



Best Value Self-Assessment

May 2005



National Library of Scotland

Best Value Self-Assessment

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Best Value Self-Assessment

The National Library of Scotland acquired a duty of Best Value in April 2002. The Scottish Executive issued draft guidance on what this means to bodies like the NLS in 2003. That guidance includes a requirement for bodies, which have a new duty of Best Value to conduct a self-assessment.

This document represents a self-assessment against that guidance.

The self-assessment process was carried out in the NLS during the winter of 2004-05 under the auspices of the Corporate Planning Group (CPG), and approved by the Senior Management Team in May 2005. The members of the CPG evaluated current NLS performance against each of the nine component parts of the BV guidance produced by the Scottish Executive (October 2003). They also identified future action required by the Library. This material was aggregated and compiled into section 3 of the document.

This self-assessment will be used to inform all NLS work programmes, feeding into future corporate, departmental and divisional plans, and assisting the Library to prepare for reviews such as the forthcoming Performance and Finance management Review (PFMR). Its key conclusions will also be reported to the Scottish Executive, the NLS Audit Committee and the full Board of Trustees.

The Self-assessment consists of two sections – Section 1 is a summary of the key findings of the self-assessment (sub-divided into two sections – strengths, and areas for development). Section 2 is the more detailed self-assessment of the current position and required future action, assessed against the details of the 2003 Guidance document.

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Section 1

This section highlights the main areas of assessed strengths (Part A), and weakness (Part B), which emerge from the Self-assessment.

Part A: Strengths

Commitment and leadership

Strategy

NLS has an approved strategy (Breaking through the Walls), which was widely consulted on, and which sets clear strategic goals.

Best Value

NLS has an agreed approach to Best Value. 'Best Value' will not be branded as such. Key components of Best Value (continuous improvement, sound use of resources, review processes etc) are embedded in current staff guidance on corporate and section plans, performance management expectations etc. The Best Value Self-assessment has taken place.

Minimising fraud

Draft policies for fraud prevention/investigation and whistle-blowing have been approved in principle by the Senior Management Team.

Staff commitment and behaviours

Staff were closely involved in the development of the NLS strategic goals. Four core values for NLS are included in the Strategy (Service, Excellence, Learning and Commitment). All managers have had four days of training in 2005/06 on performance management.

Sound governance

Planning processes

An annual Corporate Plan, an annual budget, an annual planning timetable and departmental/divisional work plans are in place. Recent innovations include the use of standard pro-formas and workshops for managers to help set objectives and identify risks for work plans.

Performance Information

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) have recently been agreed. A Corporate Statistics spreadsheet is in place, as a central focus for management information.

Sound management of resources

Capital projects

A high-level capital strategy was agreed May 2004. Project owners/managers for key projects have been appointed.

Managing Risk

A risk management procedure has been drawn up and agreed by the Senior Management Team.

Making the most our resources (finance, staff and assets)

Following reform of the senior management tier in 2003, the Organisational Development Planning Group (ODPG) has produced proposals for wider organisational reform.

An Investors in People project team is in place.

New financial reporting procedures have been adopted, including greater delegation of decision-making, agreement of departmental budgets for 2005/06 and monthly finance reports.

Use of Reviews and options appraisal

The Library has developed considerable experience of organisational review, including the Review of Activities, the ODPG reviews and a review of Business Information.

Contribution to sustainable development

A proposed corporate approach to environmental management has been developed.

Equal opportunities

A draft Equalities Policy has been prepared, which includes the commitment to mainstreaming.

Joint Working

NLS works with a wide range of partner organisations (the extent and quality of this will be reported through new KPI arrangements).

NLS is playing a leading role in considering shared services with other public bodies, as part of the Efficient Government initiative.

Accountability, Responsiveness and Consultation

Considerable investment in understanding stakeholders' needs has taken place in the last two years, and is continuing through on-going customer research programmes.

Performance is reported to stakeholders through mechanisms including Annual Review, Annual Report and Accounts, Corporate Plan and website.

Part B: Areas for Development

Commitment and leadership

Strategy

Effective ways to measure progress on achieving strategic goals, and to turn strategic goals into realistic operational plans, require development.

Best Value

Key components of Best Value (continuous improvement, sound use of resources, review processes etc) need to be better embedded into everyday practice in NLS.

Organisational culture

More work is needed to develop a culture of openness and commitment to NLS strategic goals. The move to strategy-based decision-making structures, and Investors in people will address this.

Minimising fraud

Draft policies for fraud prevention/investigation and whistle-blowing require further discussion with unions before final approval by SMT.

Staff commitment and behaviours

Staff codes need to be reviewed and re-issued to all staff, to ensure that staff understand what is expected of them.

Sound governance

Planning processes

Corporate and general business planning processes need to be improved in order to link better to the Strategy, to all work plans and to resource allocation (budget making). Procedures to include standardised documentation (business cases) for submission of bids. Introduction of balanced scorecard objective-setting.

Performance Information

Key performance indicators (KPIs) have recently been agreed. Regular quarterly monitoring by the Senior Management Team (including monitoring against targets) to commence 2005. KPIs to be further developed, monitored, and reviewed by Strategy groups.

Introduction of IT-based management information system.

Wider and more consistent use of benchmarking to be developed.

Sound management of resources

Capital projects

Clear process for developing capital bids, including development of briefs, business case and option appraisals need to be developed.

Project management

Project Management methodologies need to be developed and implemented, including the introduction of business case format and documentation.

Managing Risk

The agreed risk management procedure has not yet been implemented, and will require development. A Business Continuity Strategy needs to be agreed and implemented.

Making the most out of our resources (finance, staff and assets)

Making the full use of NLS staff potential requires progress on: organisational reform, Investors in People, reward strategy, knowledge management and process review procedure.

Separate strategies are required to ensure the most effective use of equipment and property.

Zero based budgeting will be introduced 2006. This will build on KPI work and monitoring strategy. Devolved budget reporting to be improved, including new scheme of delegation (implementation due from May 2005).

Decision making/management structure redefined to ensure appropriate contribution at all levels.

Management Development Strategy (including a management competency framework) needs to be developed.

Procurement review (including development of e-procurement) to be completed 2005/06.

Use of Reviews and options appraisal

New process for the conduct of organisational reviews needs to be defined, and a programme drawn up. Reviews to consider joint-working options with partners.

Contribution to sustainable development

Implementation of Environmental Action Plan required (including provision of any resources, staff training needed).

Equal opportunities

The draft NLS Equalities policy needs to be endorsed by SMT/EMT and Board of Trustees, cascaded to all staff, and embedded in all NLS plans, reviews and service activity.

Joint Working

Greater clarity is needed on the respective obligations (in some cases legal) of partners (taking account of the increase in partnership activity).

Accountability, Responsiveness and Consultation

Customer research programmes to continue, to maintain and develop understanding of stakeholders' needs.

A review of current performance reporting tools to stakeholders (chiefly Annual Review, Annual Report, Corporate Plan and website) is required as an important part of the marketing strategy.

A Customer Relations Management system is required to manage diverse stakeholder contacts.

Section 2 – the Self-assessment

This section consists contains an analysis of the current position in NLS, together with action required in the future, grouped under each of the nine headings (starting with *Commitment and leadership*) as outlined in the Scottish Executive’s 2003 Guidance. The ‘key requirements’ column contains abbreviated material from that Guidance.

Commitment and leadership		
Key requirements	Current position	Action
<p>A strategy is in place.</p> <p>Objectives and targets are realistic and achievable.</p> <p>A mechanism to monitor progress on implementing the strategy is in place.</p> <p>Widespread staff ownership of vision, mission and values.</p> <p>Stakeholders needs are understood.</p> <p>Best Value is integrated into all strategies, plans and every day working practices.</p>	<p><i>Breaking through the Walls</i> approved March 2004.</p> <p>The Corporate Plan and other work plans are the key mechanism currently used to translate strategic goals into achievable tasks. These processes are not wholly effective.</p> <p>A basket of KPIs and reporting timetable has recently been agreed.</p> <p>Strategic NLS goals thought to be widely understood, but the extent of full ownership is uncertain.</p> <p>Market research programmes are beginning to address this.</p> <p>Continuous improvement not yet embedded in the organisation. ‘Best Value’ is not well understood in NLS.</p>	<p>No action is required in the short-term.</p> <p>Key initiatives planned are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Move to strategy-based decision-making structures – Introduction of balanced scorecard objective-setting – Introduction of IT-based Performance Management System. <p>The KPIs need to be monitored quarterly, and reviewed by Strategy groups.</p> <p>Organisational development and Investors in People will be key drivers in securing staff commitment.</p> <p>Customer research programmes to continue.</p> <p>‘Best Value’ is not being branded as such in NLS. Key components (continuous improvement, sound use of resources, review processes etc) are being embedded in corporate and section plan guidance, performance management expectations etc. Performance</p>

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Commitment and leadership		
Key requirements	Current position	Action
<p>Effective internal and external performance reporting.</p> <p>Decision making processes should be open and transparent within the NLS.</p> <p>There are policies on fraud prevention, investigation and "whistleblowing".</p> <p>There is a Staff Code of conduct.</p>	<p>Main mechanisms are Corporate Plan, Annual Review/Report. Co-ordinated performance information is now available through the Corporate Statistics spreadsheet, but a management culture of performance reporting is not well embedded in NLS.</p> <p>Minutes of management meetings are posted on the Intranet.</p> <p>Draft policies have been drawn up.</p> <p>Staff codes are in place but not up to date.</p>	<p>management, work planning etc will be developed further.</p> <p>KPIs and routine monitoring of performance to be further developed, along with development of management competencies.</p> <p>More work is needed to develop a culture of openness. The new decision-making Strategy groups, and Investors in people should address this.</p> <p>Policies awaiting presentation to SMT & Unions.</p> <p>Codes to be reviewed and re-issued to all staff.</p>

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Sound governance		
Key requirements	Current position	Action
<p>There is a Corporate Plan.</p> <p>Organisation-wide plans support policy development and service delivery.</p> <p>For partnerships, a robust framework of corporate governance is in place to manage delivery.</p> <p>Resources (financial, human and operational) are matched to priorities through the budget planning process.</p> <p>Indicators allow performance to be assessed.</p> <p>Action in next planning cycle learns from success and tackles underperformance.</p> <p>Key processes link into planning cycle</p> <p>Performance management framework extends through to delivery.</p> <p>Accurate performance information including relevant trends/comparison</p>	<p>A Corporate Plan is in place.</p> <p>Divisional/departmental plans in place for 05/06. Work planning processes are considered in need of improvement.</p> <p>NLS partnerships are traditionally based on ad hoc arrangements.</p> <p>Budget- and work- planning have not been well integrated in the past; but new delegation and monitoring of budgets have been introduced in 2005.</p> <p>Traditional weakness; greater consistency has been introduced through Corporate Statistics spreadsheet.</p> <p>An approved Corporate Plan Timetable partially does this. More work needs to be done.</p> <p>There are links in place between most processes but they are possibly not being carried out effectively.</p> <p>Weak, but improving. Performance management training carried out for all managers in 2004/2005.</p> <p>Statistics now available on shared drive.</p>	<p>Corporate planning process to be improved, to link better to the strategy, all work plans and resource allocation.</p> <p>Revised decision-making structures to be implemented. A system for process review needs to be adopted.</p> <p>Delivery through others is likely to increase, and greater clarity will be required on the respective obligations (in some cases legal) of partners.</p> <p>Zero-based budgeting to be introduced 2006. This will build on KPI work and monitoring strategy.</p> <p>KPIs under development.</p> <p>Definition and implementation of business planning systems to be improved.</p> <p>Process review will develop this area.</p> <p>Further development of management competencies. Work on establishing KPIs will contribute.</p> <p>Regular KPI monitoring to commence 2005, including monitoring against targets.</p>

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Sound governance		
Key requirements	Current position	Action
<p>monitored regularly.</p> <p>Systematic use of benchmarking.</p> <p>Performance is reported systematically to management and stakeholders.</p>	<p>Benchmarking is used in parts of NLS, but not systematically.</p> <p>Weak at present. Current focus is on standardising recording and use of information, rather than reporting.</p>	<p>Wider benchmarking needs to be developed.</p> <p>Performance reporting is an important part of marketing strategies. A review of current tools (Annual Review, Annual Report and Corporate Plan) is required.</p>

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Responsiveness and Consultation		
Key requirements	Current position	Action
Recognition of diversity of customers and stakeholders.	Market research and diversity information monitoring is now available for monitoring.	More work required to mainstream equalities into the organisation and all its services.
Development of accessible and effective complaints system.	This is a weakness. Current systems for deciding responsibility for response to complaints are dispersed.	Review of corporate complaints system is a commitment in the 2005 Corporate Plan.
Identification of most effective way to undertake consultation.	In development, part of public consultation across the organisation.	Develop relationship to marketing strategy. Should this be part of Business Planning Process.
A systematic approach co-ordinates consultation.	Stakeholder consultation is part of the planning cycle.	To be co-ordinated both internally and externally, and addressed in marketing strategy
All stakeholders (including staff) should have genuine opportunities to make their voice heard.	NLS staff currently have this opportunity.	Customer Relations Management (CRM) system required in order to manage diverse and diffuse contacts with stakeholders.
Systematic review of effectiveness of NLS approach to consultation.	Consultations have been carried out in the past, but with no systematic method of presentation of feedback.	A CRM system has the potential to help co-ordinate consultation.

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Sound management of resources		
Key requirements	Current position	Action
There is a systematic approach to risk management.	Corporate level risk register in place, along with risk management procedure. Embedding risk management more widely begun through management seminars (April 2005) and work plans, but is immature. Work on business continuity/disaster recovery has been instigated.	Risk training to be developed; Risk Manager needs to be identified; supporting software evaluated. Business continuity strategy to be agreed.
Regular review by SMT of management of resources across all activities.	Resource usage reported to SMT through management accounts. Format and content of these needs to be improved.	Devolved budget reporting structure, scheme of delegations to be approved. Business case format and documentation to be reviewed.
Organisation has capacity to implement plans and make full use of staff.	Staffing structure and numbers are inherited from old strategy, not new one.	Development required of: Investors in People, reward strategy, knowledge management and process review procedure. Decision making/management structure redefined to endure appropriate contribution at all levels.
Effective management of employees with regular performance assessment.	All managers have received Performance Management Training (four days per person 2004/05); appraisal (performance management) process reviewed 2005.	Development of management competency framework and Management Development Strategy.
Efficient management of fixed assets.	More joined-up, sustainable approach needed – currently difficult to assess scope to reduce property, vehicles, plant etc if not required.	Separate strategies required for equipment and properties.
There is a strategy for procurement and management of contract and contractors.	Procurement due for review. Being taken forward by Shared Services Group.	Procurement review including development of e-procurement to be completed 2005/06
Procurement expertise, guidance and training in place.	Currently large percentage of procurement activity managed through accounting and acquisitions systems.	Scope for dovetailing these separate processes (accounting/acquisitions).

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Sound management of resources		
Key requirements	Current position	Action
Annual accounts prepared according to recognised accounting standards.	In place (NLS has always had an unqualified audit report).	To continue.
Sound financial controls that minimise the risk of fraud and error.	Draft fraud policy in place. Expenditure authorisation is sufficient to satisfy auditors.	Programme required to improve frequency, quality and content of reporting of fraud/error risks.
Full financial consequences of decisions are assessed before commitments made.	NLS has not traditionally adopted project planning methodologies.	Business planning procedures to include standardised documentation (business cases) for submission of bids.
High standards of budgeting, monitoring and reporting.	Better vehicles required for dissemination of information.	Devolved budget reporting to be improved; implementation from May 2005.
Systematic feedback on major financial decisions provided to ensure anticipated benefits realised.	Historically weak.	Implementation of Project Management structure and procedures.
Training and support for appropriate staff to ensure skills for managing budgets.	Needs development.	Devolved budget programme to include training (2005).
Appropriate electronic payment procedures used; suppliers paid promptly.	85% of invoice are paid within agreed time (BACS).	To continue.

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Use of Reviews and options appraisal		
Key requirements	Current position	Action
Review activity is conducted on a regular basis and becomes integrated into management arrangements.	Review processes (Review of activities, ODPG etc) have traditionally been characterised as projects, rather than routine activity.	Need for an ongoing programme of formal reviews with a structured methodology. Consideration is being given to EFQM, Balanced Scorecard, lean systems methodologies.
Reviews anticipate future changes in stakeholder needs, demographic, cultural, socio-economic etc factors.	No systematic process at present.	'Horizon Scanning' system to be recommended by Strategic Policy Unit.
Reviews concentrate on identified priorities and areas where performance maybe poor.	No systematic process at present.	Improved performance management procedures will base rolling programme of annual reviews on assessment of concerns.
Reviews address cross-cutting agendas such as equalities, joint working and sustainability.	No systematic process at present.	New management/decision making structure to aid strategic cross working decisions. Department planning to include equalities, joint working and sustainability.
Reviews consider joint-working options with partners to achieve effective policy development and service delivery.	No systematic process at present.	Incorporate efficient government agenda. Continue to conduct stakeholder surveys.
Reviews conducted within a consistent approach with necessary skills and knowledge.	No systematic process at present.	New review processes to be defined.
SMT regularly monitors progress on implementing reviews' recommendations / actions.	No systematic process at present.	Need to clarify and restate review process.

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Contribution to sustainable development		
Key requirements	Current position	Action
<p>Commitment to contribute to achievement of sustainable development.</p> <p>Sustainable development is reflected in all objectives and plans at corporate and operational level.</p>	<p>New approach to environmental policy introduced 2004 in conjunction with Health & Safety Environmental Committee. Not yet fully implemented.</p> <p>No systematic process at present.</p>	<p>Environmental action plan now being developed. Funding to be confirmed. Include departmental contribution in all department plans.</p> <p>Sustainability needs to be worked up and built into environmental programme. Training required on socio-economic impacts.</p>

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Equal opportunities		
Key requirements	Current position	Action
Objectives/plans at corporate and service level reflect Equal Opportunities.	Equalities Group in place with responsibility for recommending policy, encouraging best practice and monitoring compliance	All work plans required to include actions on equalities. Directors and Service Managers to assess all other objectives and actions against equalities requirements.
Diversity of user needs recognised in service planning and improvement.	Service Managers are aware of legal requirements and ensure compliance. Staff training needs are being reviewed.	Appropriate Library-wide training in equalities awareness required.
Commitment to mainstream equalities within the BV framework.	There is no explicit commitment; equalities statement currently in preparation.	Draft Equalities policy includes mainstreaming - to be endorsed by SMT/EMT and Board of Trustees, and cascaded to all staff.
Equalities issues are taken into account at reviews.	No systematic process at in place present (met in HR reviews).	Requirement to be included in review guidance.
Equalities requirements are taken into accounting procurement strategy.	Procurement strategy document in preparation.	Include in procurement strategy and back up with training and guidance.
Identify equalities performance measures.	Reader equality information is now routinely, but not consistently, recorded.	Set targets for improvement where appropriate and implement actions.
Employment policies are committed to equal opportunities and training in place to support this.	Commitment to equal opportunities include in employment policies. HR staff fully trained in equal opportunities (but not all managers).	Continuing ongoing review of employment policies. Training programme for managers to be put in place.
Programme of comparability studies equal pay audits, and equal pay reviews.	Annual return to SE on equal pay. Annual pay awards are equality- proofed.	To continue.

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Joint working		
Key requirements	Current position	Action
SMT & EMT encourage opportunities for formal and informal joint working.	NLS strategy identifies Partnership and Collaborations as a key policy.	Improved monitoring of progress on partnership activities.
Commitment to working with partnership organisations to ensure joined up approach.	NLS maintains and extends its work with partner organisations at both formal and informal levels.	Information on all such involvement needs to be collected and made widely available.

Accountability		
Key requirements	Current position	Action
Identification of information required by stakeholders to form a view of performance of the organisation.	Annual Review, Annual Report, Corporate Plan, website.	Identify stakeholders and manage evolving relationships. Marketing and Digital Library Divisions to work together on processes. Continue market research activities.
Arrangements in place to secure Best Value.	BV Self-assessment part of development of this approach.	Take Best Value principles forward through the medium of Corporate Planning Group and Senior Management Team.