton House Mailings, 01536 399 016, £7.50 plus p&p

Excellence in View – a guide to the EFQM Excellence Model for the voluntary sector, QSTG. Available from NCVO Hamilton House Mailings, 01536 399 016, £10.00 plus p&p

Practical Quality Assurance System for Small Organisations 2nd edition, CES. Available from 020 7713 5722, £65.00 plus p&p(from October 2000)

The Big Picture, The Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations. Available from 0131 556 3882, £66.00 (£45.00 to SCVO members/voluntary sector) plus p&p.

What is Self-Assessment? – your handbook, TQMI. Available from 01703 233201, £5.00 plus p&p

Useful websites

www.skillup.org – provides an online self-assessment tool

www.ncvo-vol.org.uk – National Council for Voluntary Organisations

www.nacvs.org.uk – National Association of Councils of Voluntary Service

Self-Assessment Continuation Sheet

Think about where you put your crosses. What evidence did you base this on?

CHECK! Now you've thought about the evidence, do you need to review your ✗?

What are your *Strengths* in this area?

Areas for Improvement?

Any other issues arising from your thoughts or discussions? Collect them here.

Prioritising *Areas for Improvement* – Record Sheet

To use this template:

- look back at the *'Areas for Improvement?'* boxes in sections 1 – 7 of Part 1 (remember to check the 'Any other issues…' boxes too)

- Write your *Areas for Improvement* in the left-hand column below (make copies of this template first if you think you will need more than one).

- check each one against the eight priority factors listed below (see page 15 for descriptions of each factor)

- write the total number of 'Yes' responses in the right-hand column next to the relevant *Area for Improvement.*

- highlight or circle all those *Areas for Improvement* with more than five 'Yes' responses

- if you have highlighted more than six *Areas for Improvement*, you may need to look back at the priority factors and try to reprioritise them.

Priority factors

Survival?   Resources?
Success?   People?
Customers?   Risk?
Urgency?   Easy?

Areas for Improvement (list all)	No. of 'Yes' responses

Tip: If you are working in a group you may want to use a flipchart for this exercise.

Creating a SMART goal

Photocopy and use the templates below to turn your *Areas for Improvement* into SMART goals. Refer back to page 17... for help if you need to.

Priority Area for Improvement:

1 Goal:

2 Specific objective:

3 Measure/s neccessary

   a) to check progress:

   b) to know the goal has
      been achieved:

4) Achievable (factors):

5) Resources:

6) Time:

Priority Area for Improvement:

1 Goal:

2 Specific objective:

3 Measure/s neccessary

   a) to check progress:

   b) to know the goal has
      been achieved:

4) Achievable (factors):

5) Resources:

6) Time:

Template 4

Keeping track of SMART Goals

Goal owner:

Description of goal:

Set review dates	1	2	3	4

    Review target:

On target: YES/NO (circle as applicable)

If NO, why:

Corrective action:

Goal owner:

Description of goal:

Set review dates	1	2	3	4

    Review target:

On target: YES/NO (circle as applicable)

If NO, why:

Corrective action:

The Quality Standards Task Group

Background

The Quality Standards Task Group (QSTG) was established in September 1997 by NCVO, after wide consultation prompted by the Deakin Commission Report on the future of the voluntary sector.

The QSTG exists to enable voluntary organisations to find ways of improving their effectiveness by:

● raising awareness of the role that quality systems can play in any organisation

● providing information and advice to assist organisations in identifying the most appropriate routes to continuous improvement

● encouraging the development and applicability of methods to improve quality and quality standards

● working with partners to stimulate the development of sustainable help and support for organisations wishing to implement quality improvement

● working with funders to raise the awareness of the appropriate role that quality systems can play.

QSTG recommends the adoption of a set of Quality Principles for all voluntary organisations, which describe their fundamental beliefs and form the basis for their management ethos. Those listed below are seen as the minimum requirements to which each organisation may add its own personalised commitments.

A quality voluntary organisation:

● strives for continuous improvement in all that it does

● uses recognised standards or models as a means to continuous improvement and not as an end

● agrees requirements with stakeholders, and endeavours to meet or exceed these first time and every time

● promotes equality of opportunity through its internal and external conduct

● is accountable to stakeholders

● adds value to its end users and beneficiaries.

QSTG welcomes your comments and feedback on your experience of using this workbook. You can respond via email to QSTG@ncvo-vol.org.uk, fax us on 020 7520 2587 or write to the address on the back of this workbook.

SYSTEMS**4**

British Quality
Foundation
PROMOTING BUSINESS EXCELLENCE
MEMBER

NATIONAL
LOTTERY
CHARITIES
BOARD

NCVO
voice of the voluntary sector