

PERFORM

Case Study Findings from the PERFORM Pilot Organisations

- Action for Communities in Rural England (ACRE)
- Black Ethnic Community Organisations Network (Becon)
- Community Development Xchange (CDX)
- Kensington and Chelsea Volunteer Centre (KCVVC)
- National Association of Councils for Voluntary Service (NACVS)
- Voluntary Action Westminster (VAW)
- Voluntary Sector North West (VSNW)
- Voluntary Youth Services Devon (VYS Devon)
- Warwickshire Rural Community Council (WRCC)
- Watford Council for Voluntary Service (WCVS)
- Winchester Area Community Action (WACA)

We are very grateful for all the contributions these organisations have made to the development of **PERFORM**.

PERFORM

Action for Communities in Rural England (ACRE)

Context

ACRE is a national umbrella organisation engaged in activities and services to support its members (RCCs), who work to alleviate rural disadvantage. ACRE has twelve staff members. ACRE was already embarking, prior to the PERFORM pilot, on a new approach to strategic planning in relation to an outcomes focus and stakeholder (particularly staff) involvement. As part of this process it had already planned for 2 days outcomes training for staff delivered by CES Outcomes Champion.

Use and application of PERFORM

Focused sessions with staff as part of the ACRE PERFORM pilot built on work already carried out on encapsulating the 'core tasks' or functions of the organisation and which required some validation.

ACRE agreed that the staff management team should lead on this, with regular discussion with the Trustees. To ensure greater ownership among all staff of ACRE's future direction, its objectives and the activities to fulfil them, it was felt that all staff should be involved as far as possible in the planning cycle and a staff 'SWOT' day was very valuable. *"Staff now have a better overview of the work of the organisation and know where things fit together."* Whilst finding some of the application difficult (especially formulation of outcomes) they feel that their approach of *"holding focused sessions on each of the functional areas to look at outcomes and identifying the best 'packaging' of different activities"*, worked well.

ACRE developed its own version of the strategic planning process because it was trying to do other things suited to the planning cycle they were developing but it led to 'more or less the same end position'. They used a developmental sequence of defining:

- Overall aim
- High level outcomes
- Core tasks
- Activities within each core task
- Indicators of success for each activity
- Collection of evidence

ACRE is planning to collect evidence after the pilot has finished but has identified different methods of information collection:

- Facts and figures collected within ACRE (F&F)
- Member Services Evaluation - RCCs only (MSE)
- Subscriber evaluation for electronic subscribers (SubE)
- Stakeholder Survey - primarily funders and government departments (SS)
- Mutual system of accessing views of partner organisations (PS)
- Areas where a specific evaluation is required or is integral to activity e.g. conference evaluation, specific project evaluations, use made of data collected from RCCs (SpE)

An example from ACRE's strategic plan:

Core task	1.2	Strategic working with government and agencies	
Aim: providing the focus for government's work with the rural voluntary and community sector		What difference does it make/ how might success be measured?	Method of data collection
Supporting implementation of Defra's Rural Strategy		Defra programmes recognise the role of ACRE and the RCCs	SS + Qualitative evidence
Membership of and input to strategic groups and forums		Programmes and initiatives take account of rural needs No of arenas in which ACRE (or RCC national representatives) operate	SS, F&F + qualitative evidence

PERFORM

ACRE found that putting in *“effort at the high level outcomes stage is probably worth it”* and that *the agreement of outcomes linked to strategic planning are important*. The proviso is that this is seen as a “living” document which should be to be revisited and adapted as necessary. The organisation identified the “reporting and accountability by-product of **PERFORM** was particularly useful in rationalising other organisational processes and systems”.

ACRE employed the services of a professional facilitator for the staff SWOT session and had two days outcomes training for staff delivered by charities Evaluation Services Outcomes Champion.

Value of the framework and guidance material

ACRE has found an outcomes approach to be a much better way of working through whether the services provided are actually the ones that are needed, in a way which challenges the status quo - moving over to an outcomes approach involved a re-evaluation of strategic direction. It has led to a greater understanding, by those involved, of the role of the organisation, its constraints and capacity. It has also resulted in the identification of areas that needed development or more strategic thinking. Overall, it is seen as a major step forward in performance improvement, but not yet complete.

ACRE didn't follow the **PERFORM** guidance too closely – it used the bits that seemed appropriate but also applied different processes to achieve the desired results. It is difficult to tease out what was the **PERFORM** contribution to the resulting ACRE strategic plan and what is from elsewhere, in part because ACRE had already embarked on a review process. However, there is no doubt that the **PERFORM** framework did stimulate thinking within the organisation and helped to identify the need to review other aspects of the organisation.

ACRE sees **PERFORM** as sitting quite well alongside the ACRE standards and helps to provide evidence particularly around staff involvement in business planning.

Concerns about the framework

ACRE expressed concerns that you can package almost anything within the framework and that words on paper in a plan mean very little, whether you've used the framework or not. It becomes a completely meaningless exercise unless there is ownership of an organisation's strategic direction among all its stakeholders.

ACRE found that the proposed sequence of application steps described in the **PERFORM** materials raised some issues as they found it difficult to formulate any meaningful final indicators for monitoring purposes until action plan completed. It was suggested that however the steps are described there needs to be a strong guideline about the need to constantly go back to previous steps and to check and review materials in the light of the step you are now on. It was also suggested that while the whole process should be described as a continuous planning cycle it has to allow for flexibility and recognise that may be different starting points.

Future plans and recommendations

- Only a very general attempt should be made to 'define infrastructure' as any prescription of infrastructure functions may bias the purpose of the organisation within the development of any strategic plan. ACRE feels that there are limits to what **PERFORM** can prescribe both in content (e.g. the functions) and the process. And so **PERFORM** should avoid too much prescription – leaving just enough to guide the process for radically different infrastructure organisations.
- Without an understanding of outcomes, the framework is of limited value. If it is coupled with the kind of outcomes training, it becomes far more meaningful, provided the terminology and definitions can be refined. There needs to be more synergy between the 'Outcomes Champion' approach and **PERFORM**.
- There is a need for greater cooperation among infrastructure organisations to avoid a lack of response from stakeholders who may be overwhelmed with questionnaires/interviews to assess performance of individual organisations.

PERFORM

Black Ethnic Community Organisations' Network (Becon)

Context

Becon is a specialist infrastructure organisation supporting black and minority ethnic voluntary and community organisations in the North East. It has 11 staff members working on various projects. These range from Sports and Activities, Children, Business Development, Community Development Networks, Administrative Staff and Information Officer. All of the activities support the development of black and minority ethnic organisations in the North East. It has two office bases, one in Newcastle and the other in Middlesbrough.

Becon has not been involved in any other pilot or quality process though has engaged in strategic planning before. They thought that it would be useful to take part in the pilot to learn more about outcomes.

Use and application of PERFORM

Implementation was overseen by three staff members; this included the Operational Manager, the Community Development Networker and the Policy Officer. The outgoing Chief Executive Officer also supported the process. They had wanted to involve funders, but this proved impractical and Board members had been identified but they were also unable to participate because of changes within the organisation and the resulting workload.

Becon did not modify the high level outcomes but used them as a starting point to develop their own organisational outcomes to suit their specialist function. This led to the following examples of planned work:

- A strong and viable BME voluntary and community sector
- To assist BME groups to work together and form viable networks
- Carry out research on BME networks, support and build BME networks, new BME networks formed, existing networks supported, hold regular network meetings, plan conferences, support BME workers, develop partnership agreements and joint initiatives.

“One of the key things is using the framework to fit the organisation (to PERFORM and outcomes) not the other way around and we were a bit wary at first about changing things but after a few sit down meetings we changed our mind about that and revamped it where necessary. Our first argument! Over indicators. How exciting our life is. I must admit though I have enjoyed sitting down and thrashing out these points with work colleagues. Differing people, workroles and focus in work will lead to differing opinions ... is more valuable in the long run.”

The most difficult, and surprising aspect, of the process was the time involved in using PERFORM and working through the process. Becon felt that there was a lot of repetition, but wondered if the process would have been weaker without that. Becon did not draw in any additional help, but with hindsight this might have helped especially as the pilot process coincided with organisational (staff) change. There was however, a recognition that one benefit of doing it themselves was that they ‘own’ what the organisation is doing.

The value and usefulness of the framework

The three workers felt that working to implement the framework gave them a greater understanding of their roles within the organisation. They also felt that a benefit of the process was the close working between three staff members.

Becon feels that it is useful to have an outcomes focus for their work and that the framework is relevant and has helped the organisation to be clearer about what it’s doing. PERFORM highlighted some problems that existed both within the organisation and around the

PERFORM

engagement of other organisations; *“ We knew some of these issues anyway but seeing them there in black and white has helped us deal with some stuff head on ... To be realistic about what can be achieved And to acknowledge that we can't do everything and the responsibility lies with others as well as ourselves in the area of engagement.”* As a result Becon has changed the business plan to fit in with the framework and working on the pilot has also led to a change in the planning of their Network meetings to ensure that outcomes were being met: it helped to improve their focus.

So, Becon can see definite benefits of **PERFORM** but also found some of the process hard going. The following quote sums up contradictory feelings:

“The framework and guidelines have been okay. There are times I could have thrown them out the window but for the most part they have been useful as a guide really. The examples helped. And having a structured workbook to know how things are supposed to be done is good.”

Concerns around the framework

Becon felt the primary concern was about the time taken. There were also comments about the difficulty in understanding the language and the need for a glossary.

They felt that people need to feel confident about being flexible with the framework. They felt that once an organisation had this clear, there would be fewer problems in using the framework.

There was a concern that Becon's target organisations, the black and minority ethnic VCS would be too under-resourced to respond effectively (or quickly) to their requests for information. Hard to reach groups are hard to reach for everybody.

Future plans / recommendations

- They intend to keep using the framework in their work.
- There needs to be a long lead in time with training in outcomes for everyone involved, not just trustees.

Community Development Xchange (CDX)

Context

CDX is a UK wide organisation, with membership ranging across individuals, community groups, district and regional networks, national infrastructure organisations, local authorities and other public agencies. It can therefore be seen as both a 2nd and 3rd tier organisation. It has a small staff team.

Prior to this pilot, CDX had limited experience of performance improvement methodologies though had begun to identify outcomes for the community development sector to inform its developing business plan. The CDX Board has been very involved in these developments.

Use and application of PERFORM

The work was led by one staff member and one Trustee.

Firstly, CDX identified its stakeholders: Users – members / wider field of CD workers / policy makers, Funders, CDX Board members, Partner VCS organisations and Staff. It then mapped the relevant information it already held e.g. survey findings, feedback from a series of workshops held in 2004, as well as future opportunities to engage stakeholders in its strategic planning process e.g. forthcoming conference, paper and web questionnaires, e-bulletins, newsletter article and insert, meeting with funder, staff and board awaydays, participation in national networks.

CDX felt that the pilot timescales made it unrealistic to consult fully with all stakeholders, but ensured that members were informed about the pilot through their newsletter and that staff and Board members were closely involved in the process. CDX plans to involve all stakeholders more fully when PERFORM is implemented in full in the near future. In the meantime however, it worked up a strategic organisational plan based on existing information and involvement from staff and Board members.

An ‘away day’ was held for Board members and staff with outside facilitation. This provided an opportunity to introduce the concept of outcomes and to begin to try out implementing the framework. CDX tailored the framework by changing some of the terminology e.g. ‘VCO’ to ‘CD practitioners and agencies’ - this made the framework more relevant. One high level outcome was felt not to be useful and taken out, and an additional outcome around civil renewal/community action was designed. They also recognised that something explicit needed to be added in around diversity and inclusiveness.

The group then worked on more specific outcomes and indicators. On reflection the indicators weren’t all appropriate, or realistic to gather evidence about and so CDX decided to scale down for the purposes of pilot, and to explore the ‘buying in’ of expertise to help design appropriate indicators and tools for collecting information. It was also agreed to review the indicators in use by government and local authorities (e.g. for LAAs), to measure community action and community involvement and assess their relevance.

Finally, CDX mapped its current activities onto the new outcomes – this illustrated quite a bit of relevance but also clear gaps.

Example of application:

<p>High level outcome: CD practitioners and agencies network and collaborate for mutual benefit</p> <p>CDX function: Sector collaboration</p> <p>CDX aim: Support, develop and promote networking and collaboration</p>	
<p>OUTCOME: Every city, county, region has an effective independent community development network which has its own resources. There is also a range of specialist networks such as for BME practitioners.</p>	<p>INDICATOR: Number, range and resources of CD networks.</p>

PERFORM

CDX activities ▽ Expand the Networking Development role of CDX ▽ Ensure that CDWs are well connected into local and regional networks and activity ▽ Work collaboratively with FCDL and CDF to ensure non-duplication of networking activity.	
High level outcome: CD practitioners and agencies influence relevant policy, practice and programme development CDX function: Sector influence CDX aim: Enable CD practitioners and agencies to have a voice and influence	
OUTCOME: Community development is referred to positively in all relevant policy documents.	INDICATOR: Number of positive references to CD in relevant policy documents.
CDX activities ▽ Have an active and central role in the Community Sector Coalition. ▽ Contribute to Government consultation and policy development. ▽ Have positive working relationships with Government departments, regional Government Offices and other key regional bodies.	

The value of the framework and guidance material

CDX reordered the guidance material to make it more meaningful to them – all guidance and worksheets were put together in chunks for each step of the process.

CDX question whether the language of the framework and guidance complicates matters e.g. 'rationale' and context, and whether it could be written in more accessible style, e.g. why does your organisation exist, and what internal and external factors affect it?

The main added benefit of **PERFORM** for CDX was the introduction to outcomes working as the basis of planning and review/evaluation. This conceptual shift was the bit that people found the most frustrating and difficult, but also the most useful and relevant, at various stages in the pilot.

Concerns were raised around compulsion vs. choice, and whether **PERFORM** is trying to do too many things– define infrastructure, introduce outcomes working AND provide a system of performance management. On the other hand, **PERFORM** did suit CDX's purpose when adapted. It helped CDX take stock about why the organisation exists and how they can show the impact of the organisation – it became clear that they could better measure their effectiveness. CDX plans to use **PERFORM** and follow a more thorough process in the future, "*PERFORM has had a big impact and will continue to do so*".

CDX Recommendations

- It is important to identify a staff member to own and drive the process, with support from a board member.
- It was very useful to bring in expertise to help with explaining outcome based performance management to board and staff members, and with drawing up desired outcomes as a team.
- Changes could be made to terminology e.g. 'general' (for high level) and 'specific' for organisational.
- Need more learning and support opportunities re outcomes and viable indicators. Reading material about the concept of 'outcomes' and indicators would be helpful, "*as this was the new bit and the key to it all is how equipped organisations are for outcomes working*".
- There is a clear need for resources to accompany rolling out of **PERFORM** and acceptance that organisations may need outside expertise / facilitation.

PERFORM

Kensington and Chelsea Volunteer Centre (KCVC)

Context

Kensington and Chelsea Volunteer Centre supports volunteer involving organisations in their development and recruits and places volunteers. It has a staff of eighteen people. They also run a Supported Needs Project (for volunteers with varying levels of support needs), a New Deal Voluntary Sector Option for job seekers, a Corporate Community Involvement Project (re business volunteering), a prisoner resettlement placements, and Mentor Point (which has evolved into a London-wide Home Office funded mentoring network)

The KCVC works to an annual plan which is part of an on-going programme, looking ahead to the next 3 years. They have been working on Investing in Volunteers, VE Quality Standards (which require organisations to conduct their own PQASSO review) and Investors in People.

Use and application of PERFORM

KCVC established a small PERFORM steering group which included a trustee (the chairperson), two volunteering involving organisation (VIO) representatives, a local authority voluntary sector officer and a volunteer (two volunteers were invited, but only one participated and this raised concern about difficulties of engaging with the process). It met three times to develop the outcomes, objectives and indicators. KCVC feel that the framework pinned down the infrastructure role and that it was relevant and appropriate to their work. The framework high level outcomes needed adaptation of the wording to fit with the role of a volunteer centre in relation to VIOs.

Below is an example of how KCVC used PERFORM:

<p>High Level Outcome 1: VIOS are competent and have sufficient volunteers to run their volunteer programmes Aim: To ensure the support necessary to develop and maintain VIOs Volunteer Programmes</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">Outcomes</p> <p>VB is aware of and responds to the current needs of VIOs VIOs are able to attract sufficient volunteers to run good quality services VIOs retain volunteers (with VB support) VIOs are increasingly sustainable VIOs feel that they are meeting the needs of service users</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Indicators</p> <p>Recruitment is targeted Number of unfilled volunteer vacancies Length of time volunteers stay Percentage of people who expressed an interest who then go on to volunteer with VIOs Funding levels Consistency/Continuity of service Perception of VIO (feedback from vols & staff) Feedback from service users Take up of training by VIOs</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Objectives</p> <p>Regular consultation and communication with VIOs KCVC is proactively recruiting volunteers and brokering KCVC will support VIOs with improving their volunteer retention KCVC will encourage VIOs independence and self sufficiency KCVC will encourage VIOs to monitor and evaluate their services</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Activities</p> <p>VIO visits, follow-up telephone calls, VIOs Forum, Questionnaire Market volunteering, website, vacancies bulletin, partner volunteering opportunities Relationships, outreach. Maintaining database and brokerage service, working with VIOs to create appropriate volunteer opportunities Individual advice, we will develop appropriate training on retaining volunteers and promoting best practice Training and signposting Advice, information, workshops, lead by example</p>

KCVC conducts a bi-annual survey of members and used this opportunity to ask questions to establish a baseline in relation to the PERFORM plan. They offered a camera in a prize draw as

PERFORM

an incentive to VIOs to complete the questionnaire and this produced a higher return than might otherwise have been the case. A feedback report included the findings and some recommendations regarding future strategy and action plans e.g.

- Look at how we can improve our brokerage service to VIOs
- Run training for VIOs on volunteers motivation and retention, as well as on general volunteering good practice issues
- Work with VIOs to help them with monitoring and evaluation of their services and volunteer programmes
- Make better use of the Volunteer Co-ordinators Forum to promote volunteering good practice issues, networking and the sharing of resources by VIOs
- Produce a volunteering good practice pack for VIOs which can be updated on a regular basis and is available via our website
- Promote Investing in Volunteers to VIOs more and explore how they can fund this
- Run regular training and/or Forum sessions on inclusivity, equal opportunities and diversity
- Encourage VIOs to give peer support and mentor each other

The report concludes:

“Taking part in this pilot has enabled us to review our services, identify our priorities, and plan for the future with an outcomes focus to the work. This has been a useful process and has given us a new perspective on achievement.”

The value of the framework and guidance material.

KCVC feels that it is too early to tell about the value and usefulness of the framework overall, although it has helped to clarify their infrastructure role, (the organisation delivers a number of projects outside of infrastructure work). It has however, given volunteer involving organisations a greater say in the running of KCVC and it is a useful mechanism to let members know how the services help them - indeed the framework is considered to be useful for something like an organisational audit on their work with volunteer involving organisations. **PERFORM** questioned what they do and gives different perspectives i.e. it is not just a number crunching exercise. Feedback from the funder involved in the **PERFORM** steering group indicates that it helped to explain what the organisation does.

The key concerns for KCVC are around the amount of work involved in implementing the framework - they considered it to be complicated and wieldy. Time is therefore a factor as is the need for additional resources.

Whilst **PERFORM** was seen to be a good method of defining our priorities and addressing gaps, there was a concern about how it links with other quality frameworks (although it is overarching).

The person leading on **PERFORM** from KCVC also commented that she found the process of participating in the networking events for pilots very useful.

Recommendations from KCVC

“Trust the process and trust your steering group members. Don’t do it for them; but let them genuinely contribute or they will lose interest and not be true ‘stakeholders’”

KCVC found it was really useful to have the input of the steering group, who are a cross section of stakeholders, as they each bring a different perspective.

PERFORM

National Association of Councils for Voluntary Service (NACVS)

Context

NACVS is a national, generic, 3rd tier infrastructure organisation. They were already working through Investors in People and PQASSO, and have experience of developing quality standards for members.

Use and application of PERFORM

NACVS piloted the framework as a guide to developing a new strategic plan and found it to be broadly relevant. It amended the wording to reflect its context as a 3rd tier organisation (“our organisational outcomes are more about supporting local infrastructure organisations to become strong and effective, so that they in turn can support local VCOs”), and explored additional new high-level outcomes; one being internally focused. Although NACVS didn’t use the same objectives provided as examples in PERFORM, they are not very different.

Example (taken from the early draft stage)

<p>Vision: A strong, diverse and vibrant voluntary and community sector High level outcome: Local Infrastructure Organisations are equipped to provide services to local VCOs which enable the VCOs to deliver high quality and reliable outcomes across the full range of their activities.</p>	
<p>Intended outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills and knowledge of LIO employees and trustees are improved • LIOs have access to timely and appropriate information • LIOs have access to advice and development support 	<p>Objectives /</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide LIOs with relevant information and advice • Provide LIOs with access to high quality and diverse learning opportunities • Support LIOs to build their organisational capacity
<p>High level outcome: LIOs deliver high quality and inclusive services to local VCOs throughout England</p>	
<p>Intended outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LIOs are better able to support the work of marginalised groups • LIO standards are implemented 	<p>Objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support LIOs to develop a diverse and inclusive local VCS • Lead the development of high quality performance by LIOs by implementing NACVS quality standards and the accompanying kitemark
<p>High level outcome: LIOs influence local and national policies and practices, ensuring the involvement of local VCOs</p>	
<p>Intended outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The influence of LIOs on local public bodies is increased • ChangeUp implementation reflects the needs of the local VCS and infrastructure organisations at all levels • LIOs use national and local Compacts to further their aims 	<p>Objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use consultation processes that enable the experience and voice of the local VCS to influence Government and other stakeholders • Facilitate LIO participation in partnerships and other multi-agency structures • Help LIOs to improve funding and procurement relationships between local VCOs and public bodies

NACVS designed an internally focussed outcome “NACVS has the resources it needs to achieve its strategic outcomes” for ‘completeness’.

A mind map was used to identify all NACVS’ stakeholders, the opportunities to involve them, and who should be prioritised. There was however, a limited opportunity to involve stakeholders within the pilot timescale, particularly as other consultations were already underway. In the end though this felt like a missed opportunity and it was recognised that it is important to look for opportunities to use existing events / consultations as long as they are flexible enough to adapt to PERFORM needs.

PERFORM

Examples of contextual factors to frame the outcomes.	
The needs of VCOs, actual and potential members and users	The relevant policy climate
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding and sustainability • Organisational development / performance improvement • Support on particular policy themes, e.g. health, children and young people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government focus on public service delivery • Moving from grants to procurement/contracts • Local government modernisation & regionalisation (growth of Regional Development Agencies) • Government focus on “neighbourhood” vs. “local” • Focus on performance standards
The ‘state’ and health of the voluntary and community of sector	Availability and access to infrastructure services provided by other organisations.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competition (between local organisations, between local and national organisations, between generalist and specialist organisations) • Growth in social enterprise • Focus on diversity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for volunteering • National coverage of generalist local infrastructure • Effective relationships with other national orgs • Using technology effectively

This analysis was based on “brainstorming” discussions at a Trustee Board meeting. This was written up into a draft paper and commented upon by staff. A final version was presented to a subsequent Trustee Board meeting to set the context for strategic planning.

NACVS found that more preparation was needed to help others think about how best to use the framework. NACVS found there was too much guidance material to present to Trustees and a staff member wrote a shorter briefing note and summary.

All the steps made sense, although some seemed a bit repetitive and process-heavy. The indicators were probably the hardest aspect as it is difficult to get a balance between setting challenging indicators and the reality of available / limited resources to measure our progress against them. NACVS suggest that it would be helpful to be clearer about where the framework could be adapted without weakening it e.g. a ‘comply or explain’ approach – if you don’t use a particular element, need to be clear about why not and what you will do instead.

In retrospect, a steering group would have been beneficial (rather than just one member of staff) - this would have created more ownership, and an external facilitator may have been helpful.

The value of the framework

NACVS felt that it could envisage using the bits of **PERFORM** that add to existing processes, rather than adopting the whole thing.

Different voices brought in some new ideas and this felt reassuring, *“to take time to stop and think about what’s happening in the outside world and how this might affect us - this was a helpful exercise”*. The impact of **PERFORM** is described as minimal although having a framework to drop things into was useful - it has helped to structure the new strategic plan, to inform debate about the nature of the organisation (through high level outcomes) and to focus more on indicators. *“In thinking about where want to go, encourages to think about what others are doing.”*

Future plans / recommendations

Guidance and recording materials: a loose-leaf or folder format so that other documents can be inserted; need different layers of information for different audiences, e.g.

- brief (but compelling) overview (what and why)
- more detail for steering group (what, why, how)
- detailed technical manual for project leader

Voluntary Action Westminster (VAW)

Context

Voluntary Action Westminster is a generalist VCS infrastructure organisation based in Westminster. It is a member of NACVS and was involved in piloting the NACVS outcomes based standard, Investors in People and PQASSO. They are strongly of the view that the PERFORM framework is very different from the NACVS approach in that it is a tool and not a quality standard.

Use and application of PERFORM

VAW did not modify the high level outcomes, but did add another outcome around sustainability. VAW had recently completed a strategic planning process and were therefore wedded to strategic aims (recently agreed and arrived at from an outcomes perspective). They therefore chose to utilise the pilot high level outcomes but did draw links with the strategic plan rather than purely starting from scratch. Below is an example of VAW's plan in relation to the third high level outcome with the recently developed strategy linked in:

Vision: A strong, diverse and vibrant voluntary and community sector High level outcome: VCOs influence relevant policy and programme development VCSIO Core function: sector influence VCSIO aim: To enable the VCS to have a voice and to influence			
Intended outcomes	Indicators	Objectives	Activities
A broad range of VCOs have contributed to policy and programme development <i>VAW SP1: Greater understanding of the role and impact of the VCS</i> <i>VAW SP2: A stronger voice for the sector and communities</i> <i>SP7: Greater engagement of the local VCS in sub-regional, regional and national agendas</i>	-Number and diversity of VCOs involved in consultation -Number and nature of key local planning and policy bodies that have active VCS representation -Extent of changes in service priorities due to consultation/involvement of the sector	To ensure the VCS voice in local strategic planning (inc. health and children) To promote user involvement across the borough To promote the work of VAW and the sector and their impact and effectiveness to statutory partners	Support WCN networks, PPI forums and sure start outreach – providing consultation opportunities in regular meetings and facilitating elections of representatives to strategic bodies and joint planning groups Organise two large events and four briefing sessions to facilitate consultation around health issues Ensure sector is central to emerging Statement of Community Involvement and Partnership Engagement Framework through participation on steering groups Support 4 meetings of the Westminster Involving People network Presentations to strategic bodies Annual stakeholder event Develop a marketing strategy Represent sector interests on LSP thematic networks and planning groups

VAW found that it was easier to involve staff and trustees than wider stakeholders who seemed more interested in being kept informed than being actively involved, though the wider stakeholders did gain an increased awareness of the nature of VAW's work through the process. VAW note that interesting methods of involvement must be used to encourage active involvement of all.

VAW noted that there is a temptation/tendency to follow frameworks step by step before looking at the framework as a whole but on reflection could see how different aspects of

PERFORM

PERFORM link together e.g. *"It was only when I got near the end of the process and looked back that I realised how the context could be tied more directly to step 3"*.

Like some of the other pilots, VAW wanted to find a way to make all of its aims 'fit' within one document and might have added a fifth called 'supporting internal processes' to cover the internal organisational elements – which whilst not high level outcomes for the sector, are necessary in order to deliver the outcomes.

VAW used an electronic network to further contact and consult with their stakeholders. They also made use of a telephone member survey conducted with up to 100 organisations. This was part of another piece of work they were conducting and was done under the direction of the independent consultant who was engaged in some of this work. (In retrospect it would have been helpful to have involved the consultant in the first stakeholders' workshop).

The value and usefulness of the framework

As an example of how being a part of the pilot has influenced VAW, it now reports to the board using key performance indicators which are linked to key aims in the strategic plan, i.e. key outcomes for the sector, rather than an outputs report. Another example of involvement in the pilot is the change to *"how we think' as an organisation: we were struggling to define the role of a network facilitator since our diverse networks have different starting points and aims. One of the team said, 'shouldn't we be making use of that (PERFORM) thing', should we look to see what the outcomes of the networks should be first, then define the role of the facilitator second? It was a good example of how the approach has begun to change the culture of the organisation."*

If VAW was starting from scratch (rather than just having completed a strategic plan) they think it would be likely that they would have used more of a blank slate approach in order to customise the framework to VAW and would anticipate using it as a strategic planning tool every 3-5 years.

The biggest challenge VAW identifies with measuring outcomes is 'ensuring that the evidence gathered is robust enough to stand up to scrutiny' and the pilot re-enforced the need for VAW to conduct a regular membership survey. The way in which reports to trustees are written has been changed to fit in with an outcomes approach. It was felt that this would be more useful for trustees to receive information focused on outcomes than outputs.

VAW is very clear about the difference between **PERFORM** and the NACVS standards and can foresee using the **PERFORM** model as a tool during the strategic planning process. *"As long as there is some consistency and overlap with the NACVS performance standards headings, then this planning would make the assessment exercise in relation to the standards run much more smoothly."* They will continue to use an outcomes approach to their planning.

Future plans / recommendations

- The outcomes should align with the outcomes in the NACVS standards, and the evidence gathering should be running parallel.
- It would have been useful to start the process with a staff lunch to introduce the concept of an outcomes-focus. They found that there were a number of different interpretations of the word 'outcome'.
- VAW feel very strongly that to implement an outcomes-focus means being committed to measuring.
- Funders need to recognise that outcomes measurements need a widespread survey that has validity and has to be properly done. This involves research skills and resources.
- Egroups worked well with staff and trustees, but external stakeholders did not engage as actively outside meetings.

Voluntary Sector North West (VSNW)

Context

VSNW is the regional generic infrastructure forum for the North West. It acts as a strategic organisation for the sector working across Cheshire, Cumbria, Greater Manchester, Lancashire and Merseyside. It has a membership of 150 organisations, most of which are membership organisations.

At the time of the pilot VSNW did not have a current strategic business plan but the organisation had developed a draft programme of objectives for the year. It was also discussing a much closer working relationship with One North West which is a sister regional infrastructure organisation working specifically BME communities.

Use and application of PERFORM

VSNW found the framework provided a useful starting point for strategic thinking. It established a 'core' group (including representation from staff, trustees, Government Office and One North West) to drive the process and a wider email reference group was planned though time did not allow this to happen. However the 'core' group did at times feel that, without a current strategy or business plan to inform their discussions, it was working a bit 'in the dark' and developed a framework that was more 'aspirational' than otherwise might have been. This was felt to inevitably produce a perception of the organisation as 'failing' against the high level outcomes rather than achieving much of its intentions.

Under the second high level outcome VSNW prioritised membership collaboration and facilitation of discussion with public bodies. Below is an example of how VSNW approached the process:

"In contributing to this High Level Outcome VSNW have two main contributions to make. Firstly VSNW seeks to enable its membership to collaborate and secondly to use this collaboration to engage with public bodies to discuss relevant policy.

Therefore a medium term outcome for VSNW is to facilitate membership collaboration across a range of networks of common interest.

Indicators will include:

- Networks are involved in influencing and engaging with issues at a regional and local level.
- There is feedback from the sector to policy makers, regional and national government.

To examine the outcome it will be necessary to interview members of a current network and public sector partners who engage with the network.

Research / evidence base could include questions around:

- What difference does the Network / Forum / Events make to your work? What benefits does it bring to them?
- Could anything be done to improve these forums to make them more valuable?
- Can you give any examples of the impact the network / forum / event has had on influencing strategy and policy?
- Are the networks and forums an effective vehicle for influencing policy and strategy around the sector? If so: why and how?
- If not is there anything that could be done to make the network/forum events more effective or useful?

PERFORM

VSNW commissioned external consultants to carry out a pilot survey and gather evidence against the medium term outcomes. They conducted semi structured interviews with twenty stakeholders: VSNW members; members of the networks VSNW supports and partners in public agencies and bodies. An email questionnaire also went to all VSNW's members. VSNW found it very useful to use external people for this part of the process, and it prompted some revisiting and questioning of what the organisation had identified as outcomes and indicators.

Value and usefulness of the framework

The length and complexity of the framework meant that the consultants used by VSNW, as an external organisation, had to invest considerable time in 'unpicking' to be able to understand it and feel able to use it well. VSNW found this also applied in explaining the process to other stakeholders.

VSNW agree that it is a useful planning and review tool that can form the basis of a development plan. However, in undertaking the exercise again it would modify how much of the framework it used especially in terms of the high level outcomes and the number of medium term outcomes. VSNW felt that the detailed nature of the framework led to the development of a plan which aspires to more outcomes than they currently have the capacity to deliver.

Concerns

VSNW voiced some uncertainty about the usefulness of the framework in its current format for a regional infrastructure organisation. Difficulties and concerns expressed included the difficulty of 'measuring outcomes' when working across such a huge area and the need for longer timescales for many of the intended outcomes related to influence. The findings of the exercise also highlighted that VSNW's stakeholders view the outcomes from different perspectives, dependent on whether they were members or partner organisations, i.e. voluntary sector or public sector.

It is suggested that you either need staff with the capacity in terms of time to carry out the process or funding to pay for certain activities, in particular evidence gathering. It is also felt that the volume of piloting materials was too great and not structured in the best way. VSNW re-ordered them to put everything in sequence for each high level outcome.

Future plans and recommendations

- VSNW feel that **PERFORM** is a useful tool – but it that it needs simplifying.
- There is a need for training about outcomes – through facilitators, workshops and networking (between the similar types of organisation).
- It would be good to share good practice examples e.g. the on line questionnaire that VSNW developed as one way of collecting evidence against indicators may be useful to others.

PERFORM

Voluntary Youth Services Devon (VYS Devon)

Context

Voluntary Youth Services (Devon) is a small specialist 2nd tier organisation with a sub-regional and primarily rural focus. VYS (Devon) seeks to act as a voice for the voluntary sector, and acknowledges that the breadth of the sector complicates this task. The work is driven by the SLA with the Youth Service and currently VYSD utilises PQASSO as its internal quality assurance system.

Use and application of PERFORM

The Leadership within (VYS Devon) comes from a core group of the two main staff members, Chair, Vice Chair and Principal Youth Officer through the SLA with the Youth Service giving the major funding. Other members of the Board (Trustees) are primarily there to help them keep in touch with what is going on within youth work rather than giving time to be a Trustee. This has to be balanced by the fact that they are all very busy people within their own youth organisations and their allegiances will always be first and foremost with their own organisation/group. The Manager has led on the **PERFORM** pilot and with the post increasing from 0.5 to full time in April 2004 the extra capacity allowed involvement within the ChangeUp process at local, regional and national level giving opportunities to test the **PERFORM** framework out at local / regional / consortium levels. Initially, it had to be tailored to the VYS (largely through amending the wording) but there was unilateral agreement that it helped to define infrastructure and all agreed with the 4 high level outcomes. VYSD also proposed, and had accepted, a 5th high level outcome re the "Management of Own Organisation"

VYSD already had a Strategic Plan in place and the manager had pre-empted work for the pilot and drafted an initial work plan, based on assumptions, then revised to map to the framework and include indicators. Stakeholders have been involved in a number of ways i.e. all VYSD Members re Development Plan and Work plan (some interviewed as part of the external review, questionnaire and an on-going opportunity to comment on draft plans), the Principal Youth Officer (interviewed as part of the external review, met with VYSD Chair & Manager and regular attendance at VYS Executive Meetings), the VYSD Executive Trustees (some interviewed for the review, questionnaire and an on-going opportunity to comment on draft plans through VYS Executive Meetings), the Chair, Vice Chair and Communications Manager (as per Trustees but additional meetings). Additionally, the S/W Regional Network Steering Group and Network Members were party to testing out the High Level Outcomes and Objectives through the Regional ChangeUp Project and work colleagues used the **PERFORM** framework to undertake a baseline assessment and plan development of the local youth infrastructure. Finally, the Manager liaised with NCVYS colleagues who support local infrastructure.

Example of application:

High level outcome: The Voluntary Youth Sector has a Voice and Influence	
VYSD function: Providing a voice	
VYSD aim: The local voluntary and community youth sector is given the opportunity and support to be involved with consultation processes that are inclusive and meaningful	
OUTCOME: Mechanisms have been developed for those that support work with and for young people from voluntary organisations to play an active role in decision making for the sector as a whole and for the voice of the Voluntary and Community Youth Sector from Devon to be heard.	INDICATOR: Number, proportion and diversity of VCO's involved in consultation exercises
VYSD activities	
▽ Ensure that Agencies recognise that VYS has the capacity and structures to undertake this work	
▽ Work with the Youth Service to review strategies and guidelines	
▽ Use the "Community of Interest" model to undertake this work	

PERFORM

High level outcome: Ensuring the support necessary to develop and maintain the voluntary youth sector	
VYSD function: Practical Help	
VYSD aim: Young people and those individuals, groups and agencies who work with and support work with them can access relevant, up to date information, guidance and/or advice, and resources.	
OUTCOME: An increased knowledge of available support, services and facilities	INDICATOR: Number, proportion and diversity of VCO's making use of Youth News and Web Sites.
VYSD activities	
▽ Edit and produce 11 editions of Youth News, making this available through hardcopy, e-mail and the youth news web site	
▽ Provision of a phone information, advice, signposting and support system	
▽ Monitor the effectiveness of the publication through questionnaires to readers and feedback at meetings and ensure feedback informs future development	

The value of the framework and guidance material

"The more I have been involved the more it makes me believe that it is good to be able to identify the role of an infrastructure organisation. In the past I have struggled with exactly what does an infrastructure org do let alone the plethora of other people involved in the vol/com sector or our funders. It must be helpful therefore to have a clarity as to just what is infrastructure and why do we need it"

VYSD use PQASSO but state that it has not developed thinking around Infrastructure in the same way that this project has. There is a recognition that PQASSO is relevant to the additional Management High Level Outcome suggested for inclusion and that the benefit of doing both is to recognise that sound management is crucial to the effectiveness of the organisation.

VYSD will use the evaluation and other evidence to "sell" what the organisation does and has valued the focus to become more orientated on infrastructure work and avoidance of service delivery i.e. empowering others to deliver. Overall it was felt that the framework clarifies the difference between infrastructure and service delivery and justifies the work against the 4 high level outcomes.

They have cited four examples of good practice as a result of using the **PERFORM** framework:

- Article written for the NCVYS Publication
- Using the Outcomes approach to develop the thinking of the ChangeUp Consortium at Local Authority Level
- The use of the Framework to develop the work of the Regional ChangeUp process within the Thematic Youth Work Project
- Seeking an Outcome approach from the PYO in the development of our Service Level Agreement

Recommendations

- Case Studies would be useful, as a separate publication as more paperwork could be extremely off-putting.
- Familiarisation with the material is crucial and it may be useful to be offered mentoring by "pilot" organisations who've used it and are the same field i.e. specialist / generic.
- The process itself needs to be simplified as time needed re "translating" (understanding in the context of the specific organisation you work for) and this may require suitably timed "training".

PERFORM

Warwickshire Rural Community Council (WRCC)

Context

Warwickshire RCC is a medium sized RCC working with a primarily rural client group. The RCC is a membership organisation that helps and encourages people living in rural areas to develop their communities and to develop locally led and run projects. It has fourteen full and part time staff. WRCC is part of the Coventry and Warwickshire (sub regional) LDA Forum and the West Midlands (regional) RCC Network.

The RCC has limited experience of strategic planning but had just agreed a 5 year plan prior to the piloting. It had also involved a CES outcomes champion in delivering 2 days outcomes training for the RCC staff and some Board members and was working towards completion of ACRE Quality Standards Level 2.

Use and application of PERFORM

As WRCC had just developed a five year strategic plan, with a trustee and staff ‘away day’ in August 2004 and then a Board sub group to develop the plan, it wasn’t appropriate to involve the stakeholders in the way proposed in the PERFORM guidance. *“It would have been a duplication of work to have undertaken this so soon after doing our strategic planning work.”*

WRCC found understanding where the high level outcomes linked in was the hardest part of the process. It was initially felt that the first and fourth high level outcomes were the most relevant to the RCC, however in the end the staff and the Board felt that there was a ‘fit’ with all of the outcomes.

Example of application

<p>Vision: A strong, diverse and vibrant voluntary and community sector High level outcome: VCOs network and collaborate for mutual benefit Core function: Providing information and advice, Working in Partnership, Celebrating achievements, Advocating for rural communities Aim: To reduce isolation in rural communities, To increase the voice of rural communities, To improve rural services</p>			
Intended outcomes	Indicators	Objectives	Activities
Reduction in isolation of rural communities	Extent of involvement of different groups in articulation of need	Promote and facilitate joint working	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feed information about projects and rural needs into the LSP’s and other decision making forums, as appropriate • Raise awareness of issues and opportunities that affect local communities in Warwickshire • Promote best practice initiatives across the County & Solihull • Lobby for mainstream funding for parish plan work in communities • Hold at least one consultation/ information event per year on issues affecting rural communities • Broker relationships between rural communities and other groups/ agencies • Co-ordinate community development initiatives between agencies • Undertake an evaluation of the benefits felt by parishes who have undertaken parish plans to date • Undertake research into the issues which are being raised by conducting parish plans • Support communities in identifying local need and creating action plans to meet these needs
Increased voice for rural communities	Number and range of consultation responses	Share good practice and promote networking	
Better services for rural communities	Extent of services provided to rural communities	Broker relationships between rural communities and other agencies	
Rural communities more involved in decision making about their communities	Level of community consultation initiatives undertaken		

PERFORM

The RCC had already enlisted the services of an external facilitator for a strategic planning away day (prior to the pilot), and of a CES outcomes champion to deliver 2 days training. These inputs plus the support provided by COGS during the piloting process were all seen as useful and important. They therefore decided not to use a facilitator for these sessions *“but if this were used as a main strategic planning process I feel a facilitator would be necessary”*.

Value and usefulness of framework

In initial implementation of the framework the RCC decided to involve just staff and trustees. However the exercise did raise the issue for the RCC that it lacks existing mechanisms for involving users in decision making. It prompted discussions within the organisation about ‘who are our users?’ and ‘how we can engage with them more effectively?’ As a result of both the work around the ACRE Standards and the **PERFORM** work W RCC plans to undertake a users survey later this year.

Application of **PERFORM** has helped WRCC to recognise and evidence the extent to which it fulfils functions of a generalist infrastructure organisation. The process has also led to changes in the way that staff report on work, from a very individualistic approach to a more structured one that will include a recording of outcomes indicator evidence.

WRCC note that it was difficult to map the **PERFORM** framework onto the existing strategic plan because the language and concepts are different (the strategic plan is focussed largely on internal issues like sustainability and quality). *“If we had approached our strategic planning process from this point of view, using the **PERFORM** framework, we might have had a significantly different strategic plan. Realised that our existing strategic plan starts from the position of what does our organisation need to do in order to achieve our objectives, and the **PERFORM** framework starts from the position of what does the sector need to be able to do and how do we enable that to happen. A subtle, but significant difference. “*

WRCC estimates a huge amount of staff time was necessary to implement **PERFORM** (and its other strategic planning processes) but that this is a worthwhile investment; *“We cannot underestimate how important it will be in the future to demonstrate how we support VCOs, and what the outcomes of our interventions are.”*

The RCC believes that the **PERFORM** framework is potentially useful for both planning and reviewing but has a concern about any form of compulsion. This could lead to a potential lack of ownership of aims, objectives and outcomes if an organisation is unable to adapt the framework to their own circumstances.

Future plans and recommendations

- The framework was found to be relevant, although it was suggested that some words and phrases needed to be explained/defined to illustrate the range of interpretations across different contexts.
- The six step by step stages were thought useful but outcomes training is also needed.
- WRCC does not feel that the framework can be linked to the ACRE Quality Standard per se although there are some overlaps particularly in relation to user engagement.

PERFORM

Watford Council for Voluntary Service (WCVS)

Context

Watford CVS is a medium sized local urban and generic second tier organisation with a membership of 160 voluntary and community groups for whom they provide a local authority funded generic service, along with their delivering their own funded projects. There are nine CVS' across the county experiencing a pressure to merge and this has created a competitive "survival of the fittest" culture. All current Service Level Agreements for Watford CVS come to an end in March 2006.

Watford CVS uses PQASSO as an internally focused quality system. In addition, the organisation has utilised the NACVS Quality Standards and has a member of staff who is a CES Outcomes Champion.

Use and application of PERFORM

The work was led by the Manager who has stated *"The whole framework is relevant and appropriate. It does help us to define infrastructure and our funders thought so too"*.

The process followed included:

1. The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) presented the proposal to engage with the **PERFORM** pilot, introduced the paperwork and reported progress back throughout the process
2. The CEO and a Development Training Officer worked collaboratively on a paper exercise and decided that representatives of all stakeholders i.e. volunteers, staff, trustees/users and funders should be involved
3. They set up a Steering Group comprising:
 - 2 staff members – the CEO and the Development Training Officer (who is also a CES Champion)
 - 1 funder (Grant Manager of Watford Borough Council)
 - Two trustees/ reps of member orgs & user groups – Millennium Volunteers Chief Officer & Watford & District Home Start
 - One volunteer
4. Two extended meetings were held with staff to introduce the **PERFORM** framework, and to task each person to work on their own outcomes and evidence gathering and collectively collate findings
5. The CEO took responsibility for leading the piloting process and recording information.

It was felt that the High Level Outcomes were appropriate to the organisation but that objectives overlapped within the four areas and the indicators adopted were quite difficult to get evidence for. The indicators within the framework were useful as guidance but the organisation developed their own and added a fifth High Level Outcome related to the sustainability of the organisation.

Example of application:

High level outcome: VCOs are confident, skilled and knowledgeable in running their projects and activities	
WCVS function: Sector support	
WCVS aim: WCVS will ensure the support necessary to develop and maintain the V/C sector	
OUTCOME: Increased skills and knowledge for Trustees, staff and volunteers	INDICATOR: No. of groups/individuals attending and making use of the training opportunities
WCVS activities	
▽ Identify training and learning needs of VCS trustees, volunteers and staff.	
▽ Support the development of accreditation and qualifications as appropriate to the sector.	
▽ Facilitate a training network to enable the sharing of skills, expertise and training opportunities	

PERFORM

High level outcome: VCOs deliver high quality and inclusive services	
WCVS function: Sector Strategy and practice	
WCVS aim: WCVS will strategically build and enhance internal policy and best practice	
OUTCOME: Increase in the level of organisations becoming outcomes focused & implementing PQASSO	INDICATOR: No. of groups coming to training and/or groups attending the support forum for PQASSO
WCVS activities	
▽ Produce and disseminate best practice guidelines around quality and equality	
▽ Model methods of reflection and assessment of performance to the sector i.e. outcomes	
▽ Promote quality assessment frameworks and support VCOs to apply appropriate performance improvement procedures	

The value of the framework and guidance material

WCVS have said that initially the paperwork appeared overwhelming as a lot of assumptions were made and it needed several readings for clarity. Developing a “buddying” relationship with another pilot organisation assisted with this and supported the whole process. However, the steering group thought the framework was good and laid out in simple language.

The layout within the guidelines was also appreciated as it brought everything together and at a glance the aims and objectives could be seen. However, they felt that they would not have been able to complete the exercise had there not been any templates. *“We had no Action Plan that we could incorporate so we used the suggested template and it was a useful exercise.”* WCVS stated that *“We will be planning our work round the outcomes and providing the evidence to all our funders. This has certainly been a worthwhile exercise that has made us more aware of how to collect the evidence and for what purpose rather than just recording things i.e. every telephone call.”*

Before working with **PERFORM**, the organisation had no Business Plan, although a Vision Statement created in 2004 through an Away Day process was meant to inform a Business Plan development in 2005 but had been held up by the impact of other contextual issues e.g. Change Up. There was no Strategic Plan in place. Both Strategic and Business Plans are now being worked on, with a management agreement that an annual review and planning process will now be adopted.

Recommendations

- It is clear from discussions with the CEO of WCVS that raising awareness about the development and application of an outcomes based approach to planning and evaluation is a baseline requirement for many organisations within the sector.
- In addition, the organisation valued the external support both from the COGS team and the “buddying” system they instigated and would see that form of support as essential initially.
- There was recognition that the implementation within the organisation was labour intensive at a time when it was having to respond to major contextual changes and establish a case for survival. In hindsight they might not have taken the pilot on but conversely they do value the developmental process and outcomes *“This has told us that we need to do this (forward planning) soon so we can have a clean plan or a work plan that incorporates all these (evidence outcomes)”*.

Winchester Area Community Action (WACA)

Context

Winchester Area Community Action is a large to medium sized generic second tier organisation with a local urban and rural focus. It is a diverse organisation which incorporates both infrastructure and service delivery operations.

At the start of the pilot WACA had both an Operational Plan 2005 – 2006 and a Strategic Plan 2005 – 2008 in place which were formed on the basis of the November 2004 draft **PERFORM** framework (earlier version to pilot one) as a mechanism to consider growth and development for the organisation or consolidation or downsizing re core functions.

Currently WACA has achieved Level 3 of PQASSO and intends to roll it out to other organisations and has a CES Outcomes Champion. In addition WACA is working with the Investors in Volunteers programme, has developed an Action Plan to work with the VE Quality Standards in order to achieve the VE Quality Mark and has worked with the NACVS Quality Standards in order to achieve approval for membership renewal.

Use and application of **PERFORM**

The work was led by the Deputy CEO who had already developed both Strategic and Operational Plans (as above) as the value of this outcomes based approach was recognised at an early stage in its development.

Stakeholder engagement was cited as an example of good practice as it “assisted us in better informing people what our organisation is about. Having undertaken this pilot and done all this work on our strategic and operational plans, it is a selling point to other organisations that it is now easy to identify relevant information and hard evidence for use in bids and grant applications to support and validate our achievements”.

A Strategic Planning Working Party was convened comprising the Chair and Vice Chair of the Trustee Board, the lead Trustees of the Trustee Sub Committees (i.e. Development, Personnel, Finance and Resources, Health and Safety), the Senior Management Team (i.e. Chief Executive and two Deputy Chief Executives with responsibility for internal and external affairs), serviced by the senior project manager. Internal consultation took place through bi-monthly Trustee Board meetings, bi-monthly Strategic Planning Working Party meetings, monthly staff meetings, monthly supervision sessions and fortnightly senior management team meetings. External consultation was met through monthly meetings with service users and quarterly meetings with funders. In addition, a stakeholder event was arranged, with lunch, to inform and invite comment/feedback on relevant sections of the Strategic Plan 2005-08 and this was also presented, by means of a short video, at the October AGM, highlighting what had been achieved to date.

The process undertaken and the outcomes were promoted to member organisations through the June Community Newsletter, monthly e-bulletins and at the AGM.

WACA felt that the Core functions in the framework were appropriate for a CVS but not for more specialised projects and services; “..... *struggled to devise a structure for the Strategic Plan from the **PERFORM** framework because the framework does not cover those activities the organisation undertakes outside of its core functions, nor does the framework capture the organisation’s own diversity sufficiently, i.e. community services and projects and community development activities, nor what the organisation has to do in order to ensure it’s own sustainability and effectiveness as an organisation. As a result part A of the WACA Strategic Plan comprises the 4 x core functions identified in **PERFORM** and parts B & C are Community Services & Projects and Development of Local Community Activities respectively. Finally, part D is Internal Organisation & Development – the framework is outcomes based relating to VCSIO external functions only, not the internal functions of the organisation which are necessary in order to ensure its own sustainability and effectiveness”*

PERFORM

Example of application:

High level outcome: VCOs network and collaborate for mutual benefit	
WACA function: Sector collaboration	
WACA aim: To support, develop and promote collaboration and networking	
OUTCOME: Vulnerable groups / deprived areas targeted to reduce health inequalities	INDICATOR: VCS role in Health Partnership working developed
WACA activities	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▽ Support development of cross-sector projects and initiatives which have aims of promoting healthy, independent lifestyles and preventing dependency on health care services ▽ Support development of services for older people aimed at preventing hospital admission, ensuring effective and efficient hospital discharge and supporting independent living at home 	
High level outcome: VCOs are confident, skilled and knowledgeable in running their projects and activities	
WACA function: Sector Support	
WACA aim: To ensure the support necessary to develop and maintain VCOs	
OUTCOME: Development of staff and volunteer potential to ensure more effective organisations	INDICATOR: Learning needs of local VCO's met
WACA activities	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▽ Identify the diversity of needs of actual member organisations and service users ▽ Write a learning strategy to develop a training programme and good practice guidance ▽ Seek training development funding (since achieved from Big Lottery Fund for 3 years) 	

The value of the framework and guidance material

WACA adapted the framework and made it relevant to the organisation but in doing so recognised that there were 2 distinct elements to the organisation's work. The stepped process within the framework helped the organisation to review and amend its Mission Statement and has enabled it to arrive at an explanation of infrastructure that people could understand. *"Using outcomes as a starting point gave us a clearer focus in all aspects of our work, particularly in 'core' areas as well as service delivery areas. The framework provided a focus for the planning process and a strength was that it 'captured' and engaged trustees. It helped us move on with developing a monitoring and evaluation framework which was based on outcomes as well as outputs".*

WACA feels strongly that the process itself requires a lead in period, in order to consider the implementation of outcomes identified in framework. "We had the benefit of having worked on this consistently for the 5 months prior to the pilot period and therefore already had an Operational Plan for 2005-06 and a draft Strategic Plan for 2005-08 in place at the start of the pilot period. Also, by the start of the pilot period, most stakeholders had at least a basic knowledge and understanding of outcomes, were willing participants in the pilot, and recognised its potential to themselves and the voluntary and community sector as a whole".

Recommendations

- All organisations who use the framework in the future should receive training about outcomes (their meaning and application) first.
- The final product needs to be kept simple, adaptable and flexible so that it can be used according to size and scope of organisation. WACA suggested a two tier approach to avoid frightening off small, less well resourced infrastructure bodies that need this focus but need a framework that doesn't consume inordinate amounts of staff time.
- They felt the concept was good but problems arose with some of the paperwork and structure of the pilot framework – suggested two versions for short (operational) term and long (strategic) term.